

epochtimes.fr

The website of Epoch Times, a conservative newspaper that has promoted false claims and debunked conspiracy theories while mixing opinion with news to advance its political agenda.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Score: 20/100

Ownership and Financing

Fr.TheEpochTimes.com is published by Epoch Times France, a nonprofit affiliated with the privately held news and entertainment company Epoch Media Group. Based in New York, the group is owned by its founder John Tang, who launched the Epoch Times as a Chinese-language newspaper in 2000 when he was a graduate student at Georgia Tech University.

Tang is a self-described practitioner of Falun Gong, a religious-spiritual practice that opposes the Chinese government and communism and that is barred in China. One of the company's declared aims is "to provide uncensored news to Chinese people who were immersed in propaganda and censorship in China," according to Epoch Times' corporate site. The enterprise has grown to host websites in 23 languages in 35 countries.

The French version of the printed newspaper, which was distributed for free in Paris and Montreal, stopped printing in January 2017, according to Epoch Times France's publishing director, Isabelle Meyer.

Fr.TheEpochTimes.com derives revenue from advertising.

- Does not repeatedly publish false content (22 points)
- Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Content

Fr.TheEpochTimes.com's stated objective is "to provide our readers with accurate information so that they can form their own opinion on the most important news topics." ("Notre objectif est d'apporter à nos lecteurs des informations précises afin qu'ils puissent se forger leur propre opinion sur les sujets les plus importants de l'actualité.") The site is published under the motto "Vérité et Tradition" ("Truth & Tradition").

The website primarily covers French and international news, politics, and culture. It also frequently writes about Chinese politics, often highlighting human-rights abuses, especially those involving the banned spiritual group Falun Gong.

The site also publishes French translations of articles by TheEpochTimes.com, the U.S. edition of the newspaper, and posts inspirational content, animal videos, and feel-good social media stories.

Typical stories have run under headlines including “The Chinese regime’s censorship expands globally” (“La censure du régime chinois s’étend à l’échelle mondiale”); “‘Yellow vests’: Police officer charged with battery in Bordeaux” (“‘Gilets jaunes’: un policier mis en examen pour violences volontaires à Bordeaux”); and “Climate change hypothesis used to promote socialism, expert says” (“L’hypothèse du changement climatique a été utilisée pour promouvoir le socialisme, selon un expert”).

Credibility

Epoch Times’ news articles sometimes rely on the reporting of established media outlets and newswires, such as Agence France–Presse and Reuters. However, articles often are based on information drawn from unreliable sources, including anonymously run blogs and unverified YouTube videos. The site also often publishes translations of misleading and erroneous news reports from the U.S. edition of Epoch Times, including false or misleading information on the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak.

For example, in February 2020, the site published an article titled “The Wuhan Bioresearch laboratory could be the source of the coronavirus, according to an expert and Chinese internet users” (“Le laboratoire Wuhan Bioresearch serait la source du coronavirus, selon un expert et des internautes chinois”). The article is largely based on comments made on the WeChat platform by somebody identified as M. Wu, who describes herself in her WeChat profile as holding “a PhD in fields related to biology.” (“titulaire d’un doctorat dans des domaines liés à la biologie selon son profil WeChat”). According to the

Fr.TheEpochTimes.com article, "M. Wu said that it was not possible for these mutations to have resulted from a natural combination." ("M. Wu a souligné qu'il n'était pas possible que ces mutations soient le résultat d'une recombinaison naturelle").

There is no evidence that the site confirmed this person's identity or credentials. Moreover, the claim that the virus was made in a lab and could not have developed naturally is contradicted by many health authorities.

According to a February 2020 report by the World Health Organization, "increasing evidence demonstrates the link between the 2019-nCoV and other similar known coronaviruses (CoV) circulating in bats." A study published the same month in Nature found the virus to be "96% identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus." Also, the fact-checking organization PolitiFact and several international news outlets, including the French scientific website Sciences et Avenir, have shown that there is no evidence that the virus originated in a Wuhan lab, as implied in the article.

Asked about this article, Fr.TheEpochTimes.com did not immediately respond to NewsGuard.

In October 2019, the site published the translation of an article from its US edition, titled "Trump impeachment: Military aid to Ukraine was sent on schedule" ("Destitution de Trump : l'aide militaire à l'Ukraine a été envoyée dans les délais prévus"). The article claimed that US aid to Ukraine was not delayed by the White House over the summer of 2019. Citing an anonymous senior administration official, the article said, "the aid underwent a routine review process and was disbursed on or ahead of schedule.... Instead of the abrupt suspension, the aid package underwent a typical process."

In fact, the White House did delay military aid to Ukraine, amid an effort to pressure Ukraine to launch an investigation related to Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden. According to numerous press accounts, in June 2019, the Defense Department

announced it would release \$250 million in military aid to Ukraine, as part of a roughly \$400 million assistance package approved by Congress. However, the White House halted the release of the funds in July — a hold that was lifted in September, after the pressure campaign came to light.

Also in October 2019, the site published an article headlined "11.2 billion euros of untraceable public money from the European Union, supplied Georges Soros NGOs in Ukraine" ("11,2 milliards d'euros d'argent public intraçables au sein de l'Union européenne, ont alimenté les ONG de Georges Soros en Ukraine"), which is a translation from the German version of Epoch Times . The article claimed that a Ukrainian nonprofit, the Anti-Corruption Action Centre (AntAC), was involved in a money laundering scheme, with the support of liberal billionaire Georges Soros and then-Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

"Hillary Clinton's campaign staff attempted in 2016 to sabotage Donald Trump's election campaign by using Georges Soros' NGO and the Poroshenko government to present President Trump as a 'Russian puppet' after his surprising victory," the article said originally. ("Le staff de campagne d'Hillary Clinton a tenté en 2016 de saboter la campagne électorale de Donald Trump en utilisant l'ONG de Georges Soros et le gouvernement Poroshenko pour présenter le président Trump comme une 'marionnette russe' après sa victoire surprenante.") This sentence was deleted from the article after NewsGuard asked about it.

It is true that Soros' Open Society Foundations partly funds AntAC, providing 17 percent of its funding in 2018, according to the Wall Street Journal. However, there is no evidence that the group was involved in a money laundering scheme. In 2016, Ukrainian prosecutors examined allegations of misuse of funds by AntAC, but the investigation was closed because of a lack of evidence, the Wall Street Journal reported. The theory that the Hillary Clinton campaign worked with the Ukrainian government to interfere in the 2016 presidential election is unsubstantiated.

"We have checked this article, and corrected what needed correction," Ludovic Genin, Editor-in-Chief of the website, told NewsGuard in an email. ("Nous avons vérifié cet article et que nous avons corrigé ce qui devait l'être").

An August 2018 story, titled "China hacked Hillary Clinton's private email server" ("La Chine a piraté le serveur de courrier électronique privé d'Hillary Clinton"), which was translated from the Daily Caller, stated that an unnamed Chinese company said to be working for the Chinese government hacked Clinton's email server when she was Secretary of State "and obtained nearly all her emails."

The claim, which was attributed to two anonymous sources, was quickly denied by the FBI, and no evidence supporting the claim has surfaced.

In late 2019, after NewsGuard asked about this article, the site changed the headline to "Sources say China hacked Hillary Clinton's private email server" ("Selon certaines sources, la Chine a piraté le serveur de courrier électronique privé d'Hillary Clinton.") However, the article itself was not modified and the site did not publish a correction or clarification.

In January 2018, Fr.TheEpochTimes.com published a story headlined "Hillary Clinton facing 3 Investigations, and soon a 4th" ("Hillary Clinton face à trois enquêtes, et bientôt une quatrième"), stating that Clinton "may also become ensnared in an investigation into the Obama administration's ending of a massive investigation into how the Hezbollah terrorist group trafficked cocaine to the United States" to fund its activities." ("Hillary Clinton est aussi visée par une enquête qui vise à déterminer pourquoi l'administration Obama a mis fin à une grande investigation sur la trafic de cocaïne aux États-Unis au bénéfice du Hezbollah libanais.")

Although the Justice Department was reportedly reviewing an Obama-era operation involving Hezbollah, there is no evidence that Clinton was being investigated, and The Epoch Times story did not cite any sources.

In November 2019, after NewsGuard asked about this story, the headline was changed to "Hillary Clinton facing 3 Investigations, and may be part of a 4th" ("Hillary Clinton face à trois enquêtes, et pourrait être impliquée dans une quatrième"). The story was also updated with a note stating that "Hillary Clinton's involvement... has not yet been established." ("L'implication d'Hillary Clinton... n'est pas encore établie.")

Because Fr.TheEpochTimes.com has frequently published false or misleading information, often citing unreliable sources or no sources at all, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and fails to avoid deceptive headlines.

Contacted by NewsGuard about its editorial standards and the articles cited above, Editor-in-Chief Ludovic Genin and Publishing Director Isabelle Meyer said in an email: "We are not spreading false content: The Epoch Times was born out of a lack of truthful information in China. Our DNA is therefore intrinsically associated with the publication of factual and truthful information. All of our articles are based on facts or sources that can be verified.... We present the news responsibly: Our writers are told to report the facts and only the facts, by cross-checking sources of information. " ("Nous ne diffusons pas de contenu erroné: Epoch Times est né du fait du manque d'informations véridiques en Chine. Notre ADN est donc intrinsèquement lié à la publication d'informations factuelles et véridiques. Tous nos articles se basent sur des faits ou des sources qui peuvent être vérifiées... Nous présentons les informations de façon responsable: Nos rédacteurs ont pour consigne de rapporter les faits et uniquement les faits, en croisant les sources d'informations.")

Fr.TheEpochTimes.com publishes corrections, typically in the form of an editor's note at the end of the article. The site's contact page lists an email address for requesting corrections, stating that "If it turns out that the Epoch Times published an error, a correction notice will be published online, wherever the error happened."

("S'il s'avère que Epoch Times a publié une erreur, un avis de correction sera publié en ligne, en fonction du lieu où l'erreur est apparue.")

Meyer, the site's publishing director, told NewsGuard that the site regularly updates articles, although it does not always publish corrections. "We make daily updates when we review our articles," Meyer said. "If a reader alerts us to a fact because we made a mistake in an article, it is perfectly legitimate to do an update and describe it at the end of the article." ("On fait des mises à jour au quotidien quand on revient sur nos articles... Si un lecteur nous alerte sur un fait parce qu'on a fait une erreur dans un article, c'est tout à fait légitime de faire une mise à jour et de le signaler en fin d'article.")

However, because numerous articles that contain false information have not been corrected or retracted — including the articles cited above — NewsGuard has determined that the site does not have effective practices for correcting errors.

The website does not disclose a political or ideological orientation, describing itself as "nonpartisan" on the About Us page. "We are immune to the influence of any government, company or political party — that's what sets us apart from other media organizations," the site states. ("Nous sommes à l'abri de l'influence de tout gouvernement, entreprise ou parti politique – c'est ce qui nous distingue des autres médias.") Unlike its U.S. edition and corporate site, Fr.TheEpochTimes.com does not disclose that it is a vocal opponent of the Chinese government.

Although Epoch Times has a dedicated opinion section, many articles criticising communism and the Chinese government appear in the news section, not labeled as opinion.

For example, in December 2019, the site published an article about Shen Yun, a dance company associated with Falun Gong, that was titled "Communist Party of China, distressed over Shen Yun, loses confidence" ("Le Parti communiste chinois, bouleversé par Shen Yun, perd confiance en lui"). The article stated that the Chinese Communist Party "has ruled by violence,

oppression of the people, human rights abuses, and religious persecution." ("Le PCC dans la Chine a régné par la violence, l'oppression de la population, les violations des droits de l'homme et la persécution des croyances religieuses.")

In January 2019, a news article related to Chinese healthcare stated that "the moral values of honesty, loyalty, altruism, knowledge, integrity, and decency, influenced by China's Confucianism, were revised and replaced by the Communist Party, and we know that communism does not value human life." (Les valeurs morales d'honnêteté, de loyauté, d'altruisme, de savoir, d'intégrité et de bienséance, influencées par l'influence confucéenne de la Chine, ont été révisées et remplacées par la culture du Parti communiste, et nous savons que le communisme n'accorde aucune valeur à la vie humaine).

After NewsGuard asked about this article in late 2019, it was deleted from the site.

Asked about the site's mixing of news and opinion, Genin and Meyer said in an email: "We differentiate between the news and our OPINION section, within the menu, category or even within the article. Thus, each Opinion article is featured in the Opinion category, with a presentation of the author and specifies that it expresses his own opinion." ("Nous faisons aussi une différence entre les actualités et notre section OPINION, que ce soit au niveau du menu, de la catégorie ou à l'intérieur même de l'article. Ainsi chaque article Opinion est classé dans la catégorie Opinion, avec une présentation de l'auteur et en indiquant qu'il s'agit de l'expression de sa propre opinion.")

However, because Epoch Times frequently posts opinionated stories outside the opinion section, without disclosing its political orientation, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

with Epoch Media Group.

The site's Contact Us page (Nous contacter) identifies the editor-in-chief and publishing director and provides their email addresses.

Stories generally include author names. However, the profile pages of the French writers, which include past articles, do not provide contact or biographical information — which does not meet NewsGuard's standard for providing information about content creators.

Meyer said the site has been posting more information about its writers, but "we haven't put this in place for everyone yet." ("C'est vrai qu'on a pas encore mis ça en place pour tout le monde.")

Advertisements and sponsored content are distinguished from editorial content.

History

The Epoch Times' founder John Tang left China to attend Georgia Tech, where he earned a doctoral degree in theoretical physics in the 1990s, according to TheEpochTimes.com. He said he was moved to action by the 1989 police massacre of protesters in Tiananmen Square and by the persecution of members of the outlawed Falun Gong spiritual movement.

In 2000, Tang and a group of Chinese-Americans established the Chinese-language Epoch Times. An English-language website was added in 2003 and a newspaper was launched in 2004. The French version started a year later in Paris, under the name La Grande Époque, before becoming Epoch Times in 2012. In Montréal, the newspaper was called Époque Times. It is not published anymore.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on March 5, 2020.

Written by: [Sophia Tewa](#)

Edited by: [John Gregory](#), [Eric Effron](#), [Alice Antheaume](#), [Chine Labbe](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

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Ownership and Financing

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