THE PROPAGANDA MACHINE OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

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Executive Summary

1. The communist state of mainland China is also dubbed in academic circles as a “propaganda state” because of the way its single ruling party came to power—by altering the consciousness and identity of the largely illiterate rural peasant masses, mobilising them through propaganda and utilising their strength to wage revolutions.

2. After the 1949 revolution, the propaganda machine has continued to support the regime’s policies and various campaigns launched by the regime, to silence dissent and to maintain internal cohesion of the ruling party.

3. The official communist ideology was greatly undermined by the cultural revolution and then the reform and open-door policy in the 1980s when China finally realised how backward it was. During much of the reform era, the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) propaganda machine limped along with capitalistic marketisation and globalisation of China’s economy.

4. Upon assuming power, Chinese President Xi Jinping moved to revitalise the CCP’s propaganda machine, reiterating that “political stewardship” is of utmost importance in guiding public opinion in the right direction and injecting the public with “positive energy”.

5. The CCP’s propaganda machine is a sprawling establishment, coordinated by Wang Huning, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee. At the core is the Central Propaganda Department.

6. The rapidly expanding cyberspace and rise of the social media have caused a tectonic shift in the patterns of information flows and ways of communication. The CCP has been overhauling the propaganda machine to keep up with these developments. A new Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission was established in 2018, headed by Xi.
The CCP’s propaganda machine continues to face challenges of fragmentation, rigidity and technological integration. It has fought a long battle with Western media and ideas, and only recently seems to have regained some ground among the Chinese people.