WEEK 36, 2019

THE EPOCH TIMES

Stephen Bannon on Huawei and the Communist China Threat 4



Printelegt

CHINA SEEKS TO SWAY THE VOTE

See Page 2

Look Who's Interfering With the 2020 Election

China seeks to defeat Donald Trump in the 2020 national election with the help from who else? Americans



Apparently, China can't take another four years of Donald Trump in the White House. To make sure he's a one-term president, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is enlisting the help of anti-Trump Americans from Washington to Wall Street and

Will Chinese interference in America's upcoming election be tolerated by those so upset at President Trump's supposed "collusion with Russia" to win the 2016 election?

If the 2018 midterm elections are any indication, the answer is "no."

China's 2018 Iowa **Election Interference**

Yes, China meddled in the 2018 midterm elections. The China Daily, a state-run newspaper, bought a fourpage insert to post pro-China, anti-Trump trade policy propaganda in the Des Moines Register prior to the election. The aim of the insert was to sway voter opinion regarding U.S.-China trade and reminding Iowa voters of Chinese leader Xi Jinping's deep and historical connections to Iowa. The state had strongly supported Trump's election in 2016.

China's little propaganda ploy had little or no impact. Nonetheless, no one on the left cared about it. There were no special reports on CNN, nor articles in The New York Times warning about Chinese influencing an American election—which speaks volumes.

China Can't Win Against Trump's Policies

But with the 2020 election coming up, China has decided to do all it can to stop Trump from being re-elected. It's easy to understand why. Trump's huge tariffs against Chinese goods are giving the Chinese economy a serious beating. China's economic output has

with Trump is to fallen to its lowest level since 1992. negotiate with What's more, it doesn't look like a Democrat the Chinese economy will improve much between now and the election. president instead.

a banner declaring President Donald Trump's re-election intentions, which reads, "Trump 2020: Keep America Great" at a factory in Fuyang, Anhui Province, China, on July 13, 2018.

China has figured

out that the best

trade negotiation

way to win a

A Chinese worker sews | China's domestic consumption conimports begin on Oct. 1. The immediate outlook for China's continued economic growth is less than promising.

More to the point, China has figured out that the best way to win a trade negotiation with Trump is to negotiate with a Democrat president in- 4. Powerful Chinese and Asianstead. To accomplish that, Xi Jinping has a plan, and you can be certain that it's much bigger than buying and political power in America. insert pages in the Des Moines Register Sunday Edition and way beyond Russia's fake Facebook pages. And determined that it's "not permisapparently, the plan has been in place sible" for a sitting president of the since the 2018 elections.

with The Washington Free Beacon, just been named. exiled Chinese billionaire Guo Wengui, a staunch anti-communist, "For the 2020 U.S. presidential election, the security committee [of the CCP] has given very clear instructions that it is not permissible for Trump to win the 2020 election."

Guo has said that Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan gave him the details recently in Beijing. More on those in a moment. But just as interesting is Trump's re-election-none other than Xi Jinping himself, through the CCP's tightly controlled National Security Commission. One could be forgiven taunt the Chinese, saying, "The probfor thinking it's a rather personal lem with them waiting, however, is matter for Xi.

China's Four-Point Plan

to Defeat Trump According to Guo, China has "four weapons" to thwart Trump's re-election, and they all involve pro-China

assets within the United States: 1. Wall Street financial leaders: Those leading financiers have made a fortune raising capital to fuel China's economic development at the hands of the CCP, and have no interest in losing the tremendous cashflow. 2. Corrupt Washington lobbyists and

the CCP's pocket for years, and will tinues to tighten, trade volume with be called upon to help defeat Trump. of the CCP's so-called "anti-Trump the Eurozone is falling, and Trump's 3. Mainstream media and social mehigher tariffs on China's remaining dia outlets: These anti-Trump forces at least Trump won the Republican are already well-known and already slavishly serve China's anti-Trump narrative to the American people. They include Google, Facebook, The rupt politicians, the mainstream New York Times, and The Wall Street

Americans: These groups have One would assume that the Chinesesignificant financial influence Are we absolutely crystal clear on that? Xi Jinping and the CCP have United States to win a second term. According to a recent interview And China's American colluders have

China Slow-Walking

the Negotiations That certainly explains why China appears to not be in any hurry to reach an agreement with the United States on a trade deal. Recall that in late July, a deal seemed all but done, but after China reneged on its agreement to buy U.S. soybeans, the U.S. announced higher tariffs on China's remaining the person running the effort to stop \$300 billion worth of imports, effectively killing the negotiations.

Trump sees through the rather transparent plan and has used it to that if and when I win, the deal that they [China] get will be much tougher than what we are negotiating now ... on it.

If the information from Guo is reliable, it doesn't appear that a trade deal with China will be made, or even outcome of our next election. should be made.

China's Plan Shows How

Desperate the CCP Really Is The four-weapon plan as laid out is as impressive as it is revelatory. Undoubtedly, China can leverage all of those assets mentioned and likely **political leaders:** They have been in more. But will it be enough?

weapons" were called into use since nomination for president, if not even earlier, when he announced his candidacy. Wall Street financiers, cormedia, and the social media technofascists at Facebook and Google were all anti-Trump all the time in 2016. American groups were leveraged

And yet, Trump still won.

What's more, China faces growing food shortages and rising prices. African swine fever has decreased pork supplies—a Chinese staple—by 20 percent across all 31 autonomous regions and provinces. Making matters worse, crops are being ravaged by a growing armyworm infestation, which is expected to be nationwide by mid-2020. China needs the American agricultural heartland–the very same states that supported Trump in 2016–to feed its population.

The larger picture is that we now know just how devastating Trump's policies have been and continue to be for China. As we discussed last year, they're pushing China closer to the edge of internal instability every day. That's why the CCP is trying to break Trump's political support, to stop his anti-CCP policies, no matter what hardship it puts upon the Chinese people. The Party's very survival may depend

For China, this is the real context of the 2020 election. For Americans, it's an international plot to dictate the

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Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

ECONOMY

China Faces Economic Collapse and Decoupling From World Markets, Expert Says

OLIVIA LI

resident Donald Trump announced on Twitter on Aug. 23 a new round of raising tariffs, on \$550 billion worth of Chinese goods, and he told U.S. companies to move their operations out of China. China expert Frank Xie believes that when the trade war has escalated to this level, it will bring devastating consequences to China's economy, but won't have a major impact on the United States.

In an interview with the Chineselanguage edition of The Epoch Times, Frank Xie, an associate professor at the University of South Carolina's School of Business Administration, said that when this latest tariff increase is imposed, the United States and China will become completely decoupled economically.

"The Chinese communist regime has been trying to drag [the trade talks] out to give itself more time, and the Trump administration is fully aware of that. In addition, Beijing has broken its promises several times. They promised to buy agricultural products, but later changed their mind. At a certain point, they even promised to buy large quantities of agricultural products, but they did not make any purchase thereafter. They have certainly irritated the American people," Xie said.

"President Trump doesn't trust the Chinese communist regime anymore. That is why he keeps increasing tariffs on Chinese goods." Xie believes the Chinese Com-

munist Party (CCP) is eyeing the European market because it's losing the U.S. market.

President Trump attended the G-7 nmit (held from Aug. 24 to Aug 26 in France), where he sought to reach a consensus with European leaders. The European Union is expected to demand the same terms from China as the United States has obtained through the trade talks,

Based on Xie's analysis, Japan and the UK will certainly take the same stance as the United States. Italy is

From the upper to the middle level of the CCP, they all know that no matter how they try to procrastinate, there isn't much time left before the Chinese regime is hit hard by the trade war.

Frank Xie, associate professor, University of South Carolina's School of **Business Administration**

President Donald Trump

attends a bilateral

in Osaka, Japan, on

June 29, 2019.

the only G-7 country that has participated in China's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR, also known as Belt and Road) initiative. However, Italy is in the process of forming a new government, which may very likely withdraw from the OBOR, Xie said. "In the European Union, the next battleground of the U.S.-China trade war, the battle has just begun I think the European Union will eventually stand by the side of the United States," he said. He pointed out that if the CCP

loses the American, European, and Japanese markets, essentially the whole world is shutting the door to China, and it will return to the "closed country" state.

> In Xie's opinion, China has basically lost its last chance in the trade talks, and the CCP has no other choice but to continue to fight stubbornly and desperately and at the expense of Chinese consumers.

> "From the upper to the middle level of the CCP, they all know that no matter how they try to procrastinate, there isn't much time left before the Chinese regime is hit hard by the trade war," Xie said. "What we'll see next is capital flight, and many CCP officials will accelerate their plans to leave China."

Trade War Is Devastating to China but Not the US

According to Xie, the trade war will have little impact on the U.S. economy. "This is because China's retaliatory tariff increases are mostly imposed on automobiles, auto parts, petroleum and agricultural products. Actually, China won't be able to restrict the imports of these products because it has a high reliance and demand for them," he said.

easily replace Chinese imports with products from other countries.

"The key issue is whether there are options," Xie said. "China cannot produce most of the imports from the United States."

meeting with China's "For China to impose tariffs on leader Xi Jinping during American imports, this would only the G20 leaders summit increase purchase prices for Chinese consumers; it's a suicidal act,"

Xie said. "For the United States, consumer reliance on Chinese products is essentially about a preference for bargains, and almost all Chinese products can be replaced with imports from other countries. Therefore the impact is completely manageable."

More importantly, the restructuring of the global supply chain, with companies moving manufacturing out of China, is devastating to China's economy.

Xie pointed out that it has become clear the trade war will be a prolonged confrontation between the two countries, and the supply chain will continue to shift from China to other countries. Most notably, Taiwan, Vietnam, Bangladesh, South Korea, and India are replacing China's role as the biggest global manufacturing hub. As a result, in the near future, tens of millions of Chinese workers will be out of a job.

In addition, the decline in China's exports to the United States will drastically reduce China's trade surplus, which in turn will exhaust China's foreign exchange reserves. The Chinese regime's ability to intervene in the yuan exchange rate will also decrease as a result. It will then trigger a new round of bubbles bursting, such as a housing market crash, banks going bankrupt, and a credit crisis.

"China's economy will decline. From the bursting of the real estate bubble, to higher unemployment, to the deterioration of the entire economic environment, combined with inflation, the Chinese economy is facing an almost complete collapse," Xie predicted.

Another important insight gained through the U.S.-China trade war is that the CCP has revealed its true nature in its tit-for-tat tariff retalia tions, Xie said.

"The United States, from the government to the common people, has come to realize that the CCP is an evil regime. It doesn't hesitate to sacrifice the interests of the Chinese people for the sake of its own survival.'

Epoch Times reporter Li Xinan contributed to this report.

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Stephen Bannon on Huawei and the Communist China Threat



IRENE LUO & JAN JEKIELEK

uawei is the greatest national security threat that America has ever faced-even greater than the threat of nuclear war-according to former White House chief strategist Stephen

The Chinese company Huawei, the world's largest telecommunications equipment maker, has close ties to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Bannon noted, and it is vying for control of 5G, the fifth generation of cellular mobile communications.

"The backbone of the future of technology is 5G," Bannon said in an interview with The Epoch Times' program "American Thought Leaders." "Right now, the path that Huawei's taking, as a front for the PLA, is to basically take over the networks and the components throughout the world. If we allow this to happen even for a couple more years, Huawei is going to control basically the communications systems of the West, and therefore will be able to control the West."

Under the laws in communist China, companies have to cooperate with Chinese authorities and grant access to data when asked. U.S. legislators have highlighted the fact that Huawei equipment could be used by Beijing to engage in espionage or disrupt communication networks.

"Huawei is a methodology, a high-tech methodology to basically have domination over the world," Bannon said. In his view, Huawei expanded its business largely under the radar for years. It now operates in more than 170 countries across the globe and serves more than 3 billion people, according to the Huawei website.

The threat of Huawei is spotlighted in a new film, "Claws of the Red Dragon," which was executive produced by Bannon. The plot of the film was largely inspired by the 2018 arrest of the chief financial officer of Huawei, Meng Wanzhou, who is also the daughter of Huawei's founder. In the indictments, U.S. prosecutors charged Huawei with stealing trade secrets from T-Mobile and violating sanctions against Iran.

The film calls attention to the intimate relationship between telecom giant Huawei and the CCP and highlights the regime's hegemonic ambitions.

"People will be shocked when they see it," Bannon said. The 54-minute film, which will be released in September, is being dis-

Steve Bannon, former White House chief strategist and former executive chairman of Breitbart News, at his home in Washington on Aug. 23, 2019.

tributed by New Tang Dynasty Television. Huawei, Bannon said, isn't a "fine cor-

porate citizen," as they would have people believe. Instead, "it's a branch of the People's Liberation Army. It's an intelligence branch." Bannon, the former executive chairman of Breitbart, is currently chairman of the Both organizations focus on the commu-

The film, Bannon said, will "cause a lot of controversy. It's going to cause a lot of conversation. That's what we want."

The Culpability of Corporate America The indictments of Meng and Huawei speak

of decades-long abuses, so "why did both the Bush and the Obama administration kind of look the other way, while investigators at the Department of Justice and other places were pursuing this?" Bannon said.

"Every administration, every president of both political parties," he said, has "folded when it came into the spotlight with the Chinese" and allowed the Chinese communist regime to freely renege on its promises. In Bannon's view, the crux of the problem

was the marriage of corporate America and "Here's the analogy I make: Wall Street

is the investor relations department for the Chinese Communist Party, because they're the ones that raise capital for them. The corporations are the lobbyists," Bannon said.

"The tragedy and the crime," in Bannon's view, are the corporate elites who have knowingly chosen to look the other way in the face of egregious human rights abuses

"They know all of it, and they don't care." Involvement with the Chinese regime "means more money. It means higher stock prices. It means lower slave labor [costs],"

"Wall Street's the cheerleader. And corporate America has been the lobbyist."

"They have no moral authority. They have totally bought into a system that's completely corrupt, and they know all about it," Bannon said. Yet, they "mock Donald Trump and say, oh, he's the barbarian. He's the wild man. He's the disruptor to the system."

In the end, Bannon said, "the blood and guilt is on their hands," because they sought to profit from a close relationship with the Chinese ruling regime.

"And it's the working men and women in the middle class in this country [who] have paid the price," Bannon said.

Week 36, 2019 THE EPOCH TIMES

"Over the past 20 years, we've de-industrialized the United States, and we shipped those manufacturing jobs to China," Bannon said. And in return, "they sent in the opioids Rule of Law Society and co-founder of the and the fentanyl to go into the old manufac-Committee on the Present Danger: China. turing areas in Ohio and Pennsylvania and nist China threat to the West, as well as the ers, mired in depression and hopelessness Chinese regime's suppression of the Chinese about future job prospects, have been especially vulnerable to this influx of drugs from China.

"This is not just a crisis. It's a tragedy of the United States," Bannon said. Wall Street and the corporate elites are "going to be held accountable by history for what went on in this time and place, what went on in China, and what they knew about and looked the other way."

"Donald Trump, the central reason he's president is this: He said, we have to return America to her former greatness. We have to make America great again. And the way we're going to do that [is] we're going to confront the [CCP]. Wall Street has shipped those jobs over there, and I am going to bring them back," Bannon said.

In Bannon's view, Trump is the first president to take a strong stance against the Chinese communist regime.

On Aug. 23, Trump raised existing tariffs even higher and ordered U.S. companies to exit China, after Beijing announced retaliatory tariffs on \$75 billion of U.S. goods.

It was a "warning shot" to corporate America, Bannon said, to bring their manufacturing supply chains back to the United States. The move has caused controversy among people who don't believe the president's mandate includes the power to order pri-

vate corporations out of China. "He does have emergency powers," enumerated in the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977, Bannon said. The president has threatened to declare a national emergency to force U.S. businesses to cut ties with China.

Many people don't have a clear understanding of the ruling Chinese regime, Bannon said. Advocates of free trade, in Bannon's view, are well-intentioned, but they often "have this kind of soft, gauzy notion that they read in Adam Smith about free trade, not understanding that you have a gangster organization that runs a totalitarian mercantilist state."

For decades, Americans were made to be-



lieve a lie, Bannon said–namely that once China entered the World Trade Organization, received Most Favored Nation status, became wealthier, and started to develop a middle class, then China would gradually democratize and become more of a free market with rule of law.

Yet "we've seen the exact opposite. In the past 20 years, the CCP has become more radical," Bannon said.

"Why is that? Because they have a totalitarian system" where the elite "essentially skims the money off the top." Bannon said.

"You go to Belgravia, you go to the West End of London–a lot of that is Chinese money," Bannon said, and "not from the Chinese people, not from the hardworking 'Old Hundred Names' that breaks his back every day in a factory for a buck a day. That's from the elites in the [CCP] that have skimmed the money off the top of the slave labor of China, money-laundered it through banks and investment banks, and bought

real estate and hard assets in the West." "The Chinese Communist Party is the Frankenstein monster created by the elites in the West–the capital provided by the elites in the West, the technology that's provided by the elites in the West," Bannon said.

"At Breitbart, for years, we were talking about the threat of, not a rising China, [but] the threat of the [CCP] and how it's getting more radicalized over time and how it had hegemonic designs on the world.

"The people of China are some of the most hardworking, decent people on earth. They're enslaved by a radical totalitarian surveillance state of the Chinese Communist Party and really a radical cadre inside that Communist Party that suppresses, enslaves the Chinese people.'

The nature of the Chinese regime becomes especially clear, in Bannon's view, in the way the police are treating the Hong Kong protesters.

"When you see the tear gas, you see the beatings, you see the rubber bullets, you see exactly what they are. This is a gangster A protester is detained at Causeway Bay in Hong Kong on Aug. 31, 2019, in the latest opposition to a planned extradition law that has since morphed into a wider call for democratic rights in the

semi-autonomous city.

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The film "Claws of the

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"What they've done to the Uyghurs, what

dividual rights," Bannon said.

they've done to the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan Buddhists, what they've done to the Evangelical Christians, what they've done to Falun Gong, what they've done to the underground Catholic Church is unacceptable," Bannon said. "These are criminals that don't abide by any rule of law."

organization that doesn't believe in any in-

The Fight for Freedom

"The defining event I believe in the first half of the 21st century is the freedom of the Chinese people," Bannon said. "I think the freedom of China starts in Hong Kong. I think it's going to spread from there.

"The people in Hong Kong are among the most orderly and decent folks on earth. If you've ever been there, it's basically a rock island with no resources, that the grit and determination of the Chinese people, coupled with English common law, has created the third-greatest capital market in the world," Bannon said.

Historically, Hong Kongers have tended to be apolitical and business-focused, in Bannon's view. Yet now, millions of Hong Kongers have flooded the streets over the past few weeks to protest an extradition bill that would allow the Chinese regime to wantonly extradite Hong Kongers-including dissidents and activists-and sentence them in a Chinese court.

"They're standing up for freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech. They're free-market capitalists. Many of them are Christians. To me, it's very motivating to see young people that are not prepared to back down in the face of totalitarian brutality," Bannon said.

"Those young men and women are exactly what the patriots of 1776 were in the United States. They have the grit, they have the determination, they have the indefatigability. They are not going to back down. They've been tear-gassed, they've been beaten,

they've had rubber bullets shot at them, and time and time again, they show up.

"I think they're heroes of the modern world. I think they deserve to be nominated for and win the Nobel Prize for peace."

The moment that the CCP decides to stamp out the protests like they did with the Tiananmen pro-democracy protesters, the moment the Chinese regime repeats the Tiananmen Square massacre, Bannon said, "that's the beginning of the end of the Chinese Communist Party."

In Bannon's view, China would be swiftly ostracized and shut off from Western technology and capital markets. But more importantly, he said, "I think even with the firewall, the contagion of freedom will start to spread in China."

Eventually, Bannon believes, the Chinese people will stand up and say, "'We've had enough of 100,000 people or 50,000 people ruling a country of 1.4 billion and stealing all our money, stealing all our wealth, taking it for themselves, making us live in a totalitarian surveillance state."

'A Profile in Courage'

"Only the Chinese people can free the Chinese people," Bannon said. But people in the West can help by putting the spotlight on the Chinese regime's brutal persecution of dissidents and religious believers.

The Huawei exposé film, "Claws of the Red Dragon," seeks to inform people around the world about the opaque inner workings of the Chinese communist state—where major corporations are deeply influenced by the Chinese regime.

In the film, Canadian government officials grapple with whether they should hold the Chinese regime accountable, when doing so could potentially endanger Canadian citizens in China. China arrested two Canadians and charged them with espionage last December, a move that has largely been seen as retaliation for Canada's arrest of Huawei's Meng.

"Claws of the Red Dragon" is "a profile in courage," Bannon said, that highlights the difficult moral dilemmas that ordinary individuals face in confronting a goliath regime like the Chinese Communist Party. It's a "tense situation where people are making moral trade-offs all the time."

"I think it's a very powerful film, and I'm very proud to be associated with it," Ban-

"The pursuit of truth and pursuit of your higher moral self comes at a great cost. It's just like in Hong Kong. There is a huge cost they are paying. They're being jailed. They're being beaten. They are being [told] your careers are ruined, your careers are finished. This is a high cost in the modern society, and yet they refuse to back down," he said.

Correction: A previous version of this

article incorrectly identified the law from which President Trump derives emergency powers to order companies out of China. The correct law is the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977. The Epoch Times regrets the error.

"American Thought Leaders" is an Epoch Times show available on Facebook, You-Tube, and the Epoch Times website.



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JORGE SILVA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

China Weaponizes Social Media to Sway Perceptions on Hong Kong Protests



Pedestrians walk past a computer showing the login page for Facebook in Hong Kong on May 14, 2012.

EVA FU

he continuing protests in Hong Kong are highlighting how the Chinese regime uses Western social media to push its propaganda in a bid to shape public opinion abroad.

Last week, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube suspended hundreds of accounts linked to a Chinese regime information operation seeking to undermine the protest movement in Hong Kong.

In addition, Twitter banned statecontrolled media from advertising on he platform, while YouTube has started labeling videos on its Hong Kong site to clarify whether the channel that's posting them has government funding. Videos by Chinese state media now appear with an information panel that reads, "funded in whole or in part by the Chinese government."

The moves mark a growing recognition of the influence campaign launched by the regime on social media to shape the narrative surrounding the Hong Kong protests, which Beijing has portrayed as the work of "terrorists," fomented by Western powers and "radical forces."

Expanding Social Media Reach

While Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are blocked in China under the Great Firewall, the regime has sought to leverage the platforms. Chinese leader Xi Jinping has repeatedly directed leaders in the regime's propaganda apparatus to "tell China's story well, and properly disseminate China's voice."

Regular users in China, meanwhile, may only access such blocked sites through virtual private networks (VPN)-programs commonly used to bypass China's internet blockade, by making it appear as though a user is located outside of China–facing risks of fines, arrests, and detention.

Sarah Cook, a senior China research analyst at Freedom House, said the system is predicated on a fundamental double

"You have ordinary citizens in China that are in some cases arrested, or even imprisoned, in addition to them being blocked from using these platforms," she told The Epoch Times.

"Then you clearly have that, the [state media outlets] CGTN, Xinhua, Global Times, and People's Daily, who are given permissions, are using VPNs, and even have an open internet connection, and their job is to post this stuff, to 'promote China's voices around the world."

"It really undermines any kind of reasoning the Chinese government can give to why these are blocked and ... exposes

It's The Chinese government | really actively trying to sow disinformation and twist opinions by fabricated stories.

Sarah Cook, senior research analyst at Freedom House

A Facebook post comparing

company exposed a network

back to the Chinese regime,

Hong Kong protesters

to ISIS terrorists. The

of accounts that traced

which spread misleading

how politicized it is, and how it's really about the Chinese government controlling the information, leading the narrative, and monopolizing it," she said.

Sonny Lo, a political science professor at the University of Hong Kong, said the Chinese regime has turned technology into "a tool of socio-political hegemony" to ensure that people are "sticking to the correct political line of thought."

"Mass media are expected to be the servant of the state rather than a fifth branch of government to check governmental powers," he told The Epoch Times in an

externally to "win the hearts and minds" of people outside of China, Lo said.

Recent tender documents by state-run media China News Service show the outlet offered hundreds of thousands of dollars to boost its followers on Twitter and

The public documents dated Aug. 16, which have now been taken offline, offered 1.25 million yuan (\$176,461) for services that would increase the outlet's Twitter followers by 580,000, and 1.2 million yuan (\$169,403) to boost its Facebook following by 670,000.

ECNS.cn, the English portal of China News Service, has about 592,900 followers on Twitter and 1.2 million followers on Facebook.

In June 2015, China's state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) also sought to procure services to expand its Facebook influence.

The Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, China's top internet regulator, put out similar tenders in May 2018 and on Aug. 19, to carry out "online promotion of crucial topics." The tender documents did not provide further detail about what this would entail. The amount of the two bids





Cook said that by boosting their social media following, the outlets would be able to appear more convincing as established

authoritative news voices. "When ... you see tens of millions of people following, then you feel like this is pretty credible," she said.

Cook said that it isn't mere coincidence for Chinese state media to choose social media such as Facebook and Twitter as an avenue to reach people globally, given how powerful and personalized the plat-

"It's a new frontier," Cook said. "It gives This strategy includes using social media roots in society and public in other coun-

Influencing Perceptions of Protests

During recent Hong Kong protests, outlets such as CGTN, the English-language branch of CCTV, have been consistently posting information that attempts to undermine the movement.

One Aug. 28 CGTN video with English and Chinese subtitles portrayed protesters as terrorists who disrupted Hong Kong's peace and prosperity, with no mention of complaints of excessive use of force by police that have triggered concerns in the international community.

Similar stories and images have flooded internet platforms lately, both inside and outside of China, prompting Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to suspend thousands of Chinese accounts that they found "manipulative."

"It's [the Chinese government] really actively trying to sow disinformation and twist opinions by fabricated stories,"

"They build a following, then when something comes up like this that really matters to them, they use these established channels of disseminating information to reach all of these audiences."

It remains unclear how effective China's social media campaign has been–a majority of the posts have seen very little engagement. However, the campaign's active and visible presence can still leave a footprint, Cook said.

A 2016 study by a researcher from George Washington University found that over a six-year span of increased exposure to Chinese state media, the public sentiment in Africa toward the Chinese government became more positive and more aligned with the official narrative.

"Seeing their feed on a day to day basis ... subconsciously you'd think in your mind: China, the land of Pandas and bullet trains, and definitely not the torture and torture and killing and detention centers," Cook said.

CHINESE REGIME

Xi Issues Stern Warning to Hong Kong Government

OLIVIA LI

The ongoing Hong Kong protests have posed one of the largest political challenges for Beijing.

The Chinese Communist Party leadership is scrambling to resolve the crisis before Oct. 1, the Party's 70th anniversary of its takeover of China, according to an insider source in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, citizens prepare more strikes, rallies, and demonstrations to pressure the Hong Kong government into withdrawing a proposed extradition bill they believe embodies Beijing's ever-increasing encroachment on the city's affairs.

The source, who is the son of a Party elder, attended an Aug. 19 meeting of Beijing's representatives in Hong Kong, during which a message from Party leader Xi Jinping was conveyed: He is displeased with the way the Hong Kong government has handled protests, as it has intensified clashes and made protesters direct their anger toward the central government.

"Whoever created this mess will have to fix it. They are not allowed to create any more pressure for the central government," Xi's message stated, according to the source. He shared meeting details with the Hong Kong bureau of The Epoch Times on condition of anonymity.

On Aug. 18, the day before the meeting, more than 1.7 million Hongkongers braved heavy rain to participate in a mass rally and march.

Since June, protesters have demanded that the Hong Kong government withdraw an extradition bill that would allow anyone living or traveling in Hong Kong to be transferred to China for trial if Beijing names the person as a criminal suspect. Many fear that the proposal would leave individuals vulnerable to China's opaque judicial system, with its disregard for rule of

As Hongkongers marched, high ranking officials from various Chinese national agencies-including the Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of National Security, Ministry of Information, and the military's General Political and General Staff departments—all watched the events in Hong Kong unfold live, according to the source. Later that day, Xi held an internal meeting with some top officials in Beijing.

There, Xi gave a speech, his first official statement regarding the Hong Kong protests, according to the source.

His speech was then conveyed in Hong Kong the following day, which was attended by Party officials in charge of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office–Beijing's top agency for handling those territories; the Liaison Office, Beijing's representative office in Hong Kong; and the People's Liberation Army garrison in Hong Kong.

Xi had also said that whoever handles the Hong Kong protests must make sure dissent doesn't spread to mainland China–and that protesters don't target the Chinese central gov-

"Xi said these are the two outcomes he is most unwilling to see," the source

Chinese premier Li Keqiang's words were also relayed at the Beijing internal meeting. According to the source, Li stated his criticism of the Hong Kong government more directly. "Carrie Lam is not trustworthy at all," he said, referring to the city's chief executive and head of the Hong Kong government. "She has misled central authorities."

The source explained that Li reprimanded Lam and other Hong Kong officials for repeatedly misleading Beijing into believing that they could easily tackle and quell the protests.

Factional Infighting?

The source said he believed both Xi

Chinese leader and Li's words implied that Beijing's Xi Jinping and representatives in Hong Kong are not Hong Kong's loyal to Xi, adding that Wang Zhimin, Chief Executive the current director of the Liaison Of-Carrie Lam talk fice, has close ties to Zeng Qinghong, during the Asiaformer Chinese vice chair and mem-Pacific Economic Cooperation ber of the Politburo Standing Commitleaders' summit tee, the Party's highest-level decisionin Danang, central making body. Vietnam, on Nov. 10, 2017.

Zeng is known as the former righthand man for former Party leader Jiang Zemin. In recent years, Xi's anti-corruption campaign has purged trol the situation, including by shutscores of officials loyal to Jiang, who ting down internet access, restricting two days after protesters broke into the

Although he is retired, Chinese political observers believe Zeng is still an influential political figure in Hong Kong affairs today.

"At the end of the conveyance meeting, the directors and officials from the Liaison Office looked very upset," the source stated. Spokespersons from both the Li-

aison Office and the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office have made public statements in support of Lam, and have described the protesters as "rioters" and "arrogant lunatics." This has drawn anger from protesters. The source further revealed that the

Liaison Office itself is very divided between officials from different areas of China. There is the Guangdong Province faction, the Fujian Province faction, and the Beijing faction. They disrespect one another and compete for power, the source said.

For example, the central government in Beijing has allocated more funds to the Liaison Office in recent years, intended for "maintaining stability"quelling dissent–in Hong Kong. The different factions often confront one another about allocation of funds, and accuse each other of not using the money for its stated purposes, the source said.

Lam Again Under Fire

[Xi Jinping] is

displeased with

the way the Hong

Kong government

has handled

protests, as it

has intensified

made protesters

direct their anger

toward the central

clashes and

government.

Lam has recently drawn censure again for her comments, angering many protesters and the city legislature's pro-democracy camp.

At a press conference on Aug. 27, when asked by a reporter whether she would consider exercising the Emergency Regulations Ordinance to resolve the crisis—a law that grants the chief executive broad powers to make arrests, stop communications, and issue punishment during "occasions of emergency or public danger"-Lam's

vague response ignited criticism. She didn't deny or confirm whether she would invoke the law; she only noted that her government would consider all "existing laws."

"All of Hong Kong's laws, if they can provide a rule of law measure to stop the violence and chaos, the government has the responsibility to look at

Protesters fear that invoking this law would give Lam a free hand to conpress, and prosecuting dissenters.

(Below) Graffiti and umbrellas outside the main chamber of the Legislative

Council in Hong Kong on July 3, 2019.

(Bottom) Graffiti in the Legislative Council in Hong Kong on July 3, 2019,



ANTHONY WALLACE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES





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