

House Homeland Security Committee

Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability

Security Risk: The Unprecedented Surge in Chinese Illegal Immigration

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Introduction

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Ivey, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the unprecedented surge in Chinese illegal immigration at our southern border.

Instability along the U.S.-Mexico border remains a critical flashpoint, presenting complex geopolitical, humanitarian, and security challenges. However, a recent surge of Chinese nationals seeking entry into the United States via Mexico has significantly worsened longstanding border issues, placing heightened pressure on U.S. border control and national security systems. If left unchecked, these Chinese migrant flows risk severely undermining the United States' capacity to manage its borders, thereby amplifying potential risks related to Chinese state-directed espionage and the exploitation of migrants by transnational criminal networks.

Factors propelling the historic surge in Chinese migration include domestic economic pressures in China, the Chinese Communist Party's escalating persecution of its citizens, and the prevalence of sophisticated facilitation and smuggling networks on Chinese social media platforms. Making matters worse, Chinese authorities have sought to capitalize on the border crisis for propaganda purposes. Beyond leveraging the border crisis to shape global perceptions about the United States and sow societal division, China has also sought to exploit the crisis to highlight the perceived stability of its authoritarian regime in contrast to the perceived disorder in Western democracies.

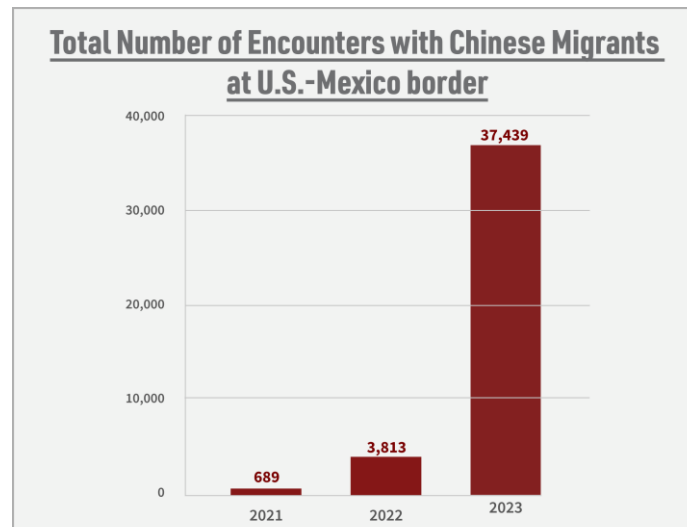
All told, the security implications of today's border crisis are profound. The United States faces the dual challenge of ensuring its border is not compromised by Chinese intelligence operatives or used as a conduit by Chinese traffickers to smuggle drugs, weapons, and people while also needing to uphold the principles of humanitarian protection and due process. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated response that includes enhanced border security measures, deeper international cooperation, and policies that address the root causes of migration. The urgency to act is underscored by the potential for these challenges to strain U.S. resources, impact diplomatic relations, and affect the overall stability of border regions.

Section I: Historical Context and Current Trends

The current influx of Chinese nationals arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border is unprecedented. According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection data, apprehensions of Chinese foreign nationals have surged from 689 in 2021 to 37,000 in 2023 — representing a fifty-fold increase.¹ This alarming escalation shows little sign of abating, presenting an increasingly formidable challenge for U.S. policymakers, state-level leaders, and federal agencies tasked with maintaining border security. Compounding these concerns are the approximately 1.8 million “got-aways” — individuals of all nationalities, including from China, who have successfully

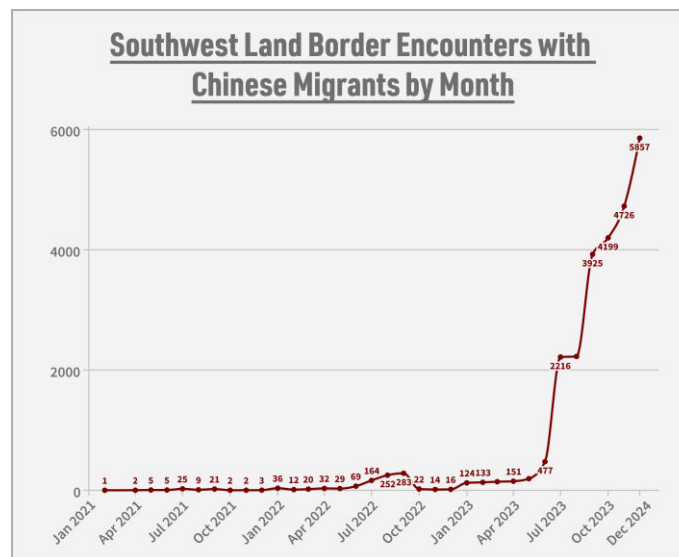
¹ 2021 apprehensions: 689; 2023 apprehensions: 37,000. CBP data. Caroline Anders, “Ten times more Chinese migrants entered the U.S. through Mexico last year,” *Semafor*, February 14, 2024. (<https://www.semafor.com/article/02/14/2024/ten-times-more-chinese-migrants-entered-the-us-through-mexico-last-year>)

crossed the border without being apprehended.² Moreover, among the 1.3 million individuals in the United States with final deportation orders, nearly 10 percent, or approximately 100,000, are Chinese nationals whom the Chinese government has refused to repatriate.³



Total number of documented encounters between U.S. border patrol and Chinese migrants between 2021 and 2023

Source: [CBP Nationwide Encounters](#)



Documented encounters between U.S. border patrol and Chinese migrants in San Diego, a major entry point for Chinese nationals, between 2021 and March 2024. December 2023 marked the highest number of encounters in San Diego, at nearly 6,000 Source: [CBP Nationwide Encounters](#).

² Maria Sacchetti and Nick Miroff, "U.S. released more than 2.3 million migrants at border since 2021, data show," *The Washington Post*, January 6, 2024. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2024/01/06/biden-migrants-us-mexico-border/>); Ali Bradley, "Footage shows migrants trying to evade border officials," *NewsNation*, March 27, 2024. (<https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/immigration/footage-migrants-evading-officials/>)

³ Eileen Sullivan, "Growing Numbers of Chinese Migrants Are Crossing the Southern Border," *The New York Times*, November 24, 2023. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/24/us/politics/china-migrants-us-border.html>)

Apart from known apprehensions, asylum adjudication statistics, particularly from 2023, offer revealing insights into the outcomes for Chinese migrants. Last year, Chinese migrants experienced a 55 percent grant rate for asylum (3,481 grants), with 12 percent denied (765 denials), and 33 percent categorized as “other” (2,127 other cases), resulting in a total of 6,373 asylum decisions.⁴ This 55 percent grant rate exceeds that of many countries, offering relatively favorable odds for Chinese migrants despite a 12 percent denial rate. Notably, this rate is significantly higher than the 11 percent asylum grant rate observed for Ecuador, a common destination for Chinese migrants seeking entry to the United States. Such statistics, particularly the relatively high grant rate for asylum, may inadvertently signal to Chinese migrants that gaining asylum in the United States is easily attainable. This perception, in turn, likely fuels further illegal Chinese migration.

Further contributing to the migrant surge is the pivotal role of Chinese social media in facilitating illegal Chinese immigration to the United States. Platforms like Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, offer comprehensive tutorials and advice for prospective U.S.-bound migrants, detailing step-by-step processes for reaching the U.S.-Mexico border.⁵ Such content not only aids migrants in locating and connecting with smugglers but also fosters a virtual community for sharing experiences and tips to illegally enter the United States, thereby enhancing the accessibility and allure of illicit migration routes. For instance, the hashtag #TheRoute on Douyin showcases numerous videos that meticulously map out the journey from China to the United States.⁶ WeChat serves as another extensively utilized platform by migrants to directly communicate with smugglers, known as “snakeheads,” who often charge upwards of \$10,000 for their smuggling services.⁷

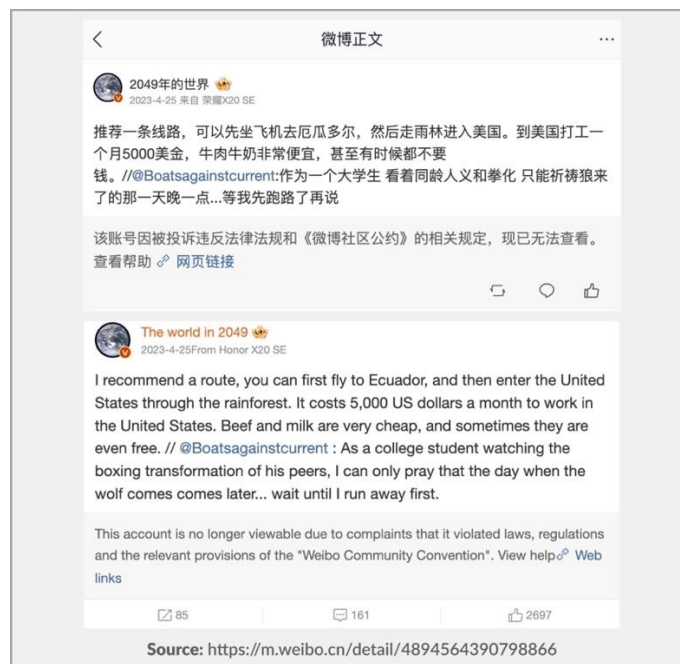
Examples of Chinese migrant stories and tutorials on social media:

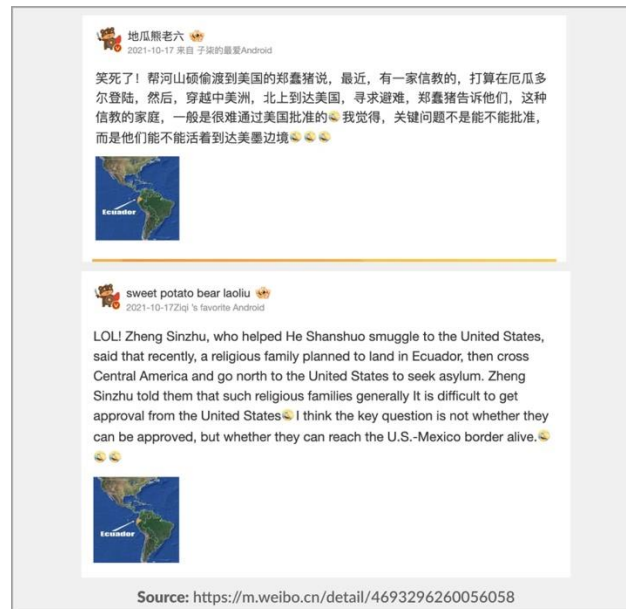
⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review, “Adjudication Statistics,” October 12, 2023. (<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1107366/dl>)

⁵ Echo Wang and Mica Rosenberg, “Migrants find tips on Chinese version of TikTok for long trek to U.S.-Mexico border,” *Reuters*, April 28, 2023. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/migrants-find-tips-chinese-version-tiktok-long-trek-us-mexico-border-2023-04-28>)

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ David Noriega, Aarne Hikkila, and Adiel Kaplan, “‘The world has changed’: WeChat, snakeheads and the new era of global migration,” *NBC News*, May 4, 2024. (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/demographics-migration-us-are-rapidly-shifting-s-change-rcna149623>)





Generally speaking, Ecuador has emerged as a significant transit hub for Chinese nationals seeking to reach the United States. In 2022, approximately 13,000 Chinese nationals entered Ecuador, a number that surged to over 45,000 in just the first 11 months of 2023.⁸ This influx is facilitated by the absence of a visa requirement for Chinese passport holders. Once in Ecuador, a network of Chinese-run businesses and smuggling facilitators provides a range of services tailored to aid migrants in their northward journey. These services encompass airport pickups, accommodation in Chinese-operated hostels, and coordination of subsequent passage to the United States, often at substantial expense. Media reports, coupled with accompanying U.S. immigration data, indicate that many of these migrants eventually converge in camps along the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly in the vicinity of San Diego, as they prepare for their final cross-border endeavor.

⁸ Yong Xiong, Simone McCarthy, and David Culver, "The 'walking route': How an underground industry is helping migrants flee China for the US," *CNN*, January 8, 2024. (<https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/08/americas/china-us-migrants-illegal-crossings-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>)

Section II: Understanding Migrant Motivations and Security Concerns

The motivations driving Chinese nationals to cross the U.S.-Mexico border are multifaceted and nuanced. While political persecution in China is a legitimate reason for seeking asylum, anecdotal evidence suggests that many Chinese migrants do not explicitly cite fear of persecution as their primary motivation for entry to the United States.⁹ Instead, many Chinese migrants report dissatisfaction with China's stringent pandemic restrictions, worsening economic conditions, and a desire for greater personal freedoms within a democratic system. Although these motivations reflect a pursuit of improved living conditions, they do not always align with the stringent criteria used to adjudicate asylum requests. Moreover, while some Chinese nationals are, indeed, pursuing immigration through skilled migration or investment-based citizenship programs, it is clear that many are instead opting for irregular, illegal migration to the United States via Latin America.¹⁰

In light of the many motivations driving Chinese nationals to cross the U.S.-Mexico border, it is also imperative to examine the contributing factors that have fueled today's historic surge. For starters, Chinese nationals encounter few barriers to entry into countries in the Western Hemisphere due to visa-free travel policies. Additionally, perceptions of insufficient U.S. law enforcement efforts along the border, coupled with the presence of well-established trafficking networks, provide additional incentives for low-risk illegal migration. This absence of deterrence has failed to dissuade Chinese migrants from undertaking the perilous journey to the border, one that is often inaccurately portrayed on Chinese social media platforms as straightforward or manageable.

The large increase in Chinese nationals at the U.S.-Mexico border also introduces additional complexities to today's security landscape, particularly in the context of espionage. China's extensive, extraterritorial national security laws mandate that any Chinese national, whether located in China or living abroad, comply with Chinese intelligence directives. More specifically, Chinese law demands that all "relevant organs, organizations, and citizens provide necessary support, assistance, and cooperation" to Chinese intelligence institutions.¹¹ Compounding these challenges is the lack of specific exemptions or limitations within laws such as China's 2017 National Intelligence Law and its recently revised Counter-Espionage Law.¹² Put differently, these laws do not merely encourage alignment with Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ideology, they demand it, thereby providing China's party-state with a powerful tool to coerce and take advantage of vulnerable migrants.

Moreover, given China's well-documented interest in expanding its espionage and influence operations against the United States, close scrutiny is warranted regarding the significant security

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Such illegal migration is often referred to on Chinese social media as "walking the route" (走线). Ting Zhang, "Why Are More and More Chinese Migrants Risking Their Lives to Cross the US Southern Border?" *The Diplomat*, June 9, 2023. (<https://thediplomat.com/2023/06/why-are-more-and-more-chinese-migrants-risking-their-lives-to-cross-the-us-southern-border>)

¹¹ National Intelligence Law of the People's Republic, (Adopted at the 28th session of the Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress on June 27, 2017), (China). (<https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/national-intelligence-law-of-the-p-r-c-2017>)

¹² "China: Counterespionage Law Revised," Library of Congress, September 22, 2023. ([https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2023-09-21/china-counterespionage-law-revised/#:~:text=The%20revised%20law%20is%20dedicated,the%20government's%20counterespionage%20work%20\(art](https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2023-09-21/china-counterespionage-law-revised/#:~:text=The%20revised%20law%20is%20dedicated,the%20government's%20counterespionage%20work%20(art))

concern of potential exploitation at the border.¹³ The specific objectives of Chinese intelligence operatives, the capabilities and resources available to them, and the effectiveness — or relative ineffectiveness — of U.S. counterintelligence measures are all factors that exacerbate existing risks stemming from the surge in Chinese nationals illegally entering the United States. These Chinese migrants are highly susceptible to being coerced, incentivized, or manipulated by Chinese intelligence agents or affiliated networks to gather intelligence or engage in other illicit activities. The dimension of this threat is amplified by the known operational tactics employed by Chinese intelligence operatives during CCP Chairman Xi Jinping's tenure, including the establishment of secret Chinese police stations across the United States to intimidate and forcefully repatriate critics of the regime.¹⁴

Generally speaking, perceived chaos or lax enforcement at the border presents a number of opportunities to Chinese intelligence services, including:

- **Operational Flexibility:** The clandestine nature of border crossings provides Chinese intelligence operatives with enhanced operational flexibility and anonymity. Potentially crossing the border in this manner allows them to circumvent traditional immigration and security screenings, such as biometric checks, thereby complicating efforts to track and monitor their activities within the United States. Such flexibility could explain the documented increase in Chinese nationals, including undocumented individuals, attempting unauthorized access to U.S. military facilities, such as the March 2024 detention of an undocumented Chinese national attempting to break into a Marine Corps base in California.¹⁵
- **Diversification of Tactics:** The porous nature of the U.S.-Mexico border allows Chinese intelligence to employ a variety of tradecraft tactics to gain entry into the United States. These include utilizing established smuggling routes, creating false documentation, and exploiting systemic vulnerabilities in border enforcement procedures. Such moves provide Chinese intelligence personnel with additional means to circumvent concerted attempts by U.S. intelligence and law enforcement personnel to detect and expose Chinese intelligence operations on U.S. soil, as underscored by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Chris Wray's statements about a surge in open cases related to Chinese espionage against the homeland.¹⁶
- **Access to Vulnerable Populations:** The influx of Chinese nationals also includes vulnerable groups, such as undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, who are particularly susceptible to coercion or manipulation. Chinese intelligence agencies may

¹³ "The China Threat," *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, accessed May 13, 2024. (<https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/the-china-threat>); Julian E. Barnes and Edward Wong, "In Risky Hunt for Secrets, U.S. and China Expand Global Spy Operations," *The New York Times*, September 17, 2023. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/17/us/politics/us-china-global-spy-operations.html>); Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "Annual Threat Assessment," February 5, 2024. (<https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2024-Unclassified-Report.pdf>)

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, Press Release, "Two Arrested for Operating Illegal Overseas Police Station of the Chinese Government," April 17, 2023. (<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/two-arrested-operating-illegal-overseas-police-station-chinese-government>)

¹⁵ Gordon Lubold and Warren P. Strobel, "Lawmakers Request Details of Chinese Nationals at Sensitive U.S. Facilities," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 19, 2023. (https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/lawmakers-request-details-of-chinese-nationals-at-sensitive-u-s-facilities-1827e57f?mod=article_inline); Nick Mordowanec, "Chinese Migrant Suddenly Found on California Military Base," *Newsweek*, March 29, 2024. (<https://www.newsweek.com/chinese-migrant-suddenly-found-california-military-base-1885133>)

¹⁶ Doreh Gregorian, "FBI director says new probes into China launched 'every 12 hours,'" *NBC News*, September 21, 2021. (<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/fbi-director-says-new-probes-china-launched-every-12-hours-n1279724>)

target these individuals, leveraging their precarious status and limited knowledge of U.S. laws to press them into intelligence service. Such pressure tactics could be exerted either before or after their entry into the United States, further highlighting the vulnerabilities of these individuals as potential assets for Chinese intelligence.

Beyond state-directed espionage, the U.S.-Mexico border serves as a significant conduit for transnational criminal organizations, including Chinese smuggling networks. Leveraging connections in both China and the United States, these networks adeptly facilitate the illegal movement of goods and people across the border, driven by growing American demand for illicit products. For instance, Chinese organized crime groups, implicated in smuggling a range of contraband, notably fentanyl, are significantly contributing to the opioid crisis in the United States. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and congressional investigations have revealed that China remains the primary producer of fentanyl precursor materials globally.¹⁷ Other investigations have revealed how Chinese smugglers ship these items into the United States through complex international shipping routes, including across the U.S.-Mexico border.

The influx of Chinese nationals across the border may be exploited by these organized crime networks to smuggle not only drugs but also counterfeit goods, weapons, and people. For example, Chinese nationals could be coerced or deceived into participating in these smuggling operations. They may be used as mules, transporting illicit goods across the border either wittingly or unwittingly. The dual threats of coercion and deception highlight the vulnerabilities faced by these individuals, who may find themselves deeply entangled in criminal activities without a clear or safe path to disentangle themselves. This situation not only presents a security challenge but also a humanitarian concern, as these individuals are at risk of severe legal and physical repercussions.

Section III: China's Propaganda Framework at the U.S. Border

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has skillfully exploited the ongoing border crisis to advance its global influence operations, which aim to shape public opinion and undermine democratic institutions. This strategy aligns with the activities of China's propaganda arm, the United Front Work Department, and serves as an extension of China's broader "discourse power," which seeks to set and shape global narratives, values, and norms to legitimize China's state power.¹⁸ By consistently misrepresenting Chinese autocracy and comparing and contrasting it with Western democracy, Beijing's discourse strategy seeks not only to influence global perceptions about China's so-called "peaceful" rise but also to undermine faith in democratic institutions and introduce conflicting social narratives in liberal societies.

¹⁷ "Investigation Findings: The CCP's Role in the Fentanyl Crisis," *The Select Committee on the CCP*, April 16, 2024. (<https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/media/investigations/investigation-findings-ccps-role-fentanyl-crisis#:~:text=The%20Select%20Committee's%20investigation%20has,synthetic%20narcotics%20through%20tax%20rebates>); Ricardo Barrios, Susan V. Lawrence, and Liana W. Rosen, "China Primer: Illicit Fentanyl and China's Role," *Congressional Research Service*, February 20, 2024. (<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10890>)

¹⁸ Kenton Thibaut, "Chinese discourse power: Ambitions and reality in the digital domain," *Atlantic Council*, August 24, 2022. (<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/chinese-discourse-power-ambitions-and-reality-in-the-digital-domain>); Craig Singleton, "Chinese Election Meddling Hits the Midterms," *Foreign Policy*, November 4, 2022. (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/04/china-us-midterm-election-interference-meddling-social-media-cybersecurity-disinformation>)

All told, Chinese propaganda tacticians appear intent on contrasting China's own authoritarian stability with the portrayal of the U.S. border as chaotic and lawless, conveniently omitting the fact that Chinese nationals are part of the migration flux. This selective narrative serves to promote China's geopolitical agenda by showcasing the supposed superiority of its governance model while highlighting perceived weaknesses and failures within American democratic structures.

Case Study: The Texas Border Standoff

In late January and early February 2024, Chinese media sources were abuzz with reports of an escalating conflict at the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly focusing on a standoff between Texas state authorities and the federal government in Eagle Pass, Texas. Chinese media and social media reports went so far as to suggest an impending American civil war fueled by Texas's actions and the federal government's response. Misinformation subsequently proliferated, with claims that Texas had officially declared a bid to secede from the United States.

Popular Chinese media outlets and social media platforms depicted the situation in Texas as the cause of widespread social unrest across the United States.¹⁹ These reports zeroed in on the political standoff between President Joe Biden and Texas Governor Greg Abbott. Abbott's Operation Lone Star, which included installing significant lengths of razor wire barriers and other measures to deter illegal crossings, was portrayed by Chinese sources as a militant action against the federal government.

This narrative took hold on Chinese social media platforms like Weibo, where posts under the hashtag #TexasDeclaresAStateOfWar circulated widely, with influential users claiming that Texas was gearing up for a military confrontation with federal authorities.²⁰ One viral post showed the Texas Military Department allegedly flying a flag with the slogan "Come and Take It," symbolizing defiance and stoking fears of an armed internal conflict.²¹ Adding to the chaos, unverified Chinese social media posts detailed alleged scenes of U.S. farmers rallying against the federal government. A notable post by a Chinese influencer claimed, "The People's Republic of Texas will most likely be founded!" while another popular Chinese influencer suggested that "the U.S. federal military and the Texas National Guard met on the battlefield," with extensive military support purportedly flowing into Texas.²²

Examples of Chinese social media postings:

¹⁹ Erin Burnett, "Chinese media seizes on US tensions to float false 'civil war' theories," *CNN*, February 8, 2024.

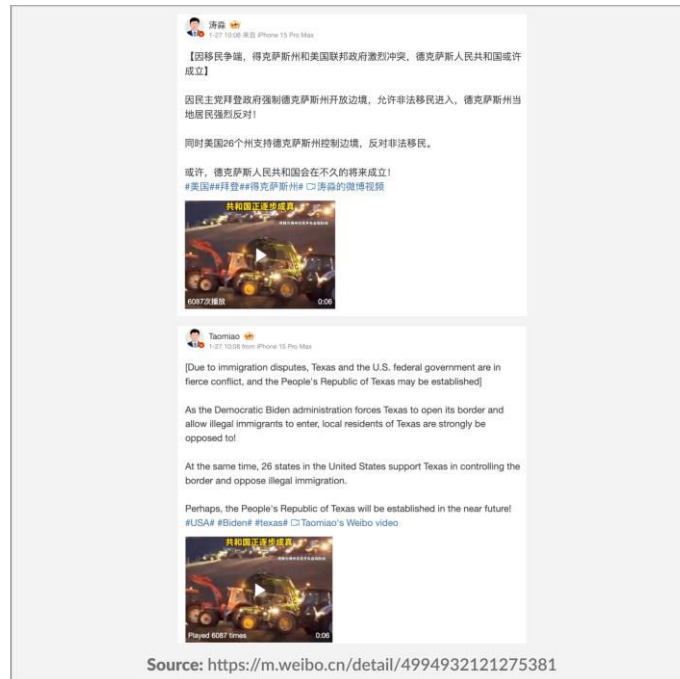
(<https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2024/02/08/china-media-us-disinformation-pkg-ripley-ebf-vpx.cnn>); Tiffany Hsu, "Chinese Influence Campaign Pushes Disunity Before U.S. Election, Study Says," *The New York Times*, February 15, 2024.

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/15/business/media/chinese-influence-campaign-division-elections.html>); Rachel Dobkin, "Chinese State Media Issues Warning on 'Disastrous' Conflict With US," *Newsweek*, March 7, 2024. (<https://www.newsweek.com/chinese-state-media-issues-warning-disastrous-conflict-us-1877081>)

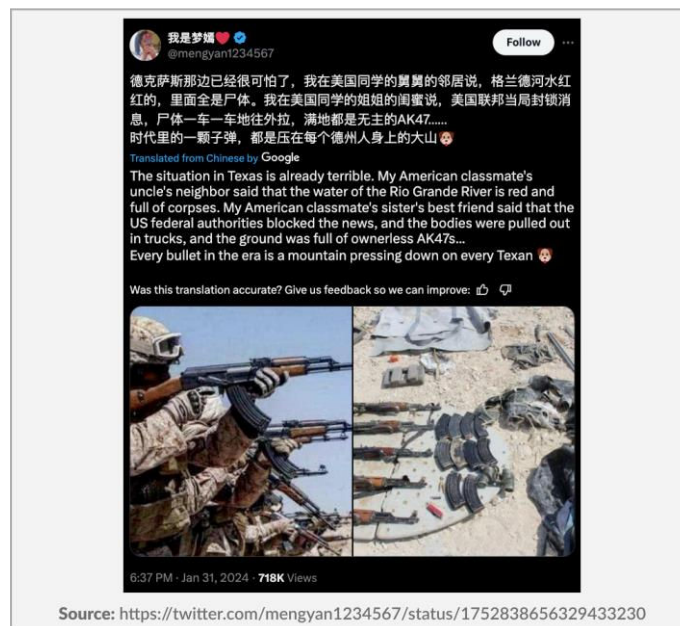
²⁰ Micah McCartney, "China's Internet Reacts to Texas and US Federal Government 'State of War,'" *Newsweek*, January 30, 2024. (<https://www.newsweek.com/china-reacts-texas-us-federal-government-joe-biden-immigration-fight-1865112>)

²¹ Kerry Allen, "Misinformation spreads in China on 'civil war' in Texas," *BBC* (UK), February 2, 2024. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-68185317>)

²² Wei-Ping Li, "The imagined American Civil War -- How was the disinformation about the Texas border standoff started, escalated, and amplified by Russian, Chinese, and Taiwanese propagators?" *Taiwan FactCheck Center*, March 18, 2024. (<https://tfc-taiwan.org.tw/articles/10398>)



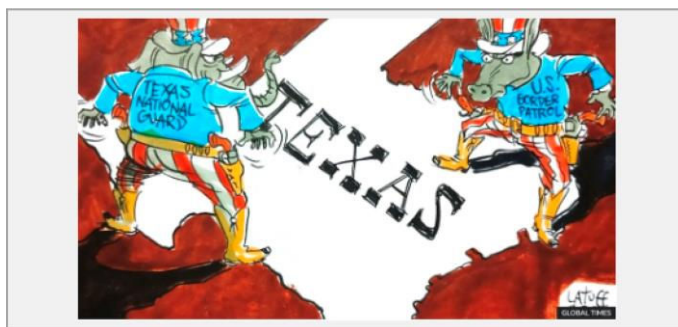
A screenshot of a Weibo post *falsely* claiming that farmer tractors gathered on the Texas-Mexican border to protest people who entered the U.S.-Mexico border illegally.



A screenshot of a Chinese post on X claiming that the situation in Texas was “horrible” and that the Rio Grande was red and full of dead bodies. The post garnered nearly half a million views.

As the fabricated narrative of a looming civil war took root, Chinese state media outlets like the *Global Times* described the situation as an “armed confrontation” (武装对峙), framing it as

evidence of a systemic breakdown within the United States.²³ This portrayal has been regularly bolstered by international commentary in Chinese-controlled media outlets suggesting the standoff is a sign of the United States' diminishing global influence. Moreover, the theme of an internal American conflict has been recurrently exploited in domestic Chinese media narratives. These narratives are carefully curated to amplify perceived divisions within the United States, thus serving as a powerful counter-narrative in response to Western critiques of China's domestic and foreign policies.



Global Times political cartoon, 2024. Source: [BBC](#)

Such disinformation is not just aimed at domestic glorification of China's stability but is also intended as a strategic countermeasure to international criticism of Chinese malign activity. By highlighting political and social unrest within the United States, Chinese media attempts to deflect attention from its own contentious behavior, such as the persecution of ethnic minorities and its ongoing territorial disputes with India, the Philippines, and Taiwan. This approach is indicative of a broader tactic employed by the Chinese government: utilizing real-time international events to reinforce its geopolitical stance and to undermine the moral authority of Western nations, particularly when they challenge China on issues of human rights and democratic values.

Section IV: Challenges and Opportunities

The U.S.-Mexico border issue presents a complex challenge compounded by an unprecedented increase in Chinese nationals seeking to illegally enter the United States. This surge presents significant vetting difficulties due to insufficient background checks and the rapid pace of arrivals, complicating the understanding of these individuals' intentions and affiliations. Furthermore, major gaps in information about undocumented entrants — who often use false documents — hinder efforts to accurately identify these people. These challenges underscore the need for a comprehensive and strategic response that not only enhances security but also ensures the humane treatment of all individuals arriving at the border.

To effectively address the challenges at the U.S.-Mexico border, U.S. policymakers must consider a range of strategic opportunities that can enhance security measures while ensuring the

²³ “得州与美联邦政府陷入武装对峙，副州长警告拜登：别惹得州！ [Texas and the U.S. federal government are locked in an armed confrontation. The lieutenant governor warned Biden: Don't mess with Texas!],” *Global Times*, January 29, 2024. (<https://news.cctv.com/2024/01/29/ARTIMzIcZHmrVNDIOjstzfK240129.shtml>)

humane treatment of migrants. These opportunities are designed to provide comprehensive solutions through enhanced protections, improved resources, and international cooperation.

- **Creation of a Specialized Task Force:** Establish a dedicated task force within the Department of Homeland Security focused specifically on addressing the challenges posed by Chinese migrants. This unit would integrate intelligence from various agencies to proactively identify and disrupt smuggling operations linked to China. Additionally, it would develop targeted outreach programs for Chinese communities, both domestically and internationally, to educate about legal immigration pathways and the risks associated with smuggling networks.
- **Enhanced Border Protections and Screening:** Upgrade screening technologies at border points with advanced biometric systems and improve data-sharing with international partners to better track and vet Chinese migrants before they arrive. This initiative would also include training border agents to effectively use these technologies to identify falsified documents and other signs of illicit entry attempts.
- **Neutralizing Criminal Syndicates and Trafficking Networks:** Enhance cooperation between U.S. law enforcement and international agencies to dismantle transnational criminal networks facilitating smuggling and human trafficking operations, with a particular focus on those exploiting Chinese nationals. Additional efforts will be needed to augment existing undercover operations and the use of cybersecurity measures to infiltrate and disrupt online platforms used for organizing and financing these activities.
- **Comprehensive Resource Allocation:** Increase resources for border personnel, intelligence, and Department of Homeland Security officials to develop deeper insights into Chinese smuggling operations. This should include funding for specialized training and technology to detect and disrupt these networks effectively.
- **International Collaboration:** Strengthening collaborations with officials in key transit countries, like Ecuador, to counteract smuggling operations at their source. This includes sharing intelligence, conducting joint operations, and deepening capacity-building initiatives to enhance local enforcement capabilities. Such efforts should focus on fostering bilateral agreements that facilitate faster response times and shared resources in critical situations.
- **Clear Messaging to Potential Migrants:** Developing clear, accessible communications in Chinese about the legal and personal risks of unauthorized border crossing and the realities of U.S. immigration policies. These messages should be distributed through Chinese social media, international broadcasting, and collaborations with community leaders within Chinese migrant populations to ensure they reach the intended audience effectively.

On behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, I thank you for inviting me to testify.