



OFFICE of INTELLIGENCE and ANALYSIS

INTELLIGENCE IN VIEW

23 SEPTEMBER 2022

(U//FOUO) Online Foreign Influence Snapshot: August 2022

(U//FOUO) We judge that narratives driven by Chinese, Iranian, and Russian state media, and proxy websites linked to these governments, often involve fact-based articles as well as editorials; these publications may include misinformation, disinformation, or factual but misrepresented information. This monthly “Snapshot” compiles English-language narratives, which we assess are intended for US and Western audiences, and highlights both consistent trends and emergent messaging, which we assess to reveal foreign actors’ changing influence priorities. We judge that, typically, China uses state and proxy media—including US-based outlets—to try to shape diaspora conduct and US public and leadership views; Iran state media manipulates emerging stories and emphasizes Tehran’s strength while denigrating US society and policy; and Russia uses both state and proxy media to amplify narratives seeking to weaken Washington’s global position relative to Moscow’s. This snapshot identifies the most persistent or emergent narratives being spread by these actors for English-speaking—probably US—audiences, as well as narratives of interest to Homeland Security stakeholders.

OVERALL GRAPHIC CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

KEY TAKEAWAYS

CHINA



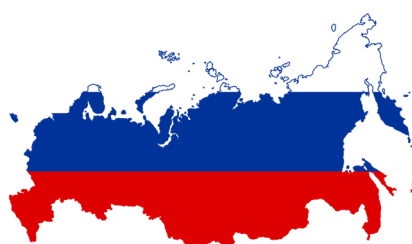
(U//FOUO) Chinese state media continued July’s heavy shift to Taiwan issues—away from significant focus on Ukraine or COVID-19—while also claiming that several US domestic controversies show a failing democracy. Outlets denounced visits to Taiwan by US politicians as political grandstanding, and as attempts to undermine the One-China policy.

IRAN



(U//FOUO) Iranian state media focused on long-standing narratives. Outlets praised Tehran’s purported efforts to revitalize the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), while criticizing Washington’s negotiating stance, and pushed stories of US social discord, including inflation and the search of the former president’s property.

RUSSIA




(U//FOUO) Russian state media and proxy websites continued their heavy focus on Ukraine by blaming global economic, energy, and food insecurity on the Western response. They also alleged that Ukrainian military actions endangered the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant. Moscow further highlighted its support for Beijing after the Taiwan visits of US Congressional delegations.

AUGUST CONSISTENT AND EMERGENT NARRATIVES


(U) US CONGRESSIONAL VISITS TO TAIWAN

 (U) Chinese state media denounced the 2–3 August visit to Taiwan by the US Speaker of the House as a desperate act to boost Democrats’ popularity and interfere with China’s sovereignty; they also decried two later Congressional delegations as political showboating ahead of US midterm elections.^{1–6}


(U) JCPOA

 (U) Iranian state media criticized the US position in JCPOA negotiations, asserting that Tehran has made reasonable demands and offered constructive solutions, while Washington was less committed to negotiating.^{18,19,20}

(U) WAR IN UKRAINE

 (U) Russian state media and proxies alleged Ukrainian military atrocities, and blamed Western support to Ukraine for price and energy inflation, and food insecurity.^{24,25,26,27}

(U) ONE-CHINA POLICY

 (U) Chinese state media amplified narratives alleging US provocations in the Taiwan Strait, claiming that Washington is undermining the One-China principle, and denouncing US actions as hegemonic and designed to destabilize Indo-Pacific stability.^{7,8,9}

(U) INFLATION

 (U) Iranian state media amplified stories on contentious US domestic issues, particularly the US inflation rate, resulting sacrifices by US citizens, increasing political turmoil due to the economy, and growing disapproval ratings for the current US president.^{21,22,23}


(U) ZAPROZHYE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

 (U) Russian state media and proxies amplified allegations that the Ukrainian military shelled the Russia-held nuclear plant in Zaporozhye, Ukraine, blaming Kyiv for any potential nuclear disaster.^{28,29,30}


(U) US DOMESTIC ISSUES

 (U) Chinese state media amplified news stories involving contentious US domestic issues such as alleged abuses of immigrants, neglect of veterans, gun control, and crime rates. They characterized these issues as showing that US democracy and leaders are ineffective and that Washington is hypocritical in critiquing human rights abuses abroad.^{10,11,12,13}

(U) MAR-A-LAGO SEARCH

 (U) Iranian state media amplified reporting about the search of the former president’s Mar-a-Lago Club^{USPER}, criticisms of the DOJ and FBI, and discord between Republicans and Democrats. Outlets also pushed stories about supporters of the former president who allegedly sent death threats to the US Attorney General and held armed protests by FBI buildings.^{14,15,16,17}

(U) US CONGRESSIONAL VISITS TO TAIWAN

 (U) Russian state media and proxies focused on the visits to Taiwan by the US Speaker of the House and later congressional delegations, while promoting Russia’s alliance with China as a sign of falling US global influence.^{31,32}

Source, Reference, and Dissemination Information

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- (U//FOUO) **Overt Influence:** Activities that a foreign government conducts openly or has clear ties to, including the use of strategic communications, public diplomacy, financial support, and some forms of propaganda.

(U//FOUO) **Disinformation:** A foreign government’s deliberate use of false or misleading information intentionally directed at another government’s decisionmakers and decision-making processes to mislead the target, force it to waste resources, or influence a decision in favor of a foreign government’s interests.

(U//FOUO) **Malinformation:** An adversary’s deliberate use of otherwise verifiable information with malicious intent, such as by amplifying the information selectively or out of context, or to the detriment of specific persons.

(U//FOUO) **Misinformation:** An adversary’s use of false or misleading information. An adversary’s intent can change misinformation to disinformation.

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(U//FOUO) This reporting includes state-controlled media outlets – some that are officially registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act – as well as covert proxy websites and social media accounts we assess are operated by foreign governments or entities operating on behalf of a foreign power.

(U//FOUO) I&A routinely reviews the totality of this malign foreign influence content and, in the case of this report, identified a number of prominent COVID-19, domestic,

	and socio-political themes regularly presented by these actors since the beginning of 2020.
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