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CCP Fostering Convergence Media As Strategic Industry 中共扶植融媒體作為戰略產業

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I. News Highlights

On August 18, 2020, People's Daily Online and China National Computer Network and Information Security Management Center signed a strategic partnership agreement. Both parties will promote the development of convergence media industry in fields like data security and public sentiment analysis. As a convergence media platform operating under People's Daily, People's Daily Online has been working with organizations like Baidu, China Unicom, Communication University of China, China Publishing Group Digital Media on technology, talents and marketing.

On the basis of these partnerships, People's Daily Online has been able to consolidate resources to develop more media functions and thus has become the iconic convergence medium which continues to top the China Media Convergence communication Index. It is worth noticing that People's Daily Online has formed a strategic partnership with a governmental technical department while sharing resources with each other, reflecting that the CCP has been actively upgrading the competitiveness of convergence media and continuously expanding the industry's reach in order to make the most of the strategic impact of its internal and external propaganda.¹

II. Security Implications

1. Convergence media has been elevated to a strategic level

The CCP has faced internal and external issues in recent years. In order to strengthen its control of public opinion, the CCP has proposed a number of measures, such as the "Regulations on the Ecological Governance of Network Information Content" on the legal side, internet policing and deployment of content censors on the operational side. Convergence media is also one of its means. In 2014, the CCP officially included the concept of media convergence in its policy documents. In 2017, the term convergence media was adopted by Xinhua News Agency for the first time. In 2019, Xi Jinping once again emphasized the importance of convergence media in journal *Qiushi* and listed it as a subject for collective

¹ 《人民網》簽署戰略合作協議·參見〈國家計算機網絡與信息安全中心與人民網簽署戰略合作協議〉·《人民網》·2020年8月19日·<https://reurl.cc/KjALj>；〈百度和人民日報達成戰略合作 打造符合黨媒資訊推薦產品〉·《中國新聞網》·2018年6月12日·<https://reurl.cc/4mavXR>；〈人民網與中國聯通簽署戰略合作協定 共建「智媒平台」〉·《人民網》·2020年4月9日·<https://reurl.cc/9XrL1v>；〈人民網發布內容聚合分發業務戰略〉·《人民網》·2019年9月12日·<https://reurl.cc/av98aY>；中國媒體融合傳播指數·參見〈《2019年媒體融合傳播指數總報告》發布 中央媒體繼續領跑〉·《人民網》·2020年4月30日·<https://reurl.cc/WL36yL>。



learning for the Politburo, making it obvious that convergence media is already an important industry at a national level.

In addition to the large-scale development of the industry, the CCP's support for convergence media also covers the industrial chain. There are two key objectives of its support: one is pool efforts to grow its Communist influence. The CCP uses the official media outlets as the main base for media development. As expressed by the motto "party media show faith in the party," the CCP uses this loyalty as the foundation to achieve Xi Jinping's blueprint for "building several new media groups with powerful capabilities, communication power, credibility, and influence." Take the People's Daily for example. In addition to the self-built online platform People's Daily Online, accounts were also set up on other platforms, such as People's Daily WeChat official account and People's Daily Facebook fan page. The CCP leverages group operations (see the appendix) to expand the influence of convergence media, which is more conducive to centralized control of public opinion.

The other is to fully exert its Communist will. The key to the CCP's control of convergence media lies in the central kitchen model. In the central kitchens of various convergence media groups, the presiding chefs purchase "politically correct" materials all together in accordance with the instructions of the CPC Central Committee, and then deliver them to the next stage of processing. The CCP uses this controllable content production line to ensure that the issues edited and reported by convergence media are in line with political requirements. For example, the Convergence Media Editorial Department of CCTV has a Global Reporters' Real-Time Publishing Platform which offers drafts and audio-visual materials screened by the editor-in-chief in its back end for reporters to use and publish in real time.²

2. Use innovative technology to deliver political messages

Under the overarching premise that the content should be politically correct, convergence media is expected by the CCP to be the "new mainstream media with diversified forms, advanced techniques and competitiveness." The central kitchen of convergence media utilizes integrated technical resources (such as audio-visual, animation, graphic designing and other software and hardware equipment), and interdisciplinary professionals (such as programmers, sound engineers, etc.) to produce different types of products through collaboration. In other words, convergence media has changed the dogmatic text messaging method used by the Chinese Communist Party's official media in the past, and developed multimedia propaganda techniques by leveraging graphics, audios, videos, and animations, showing advantages of integration across different disciplines.

In order to enhance the effectiveness of integrated media promotion, the CCP has applied technologies for more diverse user experiences in addition to innovative expression methods. For example, CCTV's integrated media platform "Yangshipin" (CCTV Video) has launched a series of slow (marathon-like) live streaming programs featuring long hours and thorough live streaming. During the pandemic, a special program called "24 Hours of the Epidemic"

² 媒體融合概念·參見〈習近平：推動傳統媒體新興媒體融合 強化互聯網思維〉·《人民網》·2014年8月19日·<https://reurl.cc/od1gED>；融媒體首見官媒·參見〈劉雲山：為黨的十九大召開營造良好輿論氛圍〉·《新華網》·2017年3月23日·<https://reurl.cc/py1z5b>；習近平於《求是》撰文·參見〈加快推動媒體融合發展 構建全媒體傳播格局〉·《求是》·2019年3月15日·<https://reurl.cc/3LoazM>；全球記者即時發稿平臺·參見〈推動媒體融合 中央媒體強勢出擊〉·《中國記協網》·2017年4月7日·<https://reurl.cc/ld50Vq>。



attracted more than 100 million people to watch the construction of hospitals. The publicity success was evident. The same approach has recently been adopted to broadcast the water level of the Three Gorges Dam. The CCP has also strengthened its marketing by building its presence in new creative platforms. For example, Xinhua News Agency created an account on the digital music platform "Kugou Music" to share online playlists with implicit ideological messages. For instance, by launching a playlist called "these are the songs enjoyed by the new youth" resulting in 8.84 million plays, it conveyed its political messages.

The technological innovation of convergence media is powered by the R&D capacity and database behind it. People's Daily Online, a subsidiary of the convergence media group, People's Daily, has been actively working with external parties and has set up a "State Key Laboratory of Dissemination of Content and Awareness." And another convergence media in the group, People's Daily, has also established a "Smart Media Research Institute." The list of directors of the institute indicates its external collaboration networks, including the three major Chinese telecommunications companies - China Telecom, China Mobile, China Unicom - in addition to internet companies like Baidu and ByteDance. In light of this, the convergence media groups supported by the CCP are boosting the competitiveness of their industry by integrating the resources of all parties.³

III. Trend Forecast

1. The integration of internal and external propaganda will become more apparent

The CCP leverages the Communist production line and conveyor belt of convergence media in an attempt to bundle public opinion in China online and offline in an airtight manner, and to deliver messaging in unison by linking internal and external propaganda. The CCP's use of convergence media to create a successful image in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 pandemic is an example of this. One of these approaches is the export of internal propaganda. For example, Xinhua News Agency built a multi-language publishing mechanism on its convergence media platform to export news overseas. It also adopts licensing partnership. For example, Xinhua News Agency collaborates with the African news website News Ghana to publish on its website news from Xinhua News Agency in original texts as a way to expand the scope of the CCP's propaganda.

The second approach is the coordination of internal and external propaganda. Observation shows that the Twitter accounts of China's diplomatic system usually use official Chinese media news such as "Xinhua News Agency" and "People's Daily" as the main source for retweets. When the spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Zhao Lijian blamed on Twitter that the U.S. military had brought the virus to Wuhan, the convergence media platform under the Xinhua News Agency published an article titled "Zhao Lijian, please continue to raise questions!" It is apparent that the CCP is trying to achieve effectiveness of integrated internal and external propaganda through coordinated internal and external actions.⁴

³ 慢直播·參見〈央視網推出系列慢直播報道傳遞戰「疫」信心〉·《央視網》·2020年2月7日·<https://reurl.cc/pyx1Gr> ;
《新華社》入駐酷狗音樂·參見〈新華社、人民網等入駐「酷狗超人」·首發歌單突破1500萬收聽〉·《中國日報中文網》·2020年6月8日·<https://reurl.cc/3L5ozV> ; 智慧媒體研究院·參見〈人民日報智慧媒體研究院成立〉·《人民網》·2019年9月20日·<https://reurl.cc/zzWZ3e> .

⁴ 新聞授權合作·參見“Africans hail China's efforts in curbing COVID-19, keen to learn its experience,” *News Ghana*, March 19, 2020, <https://reurl.cc/3Ljk8M> ; 趙立堅發言與後續效應·參見〈中國推動陰謀論·稱新冠病毒可能源自美國〉·



2. Convergence media will become a new tool for united front strategies against Taiwan

By constant innovation and integration, the operational goal of convergence media is to "tell the Chinese story right." "Collaboration with external parties" is its important business strategy and industry characteristic. For example, the collaboration between People's Daily Online and the national technology department implies the presence of state level technical capacity support. What's more, this further indicates that through People's Daily Online, the CCP can stay on top of the first-hand public opinion dynamics and collect data on media usage habits and electronic footprint records of its audience. In turn, the data collected can be used for data analysis and technology development to aid the CCP to conduct its social control projects at larger scale.

As mentioned before, the "collaboration with external parties" of convergence media may be charged with multiple political tasks. On July 16, 2020, the first cross-strait convergence media center was established in Guangzhou. It was initiated by the CCP Media Group "Guangdong Yangcheng Evening News Digital Media" and the Taiwanese non-governmental organization "China Youth New Media Association." China's Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council sent a congratulatory letter and described this move "promotes the convergence of cross-strait media" and emphasized the importance of the youth community for the convergence. It is worth noting that the CCP's promotion of cross-strait media convergence is colored by its united front strategies. On the one hand, it uses convergence media as a tentacle to collect the digital media usage habits of Taiwanese people, especially young people, as preparation for united front operations. On the other hand, the CCP uses the media as an interface not only to attract Taiwan's technology and talents, but also to capture the channels of Taiwan's media communication. Even a CCP's convergence media content industry chain against Taiwan can be built to facilitate the CCP's news processing and public opinion manipulation. It may become a powerful cornerstone for the CCP to launch a united front infiltration campaign against Taiwan.⁵

IV. Policy Suggestion

Digital transformation of the media is driven by the times. However, what's special about convergence media is that it is the CCP's policy tool to promote digitalized propaganda. It is recommended that relevant government agencies should pay close attention to CCP's united front operations under the disguise of convergence media, and publicly expose its operating methods in a transparent manner. Citizens' media literacy and democratic consciousness should be enhanced with the prerequisite that freedom of speech is upheld.

《紐約時報中文網》· 2020年3月15日 · <https://reurl.cc/8noopX> ; 參見〈參考快評| 趙立堅· 請繼續發問!〉· 《參考消息網》· 2020年3月23日 · <https://reurl.cc/D6vyoQ> 。

⁵ 首座兩岸融媒體中心成立· 參見〈「廣東兩岸融媒體中心」正式揭牌〉· 中共中央統一戰線工作部· 2020年7月17日 · <https://reurl.cc/v1g19L> 。



Appendix: The Operation mechanism of the CCP's Major Convergence Media Groups

Convergence media group	People's Daily	Xinhua News Agency	CCTV
Convergence media operating mechanism			
Central kitchen	Central Kitchen	Omnimedia Reporting Platform	Convergence Media Editorial Department
Self-built platform (Including international platform)	People's Daily Online	Xinhuanet	China Network Television
	People's Daily	Xinhuanet	CCTV.com English
Set up accounts on other platforms in China (examples)	People's Daily WeChat official account	Xinhua News Agency WeChat official account	CCTV News Weibo account
	People's Daily Tik Tok account	Xinhua News Agency Kuaishou account	CCTV News Tik Tok account
Set up accounts on international platforms (examples)	People's Daily, China @PDChina Twitter	China Xinhua News @XHNews Twitter	CCTV @CCTV Twitter
	People's Daily, China Facebook 粉絲頁	China Xinhua News Facebook fan page	CCTV Facebook fan page

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