

# french.xinhuanet.com

The French-language website of Xinhua, a Chinese state-run international news agency that does not disclose its government ties and that regularly promotes state propaganda.



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.**

**Score: 7.5/100**

## Ownership and Financing

French.Xinhuanet.com is owned by Xinhuanet Co., Ltd, a Beijing-based public company listed on the Shanghai Stock Exchange. Xinhuanet is a subsidiary of Xinhua News Agency, a Chinese-state owned media group based in Beijing, with more than 100 foreign bureaus, including in Paris, Hong Kong, Brussels, Mexico, New York, and Moscow. French.Xinhuanet.com does not disclose its ultimate ownership by China.

In addition to the news agency, Xinhua owns national and local newspapers and magazines in mainland China, including the Beijing-based daily Cankao Xiaoxi. It is also the parent company of China Fortune Media Group, which owns publisher Xinhua Publishing House and three financial newspapers — China Securities Journal, Shanghai Securities News, and Economic Information Daily. Xinhua also has a majority stake in the English-language news channel CNC World.

Xinhua’s president, Cai Mingzhao, previously served as the deputy chief of the Communist Party’s propaganda arm, known as the Department of Publicity, and was head of the State Council Information Office, an agency that oversees Chinese media policies. Cai is also a member of the Chinese Communist Party's central committee.

A 2017 report by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission to the U.S. Congress concluded that “Xinhua serves some of the functions of an intelligence agency by gathering information and producing classified reports for the Chinese leadership on both domestic and international events.”

Xinhua generates revenue from news organizations that license its content, while government subsidies cover approximately 40 percent of its costs, according

- ✗ 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)

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*

[More information.](#)

to the Guardian.

The site does not run advertising.

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Content

French.Xinhuanet.com is the French-language website of Xinhua, which means “New China” in Chinese. Xinhua’s main site provides content in Chinese and includes editions in other languages, including Spanish, English, Portuguese, German, Russian, Japanese, Arabic, Tibetan, and Korean. The French edition can also be accessed from the domain name French.news.cn.

French.Xinhuanet.com covers Chinese news and world events, including politics, foreign policy, culture, and tourism. News articles, videos, and commentary generally reflect the views of the Chinese Communist Party, portraying the Chinese government’s domestic and global actions in a positive light.

For example, a March 2020 article stated that “Foreign political leaders have said they appreciate the Communist Party of China (CPC) for timely sharing its experience in combating COVID-19 with all parties and proactively promoting international cooperation in anti-epidemic efforts.” (“Les dirigeants politiques étrangers ont dit apprécier que le Parti communiste chinois (PCC) partage en temps opportun ses expériences dans la lutte contre le COVID-19 avec toutes les parties et promeuve de façon proactive la coopération internationale dans les efforts anti-épidémiques.”)

Typical articles have appeared under headlines including “China is fighting the coronavirus epidemic” (“La Chine lutte contre l'épidémie du coronavirus”); “France: Huawei will not be pushed away from 5G in France, says Minister of Economy” (“France : Huawei ne sera pas écarté de la 5G en France, affirme le ministre de l'Economie”); and “China highly appreciates Russia's stance on Hong Kong affairs: Spokesperson” (“La Chine apprécie fortement la position de la Russie au sujet des affaires de Hong Kong (porte-parole”).

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Credibility

Many articles on French.Xinhuanet.com present only the official Chinese government line, often based on

interviews with Chinese government officials and other Communist Party and pro-government sources. Indeed, Xinhua typically functions as a mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, including on issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic that started in China, and about China's oppression and detention of Uighur Muslims in the western Xinjiang region.

For example, a December 2019 article claimed that Muslim detainees were actually trainees who voluntarily joined China's Xinjiang camps for vocational "training." The story described detention camps as "vocational education and training centers to teach skills in accordance with the law." The article also quoted a Communist party official as saying, "Foreign media reports claiming that there were 'up to one million or even two million' trainees at the centers are purely fabricated and totally groundless." ("Les reportages des médias étrangers prétendant qu'il y avait jusqu'à 'un million ou voire deux millions' de participants dans ces centres sont fabriqués de toutes pièces et sont sans aucun fondement.")

News organizations including France 24 and The Associated Press and human rights groups including Human Rights Watch have reported credible evidence of arbitrary mass detentions of Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. A United Nations panel estimated that up to 1 million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities have been sent to so-called relocation camps.

In May 2020, French.Xinhuanet.com cited an article published in Communist newspaper People's Daily that suggested that an outbreak of lung ailments in the U.S. in August 2019 could be linked to COVID-19 — thus calling into question the global consensus that the pandemic started in Wuhan, China. "People have the right to ask why the CT scans of some patients during the outbreak of acute lipoid pneumonia linked to e-cigarettes last August in the United States look so much like those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," the article said.

There is no evidence that the lung injuries in question related to COVID-19. After a spate of reports about lung ailments, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control attributed the problem to vitamin E acetate, an additive found in some e-cigarettes.

In April 2020, the site published an article that stated that “traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has proven effective in preventing and treating the new coronavirus epidemic (COVID-19), and has unique strengths in preventing and treating emerging epidemics.” (“La médecine traditionnelle chinoise (MTC) s'est avérée efficace dans la prévention et le traitement de l'épidémie de nouveau coronavirus (COVID-19), et possède des atouts uniques dans la prévention et le traitement des épidémies émergentes.”) The article relied on just one source, an official at the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

There is no evidence backing this claim. The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have said that there is no specific treatment recommended for the coronavirus strain responsible for the 2019-2020 outbreak. While traditional Chinese treatments are being tested on COVID-19 patients in China, the U.S. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health has said that there is currently no evidence that alternative remedies such as herbal therapies can cure or prevent COVID-19. The agency also warned that some Chinese herbal medicines include toxic compounds and may have serious side effects.

The site often distorts information about regional conflicts involving China, including tensions over Taiwan's push for autonomy and Hong Kong's anti-government protest movement. For example, in 2019 and 2020, Xinhua has repeatedly described the Hong Kong protests as unpopular among local residents, when by most accounts, the movement was gaining strength and holds wide support among Hong Kong residents.

Xinhua has also promoted claims meant to discredit reports of chemical attacks carried out by the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on civilians. For

example, it has repeatedly reported, without evidence, that anti-government rebels staged their own chemical attacks to frame the Syrian military.

A January 2020 article titled “Syrian army says rebels prepare to stage chemical attack in Aleppo” (“L’armée syrienne affirme que les rebelles vont simuler une attaque chimique à Alep”) said that rebels were about to stage a false-flag chemical attack in the provinces of Idlib and Aleppo. The article attributed its claim to a Syrian military statement reported by Syria’s state-owned news agency SANA.

“The rebels in the western countryside of Aleppo and the countryside of Idlib are preparing to fake a chemical attack to frame the Syrian forces and halt their progress against the rebels in the aforementioned areas,” the article said. “The statement charged that the rebels are preparing to stage the attack under the Turkish support, noting that such fabrications will not achieve the intended goal of bringing the Syrian military operation to a halt.”

There is no evidence that rebels in Idlib or Aleppo were preparing a chemical attack with support from Turkey in early 2020. Claims that chemical attacks in Syria are generally staged by opposition forces to frame the government forces have been contradicted for years by first-person accounts, photos, and videos, as well as reports from the United Nations.

Because French.Xinhuanet.com has promoted debunked and unsubstantiated claims to advance state propaganda, without disclosing that it is controlled by the Chinese government, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and fails to avoid deceptive headlines.

The site has an opinion section and typically labels commentary. However, as the articles cited above indicate, news coverage invariably mirrors the agenda of the Chinese Communist Party and glorifies its achievements. Therefore, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

French.Xinhuanet.com does not publish a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

Xinhua did not respond to two emails seeking comment on the articles cited above, the site's lack of corrections, the lack of disclosure regarding its agenda, and its handling of opinion.

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#### Transparency

French.Xinhuanet.com does not clearly identify Xinhua News Agency as its owner. The website only states that it is "Sponsored by Xinhua News Agency" at the bottom of every page. It also does not disclose its ties to the Chinese government.

The site does not name its editorial leadership. Articles do not include author names, and the site does not provide contact or biographical information for its content creators.

The site includes a general email address to contact its editorial staff at the bottom of every story.

French.Xinhuanet.com does not run advertising.

Xinhua did not respond to two emails seeking comment on the site's lack of information regarding its ownership, editorial leadership, and content creators.

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#### History

Communist leader Mao Zedong founded the Red China News Agency, the predecessor to Xinhua, in 1931, as his Chinese Communist Party was fighting for power in the civil war against Chinese Nationalists. The organization was renamed Xinhua in 1937.

Xinhuanet Co., Ltd. became a publicly traded company in October 2016.

In September 2018, the U.S. Justice Department ordered Xinhua to register as a foreign agent under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which requires government lobbyists to update the department on their activities.

In February 2020, the U.S. State Department announced that five China-owned outlets, including Xinhua, would be designated as foreign missions of the

Chinese government. A month later, the State Department announced limits on the number of Chinese citizens allowed to work for Xinhua and other Chinese media in the U.S.

In June 2020, Facebook announced that it would start labelling media outlets that are partially or wholly under the editorial control of a state. The label was immediately applied to Xinhua News, Iran's Press TV, and Russia's Sputnik News.

"The concern for us is state media combines the agenda setting power of a media entity with the strategic backing of a state," Nathaniel Gleicher, head of security policy at Facebook, told CNN. "If you're reading coverage of a protest, it's really important you know who is writing that coverage and what motivation they have. The goal of this is to ensure the public will see and understand who is behind it."

Written by: [Sophia Tewa](#)

Edited by: [Eric Efron](#), [Chine Labbe](#), [Yves Clarisse](#)

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

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