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The Epoch Times

The Epoch Times is a far-right^[12] international multi-language newspaper and media company affiliated with the Falun Gong new religious movement.^[17] The newspaper, based in New York City, is part of the **Epoch Media Group**, which also operates New Tang Dynasty (NTD) Television.^[18] *The Epoch Times* has websites in 35 countries but is blocked in mainland China.^[19]

The Epoch Times opposes the Chinese Communist Party,^[20] promotes far-right politicians in Europe,^{[3][5]} and has backed President Donald Trump in the U.S.;^[21] a 2019 report by NBC News showed it to be the second-largest funder of pro-Trump Facebook advertising after the Trump campaign.^{[18][22][23]} The Epoch Media Group's news sites and YouTube channels have spread conspiracy theories such as QAnon and anti-vaccine misinformation.^{[18][24][25]} In 2020, the *New York Times* called it a "global-scale misinformation machine".^[21] *The Epoch Times* frequently promotes other Falun Gong affiliated groups, such as the performing arts company Shen Yun.^{[14][26][21]}

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THE EPOCH TIMES



Front page of *The Epoch Times* New York edition for March 18, 2016

Type	International newspaper
Format	Broadsheet
Owner(s)	Epoch Media Group
Founder(s)	John Tang
Publisher	Epoch Media Group
Founded	May 20, 2000
Language	Multiple, mainly Chinese and English
Headquarters	229 W. 28th St. New York, NY 10001 U.S.
Website	www.theepochtimes

[External links](#)

[.com \(https://www.theepochtimes.com/\)](https://www.theepochtimes.com)

History and relation to Falun Gong

The Epoch Times was founded in 2000 by John Tang and other Chinese Americans affiliated with the Falun Gong new religious movement.^[27] Tang was a graduate student in Georgia at the time; he began the newspaper in his basement.^[21] The founders said they were responding to censorship inside China and a lack of international understanding about the Chinese government's repression of Falun Gong.^{[28][29]}

By 2003, *The Epoch Times* website and group of newspapers had grown into one of the largest Chinese-language news sites and newspaper groups outside China, with local editions in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and major Western European countries.^[30] The first English edition launched online in 2003, followed by the New York print edition in 2004.^[31]

Nick Couldry and James Curran wrote in 2003 that the paper represents a "major step in the evolution of Falun Gong-related alternative media", and may be part of a *de facto* media alliance with democracy activists in exile.^[32] In 2003 sociologist Yuezhi Zhao wrote that the paper "displays an indisputable ideological and organizational affinity with Falun Gong" and that it strongly emphasizes negative portrayals of the Chinese government and positive portrayals of Falun Gong. Per Zhao, *Epoch* portrays itself as neutral, independent, and public-interest oriented.^[30]

In 2005, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that "three new U.S.-based, Chinese-language media outlets that provide provocative reporting about the Communist Party, government oppression and social unrest in China (namely *The Epoch Times*, *Sound of Hope*, and NTDTV) have ties to the Falun Gong spiritual movement." When interviewed, executives at each outlet claimed they did not represent the Falun Gong movement as a whole.^[20]

Associated Press reporter Nahal Toosi wrote in 2006 that it is "technically inaccurate" to say that Falun Gong owns *The Epoch Times*, although many of the newspaper's staffers are Falun Gong practitioners.^[33] Toosi noted "many observers" have said Falun Gong uses the newspaper for its public relations campaigns, and the paper is connected with the group and carries sympathetic coverage of it.^{[33][34][35][36][37]}

The English *Epoch Times* chair Stephen Gregory denied in 2006 that *Epoch Times* is directly connected to Falun Gong.^[33] Independent reporters in the US repeatedly confirm the connection.^{[18][21]}

In 2008, David Ownby, director of the Center for East Asian Studies at the *Université de Montréal* and the author of *Falun Gong and the Future of China*, said the newspaper is set up by Falun Gong practitioners with their own money.^[38] He described *The Epoch Times* as wishing to be taken seriously as a global newspaper rather than being judged on the basis of its strong association with Falun Gong.^{[38][39]} He wrote: "*Epoch Times* is a newspaper with a mission, that of reporting on issues bearing on human rights throughout the world, which allows for considerable focus on China and Falun Gong."^[40]

Canadian scholar Clement Tong wrote^{[34][41][42][43][44]} *The Epoch Times* "operates as a mouthpiece for" Falun Gong without an official statement of affiliation with the movement.^[42]

The Epoch Times

Traditional Chinese 大紀元時報

Simplified Chinese 大纪元时报

Transcriptions

Standard Mandarin

Hanyu Pinyin Dàjìyuán Shíbào

In 2009, Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Gong, appeared at the newspaper's headquarters in Manhattan and called for the expansion of *The Epoch Times* to "become regular media."^[18] Li has referred to *The Epoch Times* as "our media", along with the NTD digital production company and the Shen Yun dance troupe.^{[18][45]} Two former employees said that top editors traveled to meet with Li at Falun Gong's compound, Dragon Springs, where Li weighed in on editorial and strategic decisions; *The Epoch Times* denied that a meeting took place.^[21]

Former employees of *The Epoch Times* have noted the involvement of Falun Gong practitioners in the management and editorial process.^[18] Three anonymous former employees said *Epoch Times* workers were encouraged to attend weekly "Fa study" sessions outside work hours to study the teachings of Li Hongzhi.^[46] Former employees have said that speaking negatively about *The Epoch Times* amounts to disobeying Li.^[21]

The Epoch Times runs frequent promotional stories about the Shen Yun dance troupe that is affiliated with Falun Gong. *The New Yorker's* review of Shen Yun called *The Epoch Times* "the world's foremost purveyor of Shen Yun content."^[47]

In a 2018 report, conservative think-tank the Hoover Institution commented that "the space for truly independent Chinese-language media in the United States has shrunk to a few media outlets supported by the adherents of Falun Gong, the banned religious sect in China, and a small publication and website called Vision Times", the report noting that the latter is also associated with Falun Gong.^[48] Similarly, in a 2019 report, Reporters Without Borders commented that "Aside from the Epoch Times newspaper and New Tang Dynasty Television, which are run by the Falun Gong, a religious movement persecuted in China, and China Digital Times, a website founded by a leading US-based critic of the regime, the United States now has few truly independent diaspora media."^[49]

In 2019, an NBC News investigative report suggested *The Epoch Times's* political coverage may be affected by Falun Gong believers' anticipation of a judgment day in which communists are sent to hell, and Falun Gong's allies are spared. Former *Epoch Times* employees told NBC News that President Donald Trump is viewed as a key anti-communist ally,^[18] allegedly hastening that judgment day.^[50]

In 2020, Vox identified China Uncensored and NTD as affiliates of the *Epoch Times*, as part of a multilingual "media empire".^[51]

Finances

According to NBC News, "little is publicly known about the precise ownership, origins or influences of *The Epoch Times*," and it is loosely organized into several regional tax free non-profits, under the umbrella of the Epoch Media Group, together with New Tang Dynasty Television.^{[18][21]}

The newspaper's revenue has increased rapidly in recent years, from \$3.8 million in 2016 to \$8.1 million in 2017 (with spending of \$7.2 million), \$12.4 million in 2018^[52] and \$15.5 million in 2019.^{[53][54]} Tax documents of the Epoch Media Group indicated that between 2012 and 2016, the group received \$900,000 from a principal at Renaissance Technologies, a hedge fund led by the conservative political donor Robert Mercer.^[55] Chris Kitze, a former NBC executive and creator of the fake news website Before It's News who also manages a cryptocurrency hedge fund, joined the paper's board as vice president in 2017.^[52]

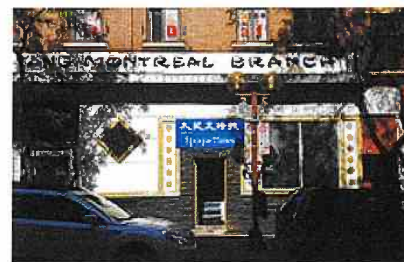
A 2020 report in *The New York Times* called *The Epoch Times's* recent wealth "something of a mystery." Steve Bannon, the former executive chairman of Breitbart News who produced a documentary with NTD, said "I'd give them a number" on a project budget and "they'd come back and say, 'We're good for

that number." Former employees say they were told *The Epoch Times* is financed by subscriptions, ads and donations from wealthy Falun Gong practitioners.^[21]

Distribution

The Epoch Times says it hosts websites in 21 languages and 35 countries, and has print editions in eight languages: Chinese, English, Spanish, Hebrew, Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, and Indonesian.^[19]

In April 2019, videos and ads from the Epoch Media Group including *The Epoch Times* and New Tang Dynasty (NTD) totaled 3 billion views on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, according to the analytics company Tubular. That ranked it 11th among all video creators, and ahead of any other traditional news publisher, according to NBC News.^[18]



Époque Times office in Montreal's Chinatown in 2015

Editorial stance

The Epoch Times is an ardent opponent of the Chinese Communist Party.^[18] Since a shift in the newspaper's approach in 2016, the newspaper received significant attention for its favorable coverage of the Trump administration,^{[18][22]} the German far-right,^{[3][56]} and the French far-right.^[5]

The Epoch Times "generally stayed out of U.S. politics" before 2016, "unless they dovetailed with Chinese interests," according to a report by NBC News. Ben Hurley, a former *Epoch Times* employee until 2013, stated that the newspaper was critical toward abortion and LGBT and that Falun Gong practitioners "saw communism everywhere" including in internationalist figures like Hillary Clinton and Kofi Annan, "but there was more room for disagreements in the early days." Since 2016, according to NBC News, *The Epoch Times* has promoted favorable coverage of Trump's campaign and presidency, and emphasized issues such as Islamic terrorism and illegal immigration to the United States. It has also emphasized "what the publication claims is a labyrinthian, global conspiracy led by [Hillary] Clinton and former President Barack Obama to tear down Trump."^[18]

A former *Epoch Times* reporter who covered the 2016 campaign, Steve Klett, said his editors had encouraged favorable coverage of Trump after he won the Republican nomination, and that "they seemed to have this almost messianic way of viewing Trump as the anti-Communist leader who would bring about the end of the Chinese Communist Party."^[21] After Trump was elected, *The Epoch Times* hired Brendan Steinhauer, a Tea Party strategist, to reach out to more conservatives and encourage the Trump administration to oppose the persecution of Falun Gong.^[21]

The Epoch Times picks up mainstream newswire stories and in some places can resemble a community newspaper.^[57] According to sociologist Yuezhi Zhao, "While mainstream newspapers typically treat Web versions as an extension of the already-existing print version, *The Epoch Times* website serves as the master for all its worldwide papers."^[30]

The Epoch Times is known for alleging conspiracies involving former Communist Party general secretary Jiang Zemin,^[58] under whose administration Falun Gong was suppressed in China.

The newspaper is at odds with the Taiwanese-owned and U.S.-based Chinese language newspaper World Journal, accusing it of being a "megaphone for the evil Chinese Communist Party."^[58]

In September 2017, the German edition, *The Epoch Times Deutschland*, which became Web-only in 2012, was described by online magazine *The China File* as being aligned with the German far-right, and attractive to supporters of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party and the anti-immigrant group Pegida.^[3] Stefanie Albrecht, a reporter for the German broadcaster RTL who spent several days inside the Berlin office of *The Epoch Times* while investigating the far right, said that *The Epoch Times* staffers she met had no journalistic training and did not check facts, trusting instead in the alternative sources they consulted.^[5]

In France, *The Epoch Times* gives "an unfettered platform to Jean-Marie Le Pen, the patriarch of the French far right, and his daughter, Marine, who leads the nationalist party her father founded," according to *The New Republic*.^[5]

Notable coverage

'Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party' editorials

In November 2004, the Chinese version of *The Epoch Times* published a series of editorials titled "Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party." The editorials argued that China would not be free or prosperous until it was rid of the party, which it said was at odds with China's cultural and spiritual values.^[59]

Millions of copies of the articles circulated in China through e-mails, faxes, and underground printing houses, according to a guest opinion article in *The Christian Science Monitor* by Caylan Ford, a former staff writer for *The Epoch Times*. Ford wrote that the campaign differed from the 1989 and 2008 democracy movements in China by drawing on Buddhist and Daoist spirituality.^[59]

In 2005, organizers of an associated campaign urging people to quit the Chinese Communist Party said that more than 2 million people had resigned.^[60]

A report by the OpenNet Initiative said that 90% of websites mentioning the phrase "Nine Commentaries" were blocked in mainland China as of 2005.^{[61][62]}

In 2012, a former People's Liberation Army Air Force officer testified to the United States Congressional-Executive Commission on China that he had been sentenced to four years of prison for distributing a "Nine Commentaries" DVD in Beijing.^[63]

The "Tuidang" movement to quit the Chinese Communist Party was selected as the one of the top global events in 2011 by Russian economist Andrey Illarionov, who cited claims by *The Epoch Times* that over 100 million people had quit.^[64]

According to China scholar David Ownby, the Nine Commentaries are a "condemnation of communism and a direct indictment of the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party's rule in China." While acknowledging the "unnecessary violence" the Chinese Communist Party has inflicted, Ownby finds that the lack of balance and nuance in tone and style makes the editorials resemble "anti-Communist propaganda written in Taiwan in the 1950s."^[40]

Pro-Trump conspiracy theories and disinformation

The Epoch Times has promoted an array of pro-Donald Trump conspiracy theories^{[65][66]} and is known as one of Trump's closest media allies and defenders.^{[66][22]} The paper has financially benefited from its promotion of Trump conspiracies, increasing its revenue nearly fourfold during the first three years of Trump's administration (from \$3.9 million in 2016 to \$15.5 million in 2019) as it catered to Trump's most ardent supporters, to whom the paper marketed itself via targeted social media advertising.^[67] The publication championed Trump's Spygate conspiracy theory in its news coverage and advertising, and the Epoch Media Group's *Edge of Wonder* videos on YouTube have spread the far-right, pro-Trump QAnon conspiracy theory,^[18] and embraced false "QAnon" claims.^[68] An NBC News report found that two of *Edge of Wonder's* hosts have been a creative director and chief photo editor at *The Epoch Times* respectively. The newspaper promoted *Edge of Wonder* videos in dozens of Facebook posts through 2019.^[18]



Woman at Million MAGA March on November 14, 2020 in Washington, D.C., distributing copies of *The Epoch Times* featuring a headline that quotes Donald Trump's disputed claim about the results of the 2020 United States presidential election.

During the February 2020 Iowa Democratic caucuses, *The Epoch Times* shared viral disinformation from the conservative group Judicial Watch that falsely alleged inflated voter rolls.^[69] The claim, which went viral on Facebook, was debunked by fact checkers and the Iowa secretary of state.^{[70][71]} A Harvard media expert quoted by NBC News said *The Epoch Times* employed a "classic disinformation tactic" known as "trading up the chain," in which false stories are repackaged and shared.^[69]

After Trump was defeated by Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election, *The Epoch Times* consistently sought to question the election results.^[72] The organization produced a 93-minute video that falsely suggested widespread fraud in the counting; one interviewee, attorney Lin Wood, falsely alleged that China had bought an American election vendor.^[73] Versions of the video on YouTube, the *Epoch Times* website and NTD were viewed hundreds of thousands of times.^[73] *The Epoch Times* created a network of seven new YouTube channels to pump out election disinformation and other false claims, including lies about the Nashville Christmas Day bombing.^[66] Only one of the seven YouTube channels disclosed its ties to the *Epoch Times* or Falun Gong.^[66] In the two and a half months after their creation, the disinformation channels garnered tens of millions of views and at least 1.1 million subscribers.^[66] One of the channels ("Eye Opener With Michael Lewis") portrays itself as an independent effort by the host "and a few friends."^[66] After the videos' false and misleading claims were reported on, YouTube removed several of the videos in accordance with the site's policy against election disinformation.^[66]

The newspaper helped publicize the January 6, 2021, Trump rally in Washington, D.C., that led to the storming of the Capitol by a violent pro-Trump mob. Afterward, one of its columnists suggested that the riot was a "false flag" operation,^[72] and Michael Lewis's *Epoch Times*-linked YouTube channel echoed the same lie, suggesting that the Capitol attack was orchestrated by "antifa" as part of an "old Communist tactic."^[66]

COVID-19 coverage and misinformation

The Epoch Times has spread misinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic in print and via social media including Facebook and YouTube.^{[74][75]} It has promoted anti-China rhetoric and conspiracy theories around the coronavirus outbreak, for example through an 8-page special edition called "How the Chinese Communist Party Endangered the World", which was distributed unsolicited in April 2020 to mail customers in areas of the United States, Canada, and Australia.^{[76][77]} In the newspaper, the

SARS-CoV-2 virus is known as the "CCP virus", and a commentary in the newspaper posed the question, "is the novel coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan an accident occasioned by weaponizing the virus at that [Wuhan P4 virology] lab?"^{[74][76]} The paper's editorial board suggested that COVID-19 patients cure themselves by "condemning the CCP" and "maybe a miracle will happen".^[52]

The misinformation tracker NewsGuard called the French page of *The Epoch Times* one of the "super-spreaders" of COVID-19 misinformation on Facebook, citing an *Epoch Times* article that suggested the virus was artificially created.^{[78][79]} NewsGuard later changed the rating of the English edition of *The Epoch Times* from green to red.^[19]

A story in *The Epoch Times* on February 17, 2020, shared a map from the internet that falsely alleged massive sulfur dioxide releases from crematoriums during the COVID-19 pandemic in China, speculating that 14,000 bodies may have been burned.^[80] A fact check by *AFP* reported that the map was a NASA forecast taken out of context.^[80]

A widely viewed video released by *The Epoch Times* on April 7, 2020, was flagged by Facebook as "partly false" for "the unsupported hypothesis that SARS-CoV-2 is a bioengineered virus released from a Wuhan research laboratory." The video featured *Judy Mikovits*, an anti-vaccination activist.^{[81][82]} The fact-checker Health Feedback said of the video that "several of its core scientific claims are false and its facts, even when accurate, are often presented in a misleading way."^[75]

A story by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) on April 29, 2020, reported that some Canadians were upset to receive a special edition of *The Epoch Times* that called COVID-19 the "CCP virus". Later the CBC retracted a headline on its story that had quoted a recipient saying the special edition was "racist and inflammatory", and the CBC also retracted a claim that *The Epoch Times* edition had concluded that COVID-19 was a bioweapon.^{[76][83]} Opinion columns published by conservative tabloid *The Toronto Sun* accused the CBC of bias against *The Epoch Times*^{[84][85]} and said the CBC's report may have misled readers into thinking *The Epoch Times* was spreading anti-Asian sentiment.^[85]

Other

The paper carried an interview with outspoken Canadian Conservative Member of Parliament *Rob Anders* in 2010, wherein Anders alleged that the Chinese government used gifts and business deals in attempts to influence Canadian political decisions.^{[86][87]}

Social media bans

Ads banned by Facebook

The Epoch Media Group spent \$11 million on Facebook ads in 2019,^[72] including, over a six-month period in 2019, more than \$1.5 million on about 11,000 pro-Trump Facebook advertisements purchased by *The Epoch Times*.^{[18][23][72]} According to publicly-available Facebook ad data reported on by NBC News, the *Epoch Times* spent more on pro-Trump ads than any other group except the Trump campaign itself.^{[18][23]} Political ad spending on Facebook in April 2019 through an account called "Coverage of the Trump Presidency by The Epoch Times" exceeded any politician's spending except Trump and Democrat *Joe Biden*.^[88] Journalist *Judd Legum* wrote in May 2019 that *The Epoch Times* ads were "boosting Donald Trump and floating conspiracy theories about Joe Biden."^[88]

pages, 44 Facebook groups and 31 Instagram accounts,^[96] which in total were followed by more than 2 million people.^[95] Snopes and NBC News reported that TruthMedia had ties to the Epoch Media Group,^{[97][95]} but Stephen Gregory, publisher of *The Epoch Times*, denied this.^[95]

TruthMedia, now banned from Facebook, continues to operate YouTube channels in Chinese, English, Japanese, and Vietnamese, and has accounts on Pinterest and Twitter.^[94] It appears to have begun a petition to the White House to "start calling the novel coronavirus the CCP virus."^{[95][94]}

Censorship by the Chinese government

In some cases *The Epoch Times* operates in a hostile overseas environment, in which "overseas Chinese media companies choosing to remain independent or publish non-approved content become the targets of an aggressive campaign of elimination or control."^[98] In one instance, Chinese diplomatic officials made threats against media for reporting Falun Gong-related content; in other cases, advertisers and distributors have been threatened not to support *The Epoch Times*. Communist Party authorities have been accused of resorting to "militant methods" against the newspaper and its staff, including attacking staff and destroying computer equipment.^[98]

In 2006, the International Federation of Journalists criticized what it called a "dirty war" against *The Epoch Times*, citing incidents such as *The Epoch Times*'s Hong Kong printing plant being broken into and damaged by unidentified men, and Epoch's offices in Sydney and Toronto receiving suspicious mail envelopes suspected of containing toxic materials. The IFJ also noted incidences of *Epoch Times* staff and advertisers being intimidated, and newspapers being confiscated, in what it characterized as "a vicious witch-hunt aimed at crushing the voice of dissent."^[99]

The newspaper was briefly banned from Malaysia after coming under reported pressure by the Chinese Communist Party.^[36]

In 2016, the newspaper was removed from the pharmacy of Australian National University, after the president of the Chinese Students and Scholars Association confronted the pharmacist and threw out the papers. The incident drew national media coverage over questions of Chinese government sponsored overseas student organizations.^{[100][101]}

In November 2019, Reporters Without Borders called on Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam to protect press freedoms after *The Epoch Times* said four masked arsonists with batons had damaged its printing press.^[102] Additionally, in a 2019 report, Reporters Without Borders said that *The Epoch Times*' chief technical officer, Li Yuan, was assaulted in his Atlanta, Georgia, home on February 8, 2006, by "suspected Chinese government agents" who took his two laptops.^[49]

On 12 April 2021, the Hong Kong printing facility was vandalized during working hours, in the presence of staff members. The attack was filmed by CCTV. ^{[103] [104]}

White House protocol controversies

In September 2018, *Epoch Times* photographer Samira Bouaou broke White House protocol and handed Trump a folder during an official event.^[105]

On August 13, 2020, the White House invited reporters from *The Epoch Times* and the right-wing news outlet Gateway Pundit to a press briefing. According to a report by the Washington Post, "Gateway Pundit and *Epoch Times* both jumped the line with the White House's blessing starting on Thursday",

prompting objections from the president of the White House Correspondents' Association.^{[106][107]}

Assessments

Ming Xia, a political science professor at the Graduate Center at the City University of New York, wrote in 2007 that *The Epoch Times* represents part of Falun Gong's strategic effort to expand to non-practitioners, and "embed itself into the large civil society for influence and legitimacy."^[108] In 2018 he described *The Epoch Times* staff as largely part-time and volunteer, and said they "do not follow the protocols professional journalists abide by."^[105]

The misinformation tracker NewsGuard said *The Epoch Times* "fails to meet several basic standards of credibility and transparency."^[19]

The Epoch Times has been criticized by some scholars for biases, particularly regarding the Chinese Communist Party and mainland China issues, as well as for being a "mouthpiece" of the Falun Gong movement.^{[34][41][43][35][36][37]} James To, a New Zealand political scientist, described *The Epoch Times* as the "primary mouthpiece" of Falun Gong, writing that it "lacks credibility", despite the newspaper posing a "viable threat to the CCP" by publishing articles about the party's negative aspects.^[109] In his book *Blocked on Weibo: What Gets Suppressed on China's Version of Twitter and Why*, University of Toronto research fellow Jason Q. Ng referred to the paper's coverage of mainland China issues as "heavily biased against the Communist Party" and thus its reportage "should be viewed skeptically."^[110]

A 2018 report by conservative think-tank the Hoover Institution called *The Epoch Times* one of the few independent Chinese-language media outlets in the United States not taken over by businessmen sympathetic to the Chinese government. The report also said that reports on China by *The Epoch Times* and other outlets affiliated with Falun Gong, which is banned from China, are "uneven."^[48]

Seth Hettner wrote in *The New Republic* that *The Epoch Times* "has built a global propaganda machine, similar to Russia's Sputnik or RT, that pushes a mix of alternative facts and conspiracy theories that has won it far-right acolytes around the world."^[5]

Joan Donovan of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University called *The Epoch Times* "a known disinformation operation."^[69]

James Bettinger, a professor of communications at Stanford University and the director of the John S. Knight Journalism Fellowships, said "Even if *Epoch Times* is not associated with Falun Gong, if they consistently write about Falun Gong in the same perspective, or if there are no articles examining Falun Gong, people would perceive it as being not credible."^[57] Orville Schell, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at University of California, Berkeley, said in 2005 that "It's hard to vouch for their quality because it's difficult to corroborate, but it's not something to be dismissed as pure propaganda."^[111]

In his 2008 book on Falun Gong, David Ownby wrote that *The Epoch Times* articles are "well written and interesting, if occasionally idiosyncratic in their coverage."^{[40][112][113]} According to Ownby, the newspaper has been praised and also criticized for a perceived bias against the CCP, and support of Falun Gong practitioners and other dissidents such as Tibetans, Taiwanese independence advocates, democracy activists, Uyghurs and others. The paper, therefore, is often assessed in light of its connection to Falun Gong, rather than a thorough analysis of its editorial content.^[114]

Jiao Guobiao, a former Beijing University journalism professor who was dismissed after criticizing the Propaganda Department, proposed that even if *The Epoch Times* published only negative information highly critical of the CCP, the weight of their attacks could never begin to counterbalance the positive

propaganda the party publishes about itself. In addressing media balance, Jiao noted that the Chinese public lacked negative, critical information regarding their country. As such, he noted for a need of media balance based on the principles of freedom, equality, and legality, and that media balance "is the result of the collective imbalances of all."^[41]

Haifeng Huang, professor of political science at the University of California, said, "I'm not exactly clear why they have become such a major pro-Trump voice" but "part of it is perhaps because they regard President Trump as tough on the Chinese government and therefore a natural ally for them."^[46]

The web-only, German edition of the paper, *Epoch Times Deutschland*, has aligned with the anti-immigration far-right in Germany; the paper favorably comments on Alternative for Germany and Pegida while criticizing mainstream German media as not to be trusted.^[3] Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian of *Foreign Policy* writes that "It's not clear why the German website of a Falun Gong newspaper would choose to promote right-wing populism in Germany" but that the decision could be a business decision to drive an increase in views of the publication, or because such views reflect the teaching of Falun Gong leader Li Hongzhi, "who believes that mixed-race children are 'pitiable' and 'physically and intellectually incomplete.'"^[3] A German media report described the outlet as a "favorite" of Pegida supporters, along with Sputnik News and Kopp Report; and found that its articles which were critical of immigration have been shared almost daily.^[56]

A report by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a London-based think tank, said the German edition of *The Epoch Times* "primarily runs anti-West, anti-American and pro-Kremlin content—a high proportion of this content is based on unverified information."^{[5][115]}

In December 2019, the English Wikipedia deprecated the English and Chinese online versions of *The Epoch Times* as an "unreliable source" to use as a reference in Wikipedia, with editors describing it as "an advocacy group for the Falun Gong, and... a biased or opinionated source that frequently publishes conspiracy theories."^[116]

Awards

- In 2014, the newspaper's reporting won several other journalism awards (which the New York Times would later describe as indicative of the Epoch Times "edging closer to Mr. Li's vision of a respectable news outlet", before it changed course in 2015 and 2016 to focus on viral content and a "Trump Pivot").^[21]

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