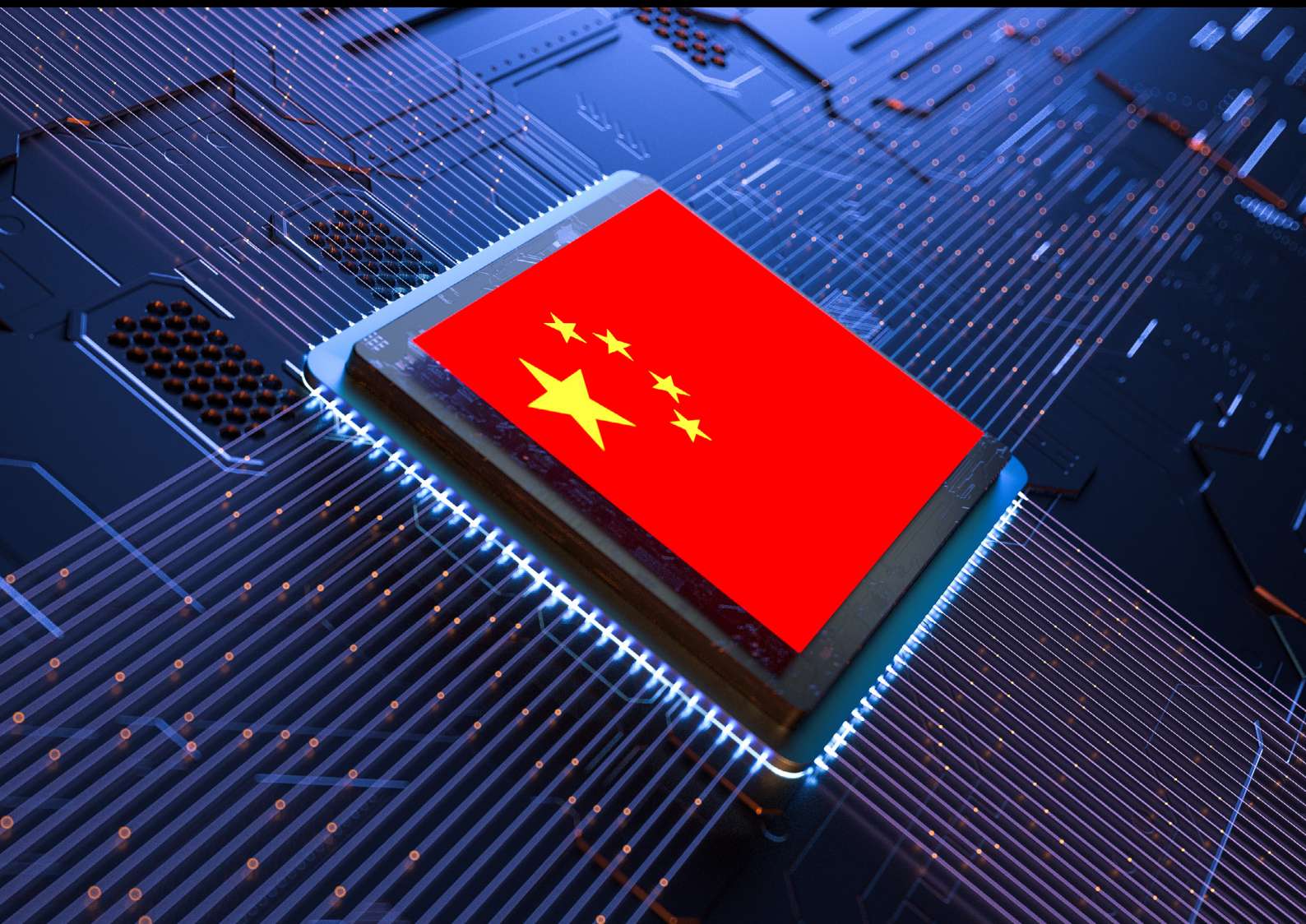


# China's cyber vision

How the Cyberspace Administration of China is building a new consensus on global internet governance

Dr Nathan Attrill and Audrey Fritz



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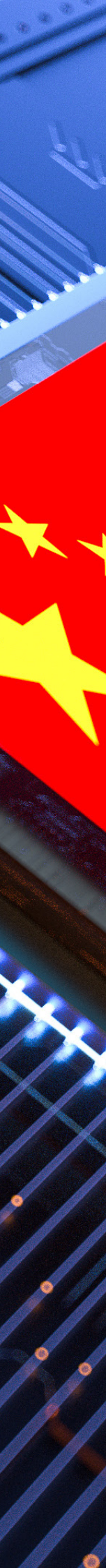


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# Introduction

The potential dangers of the internet as a contested space are well understood by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Hopes that cyberspace would be an unstoppable force for the dissemination of ideas and voices has long faced resistance from Beijing, which took steps to regulate content accessible to its citizens as far back as 1997, only three years after the internet was introduced to the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>1</sup>

The PRC has since developed a sophisticated 'Great Firewall' to block access to multiple foreign websites. Those sites that are allowed, however, are still subject to the same censorship and surveillance as domestic sites and apps. The government actively censors content on Chinese social media platforms, manipulates internet search tools and empowers public security organs to monitor internet access. Despite the dangers, however, the PRC has never sought to withdraw from cyberspace; rather, it seeks to reshape it by developing into a 'cyber superpower' (网络强国). In fact, the Chinese Government sees cyberspace as a key tool for shaping discourse to its advantage—domestically and internationally.

The CCP has a distinct vision for cyberspace that seeks to build a 'community of a common destiny in cyberspace' (网络空间命运共同体).<sup>2</sup> That's no mere slogan—it's a policy that requires building a consensus on the future of who will set the rules, norms and values of the internet. In serving as the leading voice in establishing an international governance system for cyberspace, the CCP hopes for its own domestic governance of the internet to be emulated by multiple other jurisdictions and to reshape global norms. In so doing, the CCP is enabling a division of cyberspace to create one that's susceptible to surveillance and ideological influence.

The World Internet Conference (世界互联网大会) in Wuzhen, which commenced in 2014, is one platform through which the CCP promotes its ideas on internet sovereignty and global governance. The annual forum, organised and hosted by key organisations of China's cyber policy system (网络政策系统), is a deliberate effort to build a co-governance strategy for greater control of online information by nation-states and the adoption of standards and norms developed by the CCP.

Consent-building and co-opting have long been at the heart of CCP rule. We should pay more attention to those in this cyber community and their shared vision for the future of cyberspace. Countries that lack comprehensive cyber regulations should err on the side of caution when engaging with the CCP on ideas for establishing an international cyber co-governance strategy. Although events such as the World Internet Conference appear to be organised by the international community, they're in fact organised directly under the Cyberspace Administration of China—an agency originally born from the former Office of External Propaganda that's responsible for the management of internet information and content throughout the PRC.<sup>3</sup>

# China's cyber policy: a systems approach

Like many important policy areas, cyber policy in the PRC is developed and implemented within a highly organised, national policy system sometimes referred to as a *xitong* (系统).<sup>4</sup> No system is perfect, and the PRC has encountered institutional bottlenecks, jurisdictional overlaps and catastrophic implementation failures in many policy areas. Historically, policy areas and systems could be jointly led by institutions of the CCP and the state, each with its own distinct sphere of influence in policymaking.

Under the leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping, the CCP is said to be 'eating' into responsibilities previously delegated to state institutions (党吃政).<sup>5</sup> The result of this recentring of power into the party is that today's CCP is much more directly involved at all stages of the policy cycle in important policy systems, including foreign affairs, national security, financial and economic affairs, political and legal affairs, and cyber matters. This signals that the Central Committee of the CCP asserts much greater influence over the state bureaucracy in certain policy areas than it did under previous administrations. Understanding its views and composition is critical to contextualising cyber policy outcomes.

The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) has its roots in the former Party Office of External Propaganda, which served under the state 'nameplate'<sup>6</sup> of the State Council Information Office (SCIO). Before Xi's 2014 reforms, the SCIO established the State Internet Information Office (国家互联网信息办公室; SIIO) to operate as SCIO's internet-management subgroup. Following the 2014 reforms, however, the Party Office of External Propaganda was absorbed by the CCP's Central Propaganda Department. The SIIO, previously subordinate to the SCIO, became host to the Party Office of the new Central Cybersecurity and Informatisation Leading Small Group (中央网络安全和信息化领导小组, later upgraded to the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission). The office of this leading group established within the SIIO gained a new English name: the Cyberspace Administration of China.<sup>7</sup>

After 2018, the CAC was placed solely under the authority of the CCP's Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, providing the CAC with clearer lines of authority and overall responsibilities for the entire cyber policy system.<sup>8</sup> This, in effect, makes the CAC the administrative organ of the Central Committee's cyber policies and not merely a type of state regulator, as one might infer from its commonly used Chinese name: the State Internet Information Office.

Zhuang Rongwen (庄荣文; see Figure 1] demonstrates the connections between these institutions, as he currently serves as the Deputy Minister of the Central Propaganda Department, Director of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, and Director of the SIIO.<sup>9</sup> Zhuang had previously served in roles for the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, which is now under the direction of the CCP Central Committee's United Front Work Department.<sup>10</sup>

Reflected in Zhuang's role with the Propaganda Department, the SIIO was established within the propaganda apparatus in order to harness greater control over online content. The CAC has a variety of regulatory powers that sometimes cross into other policy systems, such as propaganda or the economy and finance.<sup>11</sup> As an agency that's now at the forefront of work to achieve Xi's vision of turning the PRC into a cyber superpower and to use that power to shape domestic and international discourse, the CAC's close ties to the Central Propaganda Department raise critical questions about the intentions of the agency as it tries to turn its cyber governance system into a model for others in the international community.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 1: China's cyber policy system



Key:

- Central Committee Institution
- Other CCP institution
- State institution
- Quasi-state institution
- Policy program

Source: ASPI authors' illustration.



## The Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission

The Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission is responsible for ensuring security and promoting Chinese Government interests in cyberspace, in addition to presiding over the CAC.<sup>13</sup> China's cyber policy system is now firmly embedded within the very heart of the CCP's policymaking structures, having been upgraded from a leading small group<sup>14</sup> (a coordinating body that addresses complex policy issues or important tasks involving several different parts of the bureaucracy) to a commission (an institutionalised leading small group that has become central to operating the system that it was created to address) in a major Central Committee restructuring in 2018.<sup>15</sup> Unlike the leading group, which served as an interagency coordinating body for various ministries, the commission is viewed as a more permanent and well-resourced body. The upgrading of the leading group to a commission indicates the central leadership's prioritisation of cybersecurity in its future policies.<sup>16</sup>

## The Cyberspace Administration of China

The CAC, a new interagency regulator tied to the State Council Information Office and under the authority of both the leading small group and the Office of the State Council—which can be referred to as China's 'cabinet'—was established in 2013. It was given responsibility for the management of internet information and content throughout the country, and for supervising and managing the enforcement of laws governing that content.<sup>17</sup>

In English, 'the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC)' is an example of the 'one system, two nameplates' (一个机构两块牌子) principle, characterising the increasing blurring of the lines between party and state institutions. In Chinese, 'the CAC' is two separate offices—one of the party and one of the state—although both operate together under the same individuals as leaders of both institutions.

## Quasi-state institutions

Important quasi-state institutions are also parts of the central cyber policy system. While ostensibly categorised as part of civil society, institutions such as the Cybersecurity Association of China (中国网络安全协会) and the Internet Society of China (中国互联网协会) are more than peak bodies or representative organisations for key cyberspace actors.

The Cybersecurity Association of China explicitly accepts the 'professional guidance, supervision and management of the State Internet Information Office' in its association charter.<sup>18</sup> Both the association and the Internet Society of China are registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (民政部), China's state institution for supervising and managing social organisations.

The chair of the Cybersecurity Association of China, Wang Xiujun (王秀军), was similarly previously a deputy director of both the Office of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission and the State Internet Information Office. The chair of the Internet Society of China, Shang Bing (尚冰), was the former chair and Party Secretary of China Mobile, which is the world's largest mobile network operator by total subscriber numbers.



One of the major roles of the Internet Society of China is to serve as an unofficial regulator of the PRC's internet content laws. Entities in China that wish to obtain a Chinese internet content provider licence (a requirement to obtain a .cn domain) must first sign the 'Public Pledge on Self-Discipline for the Chinese Internet Industry' (中国互联网行业自律公约).<sup>19</sup>

Signatories must promise to inspect and supervise the information on domestic and foreign websites that internet users can access, refuse to allow access to websites that publish 'harmful' information, and mitigate the harmful effects of that information on Chinese internet users.<sup>20</sup> This effectively makes the Internet Society of China a regulator within the cyber policy system, as entities within China must comply with the public pledge in order to operate legally.

Both institutions have the mandate to carry out international exchanges and cooperation and actively participate in international standardisation activities as part of their official business scope.<sup>21</sup>

# What is cyber power for China?

The ability to shape the information environment makes the internet a space fraught with both potential danger and opportunity for the CCP. In any environment without strict party control and management, the potential for free flows of information to destabilise authoritarian regimes like the PRC Government are perceived as great enough to necessitate direct intervention. The CCP's fears of the political impacts of social media aren't just hypothetical—during the Arab Spring and Hong Kong protests, social media played a significant role in mobilising protesters.<sup>22</sup>

In a speech at the first meeting of the Central Leading Group for Cybersecurity in 2014, Xi Jinping said that, for China to be a true 'cyber superpower' (网络强国), it must have its own technology as the source of that power.<sup>23</sup> For the CCP, security from potential threats is paramount. That security can be obtained through power over space, whether it's physical space, such as territory, or conceptual, such as cyberspace.

Being a cyber superpower requires the ability to shape cyberspace, to set the rules and to shape the norms, but there's an acknowledgement by the CCP that China can't yet do so unilaterally. At the 2015 World Internet Conference in Wuzhen, Xi Jinping reiterated that 'China is willing to work with other countries to strengthen dialogue and exchanges, effectively manage differences, and promote the formulation of international rules in cyberspace that are generally accepted by all parties.'<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, cyber power for the PRC is both a matter of *self-help* (developing and harnessing its own technological capabilities to achieve self-reliance) and *co-option* (manufacturing an international consensus on its ideas about global internet governance).

## Cyberspace and party-state security

To make the internet secure for the CCP at home, it's essential that the party shapes the governance of cyberspace beyond China's borders. It's by no means alone in this strategy or intent. The nature of cyberspace as a global phenomenon means that the CCP can't simply rely on its domestic monopoly on power to secure its interests and maintain security. However, not all states have been as clear or as active as China in articulating and securing what they want cyberspace to look like and what laws ideally should govern it. Further, not all states have given effect to policies and ideas through practical actions affecting the functioning and structure of cyberspace and the information within it, as China has.

Policy ideas related to the governance of cyberspace originate at the very core of the party leadership. Xi Jinping heads a powerful supra-ministerial policy coordination and consultation body that sits directly under the Central Committee of the CCP. His personal views on cyber policy—couched in the official party-state ideology of 'Xi Jinping Thought'—are critical to shaping the intent and scope of internet regulation within China and, therefore, also drive proposals for the future of internet governance globally.

Xi understands that an unregulated cyberspace is an unprecedented transformative process that poses a potential threat to the economies, social structures and security of authoritarian regimes such as the PRC Government:

The world today is undergoing major changes unseen in a century. A new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation has further developed. Data as a resource has become a new factor in production. Information technology has become a new innovation high ground. Information networks have become the new infrastructure. The digital economy has become a new economic engine. Cybersecurity has become a new security challenge, which has profoundly affected the global economic structure, interest patterns and security structures, and added new connotations to major changes unseen in a century.

当今世界正经历百年未有之大变局·新一轮科技革命和产业变革深入发展·数据资源成为新生产要素·信息技术成为新创新高地·信息网络成为新基础设施·数字经济成为新经济引擎·信息化成为新治理手段·网络安全成为新安全挑战·深刻影响着全球经济格局·利益格局·安全格局·为百年未有之大变局增添了新的内涵。<sup>25</sup>

The CCP isn't hostile to cyberspace; rather, it seeks to harness the transformative power of cyberspace in its own developmental and security interests. China's quest for cyber superpower isn't aimed at building its own alternative version of the internet—although that has essentially been accomplished domestically through the Great Firewall. The goal is for the internet outside of the PRC's jurisdiction to adapt to the economic development, social management and national security priorities of the CCP.

The way that the CCP translates those domestic goals into international imperatives involves the use of a system for influencing groups outside the party to win friends and allies. It can then convert that influence into concrete actions that protect the CCP from what it fears the most: its fall from power.<sup>26</sup> China's cyber policy system has adopted practices that aim to co-opt international organisations and cultivate foreign allies. Those practices include CCP institutions hosting international conferences and exchanges to promote and build support for two related concepts: 'internet sovereignty' and a 'community of common destiny for cyberspace'. Showing other states how they can use cyberspace to shape and repress dissenting voices in their own societies is a part of those co-opting strategies.

### **'Internet sovereignty'**

'Internet sovereignty' or 'cyber sovereignty' (网络主权) is one of the four principles articulated by Xi Jinping on how the global internet governance system should be transformed in ways familiar to the CCP model. Using the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in the UN Charter, Xi argues that states have the right to 'independently choose their own path of cyber development, model of cyber regulation, and internet public policies, and participate in international cyberspace governance on an equal footing'.<sup>27</sup>

All states regulate cyberspace with laws and regulations to some extent. What separates the PRC's efforts from those of other countries is its belief that it has the right to exert total control over the internet domestically, with the intent of extending that control globally. It wants others to copy its model overseas in order to create a global governance system that's grounded in standards set by the CCP.

In a 2010 white paper released by the State Council Information Office, the PRC affirmed its right, as a sovereign state, to govern cyberspace as it would the physical space of the territory it claims. In the document, it states that 'the internet within the territory of the PRC falls within the jurisdiction of China's sovereignty. China's internet sovereignty should be respected and maintained'.<sup>28</sup>

A decade later, an academic paper co-sponsored by the Cyberspace Security Association of China and published on the Cyberspace Administration of China website is even more explicit about the connection between state sovereignty and cyberspace:

Cyber sovereignty is a *natural extension* of state sovereignty in cyberspace. It is the supreme power and external independence that a country enjoys over the network facilities, network subjects, network behaviours and related network data and information within its territory based on state sovereignty.

网络主权是国家主权在网络空间的自然延伸·是一国基于国家主权对本国境内的网络设施、网络主体、网络行为及相关网络数据和信息等所享有的最高权和对外独立权。<sup>29</sup>

The CCP considers territorial sovereignty and cyber sovereignty to be indivisible. Those two ideas of territorial and cyber sovereignty contradict one another—the CCP seeks sovereign data control within its borders while simultaneously seeking extraterritorial control of data and Chinese entities outside of the PRC by compelling Chinese entities operating overseas to cooperate with the State. This notion is demonstrated in Xi Jinping’s opening speech at the 2015 World Internet Conference, in which he approached cyber sovereignty in the same way that a leader would approach territorial sovereignty: ‘no country should pursue cyber hegemony, interfere in other countries’ internal affairs, or support, engage in, or conspire around cyber activities that may undermine other countries’ national security.’<sup>30</sup>

### The ‘community of common destiny for cyberspace’

The concept of a ‘community of common destiny for mankind’ (人类命运共同体) first appeared under Hu Jintao in 2007 and 2012 and has since evolved as a concept under Xi Jinping.<sup>31</sup> Through Xi’s usages, the concept encompasses the notion that ‘a China more active in global affairs ... could benefit the prosperity and well-being of populations around the world, and promote the “reforming and developing [of] the global governance system”.’<sup>32</sup> It has ultimately become paramount to Beijing’s foreign policy framework and national strategy.<sup>33</sup>

According to the CAC, the phrase a ‘community of common destiny for cyberspace’ (网络空间命运共同体) embodies and is an important practice of the concept of a ‘community of common destiny for mankind’ in the context of cyberspace.<sup>34</sup> Under the former, the CCP aims to develop a peaceful, safe, open, cooperative and orderly cyberspace that conforms with CCP directions and desires—all of which it deems necessary to create a multilateral and transparent global internet governance system.<sup>35</sup> The World Internet Conference serves as a platform for developing that global internet governance system, introduced under the concept of a ‘community of common destiny for cyberspace’. As a notion under the umbrella of the ‘community of common destiny for mankind’, developing China’s cyberspace becomes closely intertwined with the CCP’s foreign policy and national strategy.

When Xi introduced the concept of building a ‘community of common destiny for cyberspace’ at the second annual World Internet Conference in 2015, he emphasised four principles of global internet governance and a five-point proposal regarding internet development and governance.<sup>36</sup> Among the four principles are ‘promoting openness and cooperation’ and ‘building a sound order’.<sup>37</sup> Although those ideas sound innocuous, the CCP plans to encourage cooperation in cyberspace in order to extend its vision of cyberspace to countries that look to the PRC for assistance in accelerating the



development of internet infrastructure. China has already influenced the internet environment in Africa: with technical support from China, local governments in East Africa are escalating censorship on social media platforms and the internet.<sup>38</sup>

In 2019, following Xi's first introduction of the principles of global internet governance in 2015, the organising committee of the World Internet Conference released a concept document titled 'Jointly Build a Community of Common Destiny for Cyberspace', which called on the international community to work together to promote internet development and co-governance.<sup>39</sup> By hosting the World Internet Conference and developing other platforms, the CCP claims that it's able to 'promote fairer and more equitable global internet governance'.<sup>40</sup> Under the concept of building a 'community of common destiny for cyberspace', Xi proposes providing 'Chinese solutions for global internet development and governance, and contribut[ing] Chinese wisdom'.<sup>41</sup> This is a China-centred vision for cyberspace, just as the Belt and Road Initiative is a China-centred vision for the world's economy.

The PRC's International Strategy of Cooperation on Cyberspace, which provides an explanation of the CCP's views and ideologies on an international cyberspace, notes that cyberspace has become a 'channel for information dissemination', an 'engine for economic growth', a platform for social governance and a 'new bridge for communication and cooperation'. Because cyberspace is a new means for what the CCP refers to as international cooperation, the party believes that the international community should work together 'to put in place a rule-based global governance system' for cyberspace.<sup>42</sup>

Under Xi's proposal for global shared governance, the PRC would have access to international governance mechanisms and platforms for controlling and monitoring cyberspace.<sup>43</sup> If implemented, that would have significant ramifications for the world's internet freedoms. As Xi mentioned in his speech in 2015, the internet is a powerful tool for information dissemination and social governance (also called 'social management'). Social management relies on shaping, managing and controlling the operating environment, which would be enabled through Xi's concept of shared governance of cyberspace.<sup>44</sup>

# Influencing global internet governance

## The reach of the World Internet Conference

One of the most prominent platforms through which the CCP's ideas about cyberspace and internet governance are expressed is an annual conference held in Zhejiang Province, with the exception of partially virtual conferences held in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since 2014, invited delegates have been hosted in Wuzhen, a historic town in northern Zhejiang, at the World Internet Conference (世界互联网大会; WIC). The WIC is a forum that aims to build international consensus on the CCP's vision for the internet, operating under the CCP's ideal that countries should cooperate to strive to build a 'community of a common destiny for cyberspace'.

The WIC is directly organised by the CAC and the Zhejiang Provincial Government, and is co-organised by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the GSMA<sup>45</sup> (see Figure 2).<sup>46</sup> Presented as a global forum guided by the international community, the WIC aims to attract attendees and guest speakers from foreign companies and governments. Although it meets under the guise of a conference organised by the international community, it's in fact under the direct organisation and supervision of CCP officials.

In 2014, when the first WIC was held, critics from international audiences pointed to the irony that China—a country with one of the most restrictive media environments in the world—held an event with the theme of 'interconnected world, shared and governed by all'.<sup>47</sup> During the first WIC, organisers reportedly made an attempt to encourage attendees to approve a draft declaration—intended to represent the consensus views of conference participants—by slipping it under attendees' hotel room doors late at night.<sup>48</sup> The draft called on the international community to 'work together to build an international internet governance system of multilateralism, democracy and transparency and a cyberspace of peace, security, openness and cooperation'.<sup>49</sup>

The draft mentioned the importance of respecting the 'internet sovereignty' of all countries and the necessity to jointly safeguard cybersecurity by fighting cybercrimes and protecting individual privacy and information security, and called on participants to 'destroy all dissemination channels of information on violent terrorism'. It also called on participants to 'widely spread' 'positive energy' (an important phrase in the Xi era that refers to content that places the CCP and government in a positive light) in cyberspace, echoing Xi's injunction for Chinese officials to 'tell China's story well'.<sup>50</sup> Those proposals would not only aim to provide the CCP with access to and influence over internet regulations outside its jurisdiction; they would also seek to spread 'positive energy'—a form of manipulated soft power—globally.

The most recent WIC, held in September 2021, reflects the CCP's crackdown on China's internet and technology companies. As the party uses state regulators, including the CAC, to enforce data security protocols and conduct antitrust probes, it has sought to align technology companies with the goals of the party.<sup>51</sup> The 2021 WIC focused on cybersecurity and data governance more than in previous years—out of 20 forums held during the conference, four focused on data regulation and legislation, cybersecurity and digital governance.<sup>52</sup> Acknowledging the new policy guidelines recently

issued by the CAC that require internet companies to increase control over online expression, several executives—including representatives from WeChat’s parent company, Tencent—at the conference pledged to ‘create a cleansed cyberspace’.<sup>53</sup> Despite the WIC being geared towards the international community, much of the 2021 conference focused on issues relevant to the cyber environment in the PRC, encouraging greater control over online expression.

Although the WIC seeks to attract a sizeable foreign audience, it hasn’t successfully attracted significant Western buy-in. The US and other Western governments are wary of supporting the WIC, and as a result have previously sent low-level embassy officers to attend.<sup>54</sup> That strategy contrasts with those of Central Asian countries and Russia, which have sent high-level delegations to attend the conference.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Digital Silk Road and Belt and Road Initiative countries are well represented at the WIC, whereas US and EU government presence is minimal.<sup>56</sup>

Figure 2: Organisation of the World Internet Conference and its partners



Source: ASPI authors' illustration.



## The organisational make-up of the World Internet Conference

Using a systems approach to identify leadership overlap between party and state agencies, examples below highlight the close connections between the Central Propaganda Department, the CAC and the WIC. Identifying those areas of overlap demonstrates the CCP's use of the WIC as an extension of its united front foreign policy agenda to set norms for the international cyber community.

In preparation for the 2019 and 2020 conferences, the State Council of the PRC held press conferences at which a designated representative spoke about the WIC. In 2020, the deputy director of the CAC, Zhao Zeliang, served as the designated representative, and the press release noted that Zhao had been entrusted by the WIC organising committee to discuss preparations for the WIC. At the 2020 press conference, Zhu Guoxian (a member of the Standing Committee of the Zhejiang Provincial Committee and the director of the Propaganda Department of the Zhejiang Provincial Committee) was also present to discuss preparations for the WIC.<sup>57</sup>

At the 2020 press conference for the WIC, Zhao Zeliang outlined that the 2020 WIC would seek to implement General Secretary Xi Jinping's thoughts on the concept of China as a cyber superpower and on the idea of building a common destiny for cyberspace. Zhao also stated that the WIC would continue to help build an international platform for global internet co-governance.<sup>58</sup> Other CCP officials, including Huang Kunming (a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, the head of the Central Propaganda Department and the head of the Leading Group for Party History Learning and Education Campaign) have spoken at the WIC.<sup>59</sup>

Zhuang Rongwen (the aforementioned Deputy Minister of the Central Propaganda Department, director of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission and director of the SIIO) served as the chairman of the WIC organising committee for the 2020 WIC.<sup>60</sup>

The State Council press conferences for the annual WIC indicate the significance of the conference to the CCP. As a function under the control of Xu Lin, who serves as both Minister of the State Council Information Office and deputy head of the Central Propaganda Department, the press conferences are intended to align with the mission of the Central Propaganda Department.<sup>61</sup>

The WIC creates a platform that enables the CCP to disseminate its ideology on internet governance to an international audience.

## Conclusion

Under Xi Jinping's initiative to 'build a community with a shared destiny in cyberspace', the CCP seeks to enact policies jointly with international governments and companies on mechanisms to co-govern the global internet, or at least growing national segments of it, while reshaping global norms and standards based on the model of the CCP's approach domestically. Failing to approach this initiative with caution could result in the implementation of censorship mechanisms in jurisdictions outside of the PRC—as has already begun in several African countries.

Achieving the status of a 'cyber superpower', however, is critical for the CCP to successfully establish shared governance and the development of a China-centred internet. In order to attain that status, China seeks to collaborate internationally. The World Internet Conference serves as an opportunity for China to collaborate with the international community on internet development innovation in addition to cooperating on internet co-governance mechanisms.

Although the World Internet Conference is presented as a platform developed and executed jointly by China and the international community, it's under the direct management and supervision of officials under China's cyber policy system. Due to the lack of transparency within China's cyber policy system, countries that cooperate with China on internet development and participate in the World Internet Conference should be vigilant.

When approaching the topic of internet co-governance and development strategies with China, countries should consider the future of cyberspace and what information should be shared, and even controlled, by countries such as China.

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

CAC	Cyberspace Administration of China
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
EU	European Union
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCIO	State Council Information Office
SIIO	State Internet Information Office
UN	United Nations
WIC	World Internet Conference

## Some previous ICPC publications

