

epochtimes.de

The German edition of The Epoch Times, a conservative outlet founded by Chinese-Americans associated with Falun Gong, a Chinese spiritual practice that repeatedly promotes debunked conspiracy theories.



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

Score: 15/100

Ownership and Financing

EpochTimes.de is owned by the privately held Epoch Times Europe GmbH, registered in Berlin Charlottenburg, which is part of the Epoch Media Group (EMG). Based in New York, EMG is a privately held company owned by founder John Tang. EpochTimes.de is the German edition of the international Epoch Times, which is published in 21 languages and 35 countries.

The Epoch Times began as a Chinese-language print newspaper in Tang's basement in 2000 when he lived in Atlanta, Georgia. Tang is a self-described practitioner of Falun Gong, a religious-spiritual practice that opposes the Chinese government and communism and is banned 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."

The site runs advertising and seeks donations from readers.

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ 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)

Content

The site's stated mission is to provide "neutral and objective reporting about relevant news topics," particularly those "overlooked or avoided by other media." In addition to its coverage of national and international news, EpochTimes.de features sections including Health, Culture and Arts, Lifestyle, Travel, and Environment. A section called Blue light (Blaulicht) features crime stories, particularly ones allegedly committed by refugees, immigrants, and Muslims.

The site regularly runs articles about Chinese-German relations and the "New Silk Road" ("Neue Seidenstraße"), China's massive infrastructure and economic development initiative.

On a typical day, stories have run under headlines including "Viktor Orban: 'We wish the peoples of Europe will lose their blindness'" ("Viktor Orbán: 'Wir wünschen den Völkern Europas, dass sie ihre Blindheit

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

verlieren”); “Merger talks between Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank – Scholz has much to lose” (“Fusionsgespräche von Deutscher Bank und Commerzbank – Scholz hat viel zu verlieren“); and “ICE Attack in Germany: Iraqi wanted to kill out of hatred for Angela Merkel” (“ICE-Anschläge in Deutschland: Iraker wollte aus Hass auf Angela Merkel töten”).

Credibility

Articles on Epoch Times are typically produced by the site’s staff, often from content drawn from news agencies, such as dpa, AFP, and Reuters. Many articles are original to the Epoch Times’ German edition, while others are translated into German from the company’s other editions.

Epoch Times states that it “stands beyond political interest, bias or corruptibility” (“Wir stehen außerhalb der politischen Interessen, einer Voreingenommenheit oder gar Bestechlichkeit”). Although most of the site’s content consists of fact-based articles based primarily on wire services, EpochTimes.de sometimes cites as sources anonymously run blogs or YouTube videos uploaded from anonymous accounts. Moreover, the site has featured articles that include false claims and promote conspiracy theories, including false claims about the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak.

For example, a February 2020 article, titled “Is the coronavirus a bioweapon?” (“Ist das Coronavirus eine Biowaffe?”), suggested that the COVID-19 virus had been created by China to be used in warfare against other countries. “I suspect that the only real surprise for the Chinese leadership in the novel coronavirus is that China itself has become ground zero for the outbreak that they had hoped to one day unleash on other countries,” the article stated.

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus was man-made and built to be used in warfare. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” An earlier study, published in February 2020 in the journal Nature, found that the COVID-19 virus is “96% percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.”

Another February 2020 article, titled “Coronavirus: Living 'dead' in a body bag - China's 'Chernobyl' questions the legitimacy of the CCP” (“Coronavirus:

Lebende 'Tote' im Leichensack – Chinas 'Tschernobyl' stellt Legitimität der KPCh infrage”), claimed that the Chinese Communist Party was cremating coronavirus patients alive, to save oxygen and space. According to the article, “For patients with no hope of recovery, cremation is forced before they are given ventilators. To clear the beds to make room for others.” To back this claim, the article linked to a report by the Chinese-language version of Epoch Times, which included a video statement of a supposed eye-witness.

There is no evidence that Chinese officials are cremating coronavirus patients alive. The fact-checking site Politifact found that the purported eye-witness video cited in the article first appeared on Facebook, uploaded by a Chinese billionaire and political activist who, according to Politifact, is “known for his criticism of Chinese leaders.”

An April 2019 article about the Notre Dame fire that month stated that “attempts to explain the cause” of the fire are “becoming more and more curious, as they are supposed to convince people of the possibility of an accidental fire or, to put it another way, to distract them from the possibility of an arson attack.” The article includes an embedded YouTube video from an account named “MAINZ FREE TV” in which an unidentified man attempts to light a wooden beam on fire. When this does not work, he states that the fire “must have required some pretty massive preparation.” Text accompanying the video claims that the fire must have been caused by “PROFESSIONAL ARSONISTS” (“PROFIBRANDSTIFTER”) and concludes: “I stick to my thesis: The fire in Notre-Dame is 9/11-2.0” (“Ich bleibe bei meiner These: Der Brand in Notre-Dame ist 9/11•2.0”). In fact, authorities suspect the fire was sparked by an electrical short circuit, and no credible evidence of foul play has emerged.

An August 2018 news article, headlined “Pedophile Scandal: Did Hillary Clinton’s campaign manager John Podesta and his brother kidnap Maddie McCann?” (“Pädophilie-Skandal: Haben Hillary Clintons Wahlkampfleiter John Podesta und sein Bruder Maddie McCann entführt?”), connects John Podesta and his brother Tony Podesta — both high-profile Democrats in the US — to the high-profile disappearance of a three-year-old British girl in Portugal in 2013. As evidence,

the writer contends that police sketches of possible suspects in the girl's disappearance "look absolutely similar to John and Tony Podesta!"

The article also claims that the Podestas were "allegedly" in Portugal at the time of the girl's disappearance — without saying who made that allegation — and states that although "there is still a lack of conclusive evidence," the police sketches "speak for themselves." The article features an embedded YouTube video from an account named "Annonny Moose" that compares the sketches with photographs of the Podesta brothers. There is no actual evidence linking the Podesta brothers to the McCann case.

The same article includes another embedded YouTube video that claims that celebrities including Robert Redford and Lady Gaga are "cannibalistic satanists." At the end of the article, there is an appeal to readers to buy the author's book, "If Mankind only knew...", promising "more groundbreaking discoveries about Pizzagate/Pädogate."

A January 2018 news article titled "Soros warns of EU collapse – and raves about Nazi rule" ("Soros warnt vor Zusammenbruch der EU – und schwärmt von der Nazi-Herrschaft") promotes the conspiracy theory that billionaire Democratic donor George Soros, who is Jewish and grew up in Hungary, was a Nazi collaborator. Soros was 14 when the war ended, and numerous fact-checking and news organizations have debunked this widely circulated claim.

A March 2019 news article claimed that the mainstream press proved that it is biased against U.S. President Donald Trump when it reported that his inauguration crowd in January 2017 was smaller than the turnout for other recent inaugurations. The article argued that "certain shots of the crowd at Donald Trump's inauguration ceremony" were "taken hours before the official start" in order to "convey the impression that public sympathy was lower" than four and eight years earlier at Barack Obama's inaugurations.

Fact-checking organizations including FactCheck.org and Politifact.com found that Trump's inaugural crowd was in fact smaller than the crowds at Barack Obama's inaugurations in 2009 and 2013. No evidence has

emerged to support the claim that press photos were somehow altered or manipulated to convey the wrong impression about Trump's crowd.

In 2016, the site published numerous news articles advancing the conspiracy theory that Hillary Clinton and other prominent Democrats were involved with an alleged pedophile ring based in a Washington pizza restaurant. These articles remain on the site.

For example, a December 2016 article states that the Wikileaks "Podesta Emails" contain "hints that Hillary Clinton's campaign manager is connected to a Satanist and paedophile ring." According to the article, "Pedophile code words appear surprisingly frequently in the emails, such as 'Cheese Pizza,' which stands for 'childporn.'" Police authorities have dismissed the "Pizzagate" claims as baseless.

Because the site repeatedly publishes articles that include false claims and promote conspiracy theories, NewsGuard has determined that Epoch Times Germany repeatedly publishes false information and headlines, and that it does not gather and present news and information responsibly.

The site regularly publishes opinionated articles in its news sections. For example, the series "How the devil rules the world" ("Wie der Teufel die Welt beherrscht") argues that Communism has led to the "destruction" ("Zerstörung") of family values. The series features articles with titles such as "Europe is in the hands of the enemy" ("Europa ist in den Händen des Feindes"); "The Liberal and Progressive takeover of the Media" ("Die Übernahme der Medien durch Liberalismus und Progressivismus"); and "The collapse of family structure due to homosexuality" ("Das Verderben der Familienstruktur durch Homosexualität").

Because stories EpochTime.de presents as news frequently include the writer's opinion — such as in the stories cited above — and often advance the site's unstated agenda, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

The site does not have a stated corrections policy, and NewsGuard was unable to find examples of published corrections. Numerous articles containing verifiably false information stand uncorrected on the website.

The site did not respond to two emails and a phone message inquiring about its publishing of false claims and headlines, its mixing of news and opinion, and its lack of corrections.

Transparency

The site's Imprint (Impressum) discloses the site's ownership by Epoch Times Europe GmbH. Epoch Times Europe GmbH's affiliation with the U.S.-based Epoch Media Group is also disclosed. The page provides a general email address and phone number.

The site does not provide information about content creators or top editors. Articles sometimes name the writer, but do not link to biographical or contact information. Most articles are bylined "Epoch Times."

Advertisements and sponsored content are distinguishable from editorial content.

The site did not respond to two emails and a phone message inquiring about its lack of disclosures for site leaders and content creators.

History

Chinese-American John Tang established The Epoch Times in 2000. The publication began as a US-based Chinese-language newspaper, adding an English-language website in 2003 and a newspaper in 2004. The Epoch Times and its websites are banned in China.

The German edition started as a printed, weekly newspaper in 2005 under the name Neue Epoche (New Epoch). In August 2007 it was renamed Epoch Times Deutschland. Since 2012, it has been published exclusively online.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was last updated on April 30, 2020, to add examples of the site's coronavirus coverage.

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Ownership and Financing

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