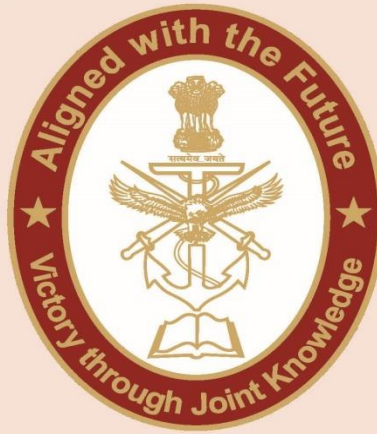


# CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



## CENJOWS

### **FAKE NEWS AND DECEIT AS PART OF DIPLOMACY**



**Maj Gen Harsha Kakar (Retd)** was commissioned into the Regt of Artillery in Jun 79 and superannuated in Mar 15. An alumnus of the NDA, he is a graduate of the DSSC, LDMC and the National Securities Studies Course at the Canadian Forces College Toronto.

Social media is the venue for projecting national views. Most nations have their spokes persons and political leaders on social media platforms commenting on global or domestic issues. These lead to internal discussions and debates, providing a feedback to the government in power. This is generally missing from China. Internal Chinese discussions on national and international issues are absent on global social media platforms due to their being banned within China. China fears internal dissent and anger, if projected globally, would hurt the image of the CCP and expose internal reality. Their own social media networks are strictly monitored, and even a single voice of dissent invites retaliation.

Views from China are pro-CCP, spread through their well-oiled English news machine led by their party owned networks including the Global and China Times, Chinese ambassadors or official Chinese spokespersons. These views are one-sided and not open to discussion or debate within China. Rarely do members of their well-oiled machine respond to international comments. Since the spread of the pandemic, the number of twitter users from the Chinese diplomatic corps and organized propaganda

outlets has almost tripled. Initially, Chinese diplomats sought to project benefits of partnership with them. Accused of being responsible for the pandemic, these diplomats switched to 'wolf warrior diplomacy', aggressively defending China and on occasions even threatening host nations. It back lashed into global anger. Chinese strategic thinkers warned the CCP, that it is losing international support due to its 'wolf warrior' strategy. Thus, China had to reconsider its approach.

This led to the opening of another chapter in Chinese global media diplomacy, that of employing fake news and deceit to protect the image of the CCP.

The Chinese Ambassador to Britain, Liu Xiaoming, stated post the passing of new security laws for Hong Kong, and UK withdrawing from its extradition treaty in retaliation, 'China has never interfered in other countries' internal affairs and we strongly oppose interference in China's internal affairs by any country.' This is the same ambassador who had in an earlier interview refused to accept authentic videos of maltreatment of Uyghurs from Xinjiang, claiming them to be fake, while the global community knew the truth.

China's direct interference in the political affairs of Nepal and Sri Lanka, previously in Maldives and currently in multiple African states is well documented. The Chinese ambassador in Nepal is busy meeting representatives of political parties to ensure the survival of the Oli government. It has angered local public.

Worldwide there have been reports of China paying politicians in different countries to support it. Investigations on the same are on in Australia. In addition, there are confirmed inputs of China purchasing media space to project the CCP positively. According to US Justice Department figures, China Daily, a mouthpiece of the Chinese regime, has paid American newspapers 19 million dollars for advertising and printing in the last 4 years alone. The same is equally prevalent in India. Is this not interference in internal matters?

China has been donating to global universities to change thought process of youth towards China. About 115 colleges in the US received monetary gifts, contracts or both from sources in mainland China in the past few years, with Harvard itself gaining over USD 1 Billion. India is reviewing the memoranda of understandings signed between prestigious Indian universities and the Chinese Confucius Institute, known for spreading Chinese propaganda. Australia is also investigating on similar lines. China has also been accused of attempting to influence elections in countries. Is this not interference in internal matters?

The Chinese ambassador to India, Sun Weidong, stated during his interaction with the Institute of China Studies, 'Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet (Xizang) affairs are totally China's internal matters and bear on China's sovereignty and security. While China does not interfere in other country's internal affairs, it allows no external interference and never trades its core interests either.' These words could never have been hollower.

China has questioned Indian internal decisions on Kashmir, constructed the CPEC through disputed territory, ignoring Indian protests, raised Kashmir in the UNSC on request of Pakistan and regularly raises Arunachal Pradesh. Recently, the Chinese foreign ministry was questioned on Indian decision of revoking article 370. It stated, 'Any unilateral change to the status quo is illegal and invalid.' If this is not direct interference in India's internal matter, then one would wonder what it is.

While China feels it can question India, it demands that India adhere to the one China principal and not cross Chinese red lines. Is this acceptable to India?

Sun Weidong also stated that, 'border troops have disengaged in most localities, the situation on the ground is de-escalating and the temperature is coming down.' There was an immediate counterstatement from the Indian MEA which stated that there has been, 'some progress', but the process of disengagement has not been completed. The Chinese ambassador had no response. Can anything be more insulting than an ambassador being called out by his host country?

China's breaking global and UN backed agreements on Hong Kong's one nation, two systems is legally and ethically wrong. Subsequently terming it as internal matters is anything but the truth. These actions question the authority of the UN, which accepted the Chinese promise of maintaining one nation, two systems policy, when it took over Hong Kong from the British in 1994.

The less stated on peddling of fake news by the Global Times and its Editor, Hu Xinjin, the better. On the closure of the US Consulate in Chengdu, the Global Times wrote, 'Washington has long used its diplomats in Chengdu to infiltrate Tibet and other regions in Southwest China, interfering in China's domestic affairs.' In a nation as tightly controlled as China, is this even possible. No American has been charged with spying in China, even falsely. On the other hand, Chinese in droves have been involved in stealing technology and research material from western nations. Recent crackdowns and arrests in the US are evidence.

Chinese fake news on the spreading virus, inputs on numbers infected and dead as also false information shared with the WHO is an established fact. Most of these were peddled by the Chinese global press. China hid casualty figures, permitted global travel from Wuhan, restricted internal travel and shared limited inputs on the Corona virus. Its Global Times claimed that the origin of the virus was initially the US and subsequently Italy, attempting to suppress the truth. Global pressure forced China to back down and accept a WHO led medical team to study the origins of the virus. Chinese fake news was exposed.

The Indo-China standoff in Ladakh has become a focal point for projection of deceit. The world is aware that it was China, employing the garb of exercises which waded into Indian perceived LAC leading to a strong Indian response. On the other hand, China accuses India of violating the LAC. Had India crossed the LAC, it would have encountered the Chinese Border Defence Regiment, which is responsible for defending the LAC and not the PLA. Hiding the direct involvement of the PLA is another example of deceit projected by multiple Chinese personalities and media houses, including its ambassador.

There are many more global examples on this current Chinese strategy. Why was China compelled to adopt this approach? The reason appears evident. China is being pushed to the wall, accused of duplicity, breaking global norms, and in the bargain has adopted an offensive agenda seeking to compel the globe to forget the origin of the pandemic being from China. However, at every stage they are being exposed and forced to retract. In embarrassment, China would soon be compelled to adopt another diplomatic approach to defend the failures of the CCP.

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