China Media Group (CMG) *en Español*:

Analyzing Chinese State media's presence on Spanish-speaking YouTube

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KEY FINDINGS:

Amid the global expansion of Chinese state media, including in Latin America, this study used content analysis and other techniques to examine the presence, reach, narratives, and strategies of the China Media Group's (CMG) Spanish-language programming on YouTube as evidenced in over 14,000 online videos published since 2016. This comprehensive analysis uncovered the following findings:

● **FLOODING WITH CONTENT:** A central component of the CMG's channels' strategy, especially that of China Global Television Network (CGTN), is to post numerous videos, far beyond the scale of publication of other international broadcasters, such as CNN and the BBC. The CMG's approach thus appears aimed at engaging audiences with a high volume of content (including apolitical but appealing videos of acrobatic feats) to acquire a following, then periodically pushing more political content to recurrent viewers.

● **LIMITED VIEWERSHIP:** CMG channels in Spanish have merged into three primary accounts belonging to CGTN, Xinhua, and CCTV's Hola China. These have garnered a considerable following—collectively exceeding 800K subscribers. Even so, the vast majority of videos (74.5% percent across the three channels) published since 2016 received fewer than 500 views. Only seven of the over 14,000 videos assessed received over one million views. The topical focus of the most popular videos typically had little to do with China's agenda, instead relating to culture, sports, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the United States, or regional news. Various videos in the analyzed sample included grammar mistakes, typos, or incorrect wording, even among the most watched videos.

● **STRATEGIC DIVERGENCE:** The editorial focus of each of these Chinese state-owned channels varies in terms of content and target audience. As evident from content analysis of the videos and their titles, CGTN primarily amplifies the Chinese government's policies to international audiences, with an emphasis on relaying official narratives, Xi Jinping's activities, events in China, or global competition with the United States under the regime's propaganda guidelines. They give only a secondary focus to

Latin America and bilateral ties. By contrast, Xinhua's content appears keen to promote strong relations between the region and the PRC. Many of the most frequent keywords are names of countries in the region, while the outlet has used its platform to cover local officials' visits to China and to promote policies or candidates in the region that align with the PRC's preferences. CCTV, through Hola China, mainly shares documentaries and dramas produced in the PRC. CGTN's launch caused the channel to have recurrent hiatuses and reduced its publication flow in 2017. The channel did not publish any videos in 2022 but resumed operation in October 2023.

● **PROPAGANDA NARRATIVES AND DISINFORMATION:** In all three of the analyzed channels propaganda that promoted the PRC system, its infrastructure, and development was prominent, as well as news emphasizing Chinese culture and poverty alleviation in Xinjiang. In addition, while not as frequent, the content of both CGTN and Xinhua en Español contained instances of disseminating disinformation, conspiracy theories, and proven falsehoods, including regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

● **AMPLIFYING RUSSIAN AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS' CONTENT:** In at least seven cases during 2023, CGTN en español has helped Russia amplify its narratives and spread content regarding the invasion of Ukraine, including airing footage from Russian state media, thereby helping them bypass a YouTube ban imposed after the war's outbreak. Such content was among the most viewed videos distributed by CGTN. On the other hand, Xinhua has helped regional governments or ruling parties in Cuba, Venezuela, or Mexico amplify their narratives, emphasizing close ties between Beijing and those nations.

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I. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and state-run media—under the umbrella entity of the China Media Group (CMG)—have expanded their global presence, including the increased production and dissemination of content in Spanish. Both policy and academic research initiatives have attempted to address this phenomenon and its consequences for their target audiences[1]. There has also been attention to disinformation from state media channels, as well as coordination with other authoritarian countries' dissemination strategies[2]. Some authors have devoted time and effort to identifying the messaging strategies of these state media channels and their actual capacity to convince local communities[3].

The issue of state-media influence is, therefore, a relevant one that affects individuals and communities across the region. There has been some scholarly examination of CGTN Español as a partner for traditional media in Latin America, but less research exists regarding its presence on social media platforms such as YouTube, one of the world's main search engines and sources of information (especially among young people)[4]. The presence of the China Media Group, which owns a system of several relevant accounts on that website, raises the question of *how the CMG operates on video platforms in the Spanish-speaking world.*

This report seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the behavior of the People's Republic of China's two main YouTube channels in Spanish: CGTN en español and Xinhua en español, as well as the recent activity of Hola China (CCTV), revived recently after a

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[1] Ye, P., & Luis Alfonso Albornoz. (2018). Chinese Media "Going Out" in Spanish Speaking Countries: The Case of CGTN-Español. Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture, 13(1), 81–97. https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.277

[2] Znojek, B. (2020). The Growing Problem of Disinformation in Latin America. Ceeol.com; PISM Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych. https://www.ceeol.com/search/gray-literature-detail?id=1167507

[3] Morales, P.S. has extensively written about these campaigns and channels, as well as cooperation among non-Western countries. Morales P. S. (2018); Morales P. S. (2022); Morales P. S. (2023).

[4] For example, a paper by Chen et. al. (2023) recently looked over CGTN's presence on Instagram, comparing it to Russia Today. The article is only focused on one specific narrative over a large-data review.

two-year hiatus. Collectively, these channels have accrued over 800,000 followers and have posted over 80,000 videos since 2009, clearly representing a significant investment by the CMG and raising questions such as:

- What is the actual content and impact of the accounts?

- What narratives are they promoting?

- Do the videos contain disinformation or other problematic content?

- Do the videos gain traction among the local Spanish-speaking population?

- Are there differences between the channels or developing propaganda strategies evidenced in their videos?

a. Research Methodology

Initially, the authors intended to analyze all major Chinese media outlets in Spanish including Xinhua, CGTN / CCTV, China Radio International (CRI), People's Daily, China Daily, and the Global Times. However, preliminary analysis immediately revealed that the PRC has significantly reduced the number of Spanish-language channels on the platform. Thus, three channels funnel most of the content from the Chinese state media: CGTN, Xinhua, and Hola China (CCTV), each having at least 70,000 followers. These platforms repost and translate content from CRI, People's Daily, and other state-run outlets, apart from the expected production of content.

To create the dataset for analysis, we scraped approximately 5,000 videos from each channel, and we analyzed 14,329 videos across three channels for this report. The subsequent examination included content analysis of narratives and keywords, as well as a more video-specific review for those items that attracted more viewers than average. Besides analyzing each channel individually, we also conducted a three-month comparison between CGTN and Xinhua, covering the period from June to

August 2023. Although the number of videos published by CGTN during this period (2,308) was significantly greater than Xinhua's (174), analysis of keywords nevertheless clarified the divergence between their editorial focus. Because the volume of videos each channel had was so different, it became difficult to compare narratives.

Videos were scraped using Ruby on Rails, analyzed using R Studio, and plotted on Google Looker Studio. A second stage of specific video analysis was conducted using Chat-GPT4 and Python to corroborate findings and to draw a more detailed text-based analysis for those selected videos. It is important to note that the analyzed view count for each video captures not only YouTube but also views across other platforms where the embedded videos, such as WhatsApp, X (Twitter), or Facebook, reflecting not only YouTube recommendations but also active user interaction.

Comparative Table (Analyzed Content)

	CGTN	XINHUA	CCTV / HOLA CHINA
Date of creation	20 Jul 2015	25 Mar 2011	12 Mar 2009
Origin country listed	China	Mexico	Spain
Subscribers	495K	78.9K	206K
Total Videos	58,049	20,298	15,770
Total Views	192,470,065	31,545,810	80,138,724
Analyzed videos	4530 (2023-04-28 to 2023-10-26)	4740 (2020-03-20 to 2023-10-30)	5059 (2016-09-15 to 2023-11-18)
3 Month sample (June-August 2023)	2308	174	N/A
View Average	2824	794	3658
View median	360	136	265
Most Watched video ever*	Two year-old child performs dangerous gymnastic stunts with ease, Incredible! [*Niño de dos años realiza cinco trucos peligrosos de gimnasia con tanta facilidad, ¡increíble!*](26,644,099 views 10 Jan 2017)	The cry for help of indigenous people in the Colombian pacific [*El llamado de auxilio de los pueblos indígenas del pacífico colombiano*] (3,377,694 views 16 Nov 2018)	On the hedge of possibility - Liu Teng girl with body most flexible in China [*Al filo de lo Imposible - Liu Teng, chica con cuerpo más flexible en China*] (19,783,440 views 17 Mar 2016)
Second Most Watched Video ever*	Vladimir Putin's dog scares Japanes journalists [*Perro de Vladímir Putin asusta a los periodistas japonese*] (15,371,679 views 16 Dec 2016; Fuente del vídeo: RT)	Tourists film a crocodile walking around in Cozumel beach [*Turistas graban cocodrilo paseando en playa de Cozumel*] (1,773,621 views 3 Jul 2016)	Wonderful dance in arabic style is dancing by the Chinese girl Luo Wenting [*Maravillosa danza al estilo árabe bailando por la niña china Luo Wenting*] (8,024,409 views 25 Feb 2016)

Source: YouTube | @CGTNEspanol; @ChinaXinhuaEspanol; @HolaChina | Visited on December 4th, 2023.

*All the videos were translated directly from Spanish to convey spelling and grammar mistakes in the original posts.

II. CGTN en Español Case Study

1. General takeaways

CGTN en español has 495K subscribers and uploads thousands of videos a month, most getting limited views but with interesting outliers. The impact of this Channel is primarily determined by the volume of uploads rather than constant engagement. With almost 60 thousand videos, CGTN en español has uploaded more content than BBC en español (Mundo)[5] with 4.7 thousand videos since 2008; Deutsche Welle en español, which amounts for 39 thousand videos since 2012[6], or CNN en español, with 12 thousand videos since 2013[7]. The output of CGTN en español is 25 videos published every day, disregarding quality or consistency, these are mostly direct cuts from their news channel, while programs and documentaries are also being bundled and published.

Despite having started several years after Xinhua, it has been more successful than the two other analyzed platforms, and re-posts from China Radio International and other CMG outlets and channels. In the six months before this report was written, its most-watched video was "[China announces the discovery of two major shipwrecks at a depth of 1000 meters] *China anuncia el descubrimiento de dos grandes pecios a 1.000 metros de profundidad*[8]" (5,375,784 views 23 May 2023).

The content exhibits a profound connection with international relations, specifically regarding the foreign policy of the PRC. For example, CGTN en español is keen to emphasize the competition between the United States and China, and heels Xi Jinping's activities over any other type of news. Its focus is, therefore, on propagating a Chinese perspective and narrative on issues that are of the Chinese Communist Party's interest.

The terminology used, but also the avoidance of certain topics is consistent with the CCP narratives. For example, when referring to Taiwan, Xinjiang, or Hong Kong,

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[5] BBC Mundo en Español (2008), visited on December 12, 2023, available at: https://www.youtube.com/@BBCMundo/videos

[6] Deutsche Welle en Español (2012), visited on December 12, 2023, available at: https://www.youtube.com/@dwespanol

[7] CNN en español (2013), visited on December 12, 2023, available at: https://www.youtube.com/@cnnee

[8] CGTN Español. (2023). China anuncia el descubrimiento de dos grandes pecios a 1.000 metros de profundidad [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78y4_HEtZoc

issues refer almost only to business and cooperation issues. *Word analysis* of the titles shows that topics related to China and Xi Jinping are the most common, followed by issues such as the U.S.'s competition with China, the U.S.'s crises such as fentanyl addiction and migration waves; economic cooperation; Japan's release of treated waters from Fukushima; Russia (depicting the

The content is deeply aligned with international relations and more specifically with the PRC's Foreign Policy. For example, CGTN en español is keen to emphasize the competition between the United States and China, and closely follows Xi Jinping's activities over any other type of news.

regime in a positive light in the war); and the promotion BRICS. As for the most popular videos, Russia comes up again, as many of the top 100 videos analyzed covered the Ukraine invasion from the Kremlin's perspective. Russia Today reposted some of these videos, highlighting cooperation between these states in overcoming information blockades in the region.

With Latin American-focused affairs, issues such as migration to the United States or local personalities such as an interview with Lionel Messi were among the most popular issues. It can be said that despite being a Spanish-speaking channel, it does not focus on regional issues unless they find a particular video to capture relevant attention from the audience, in which case the production will try to repeat those success cases.

2. Engagement analysis:

Despite the volume of followers and the number of videos published, CGTN rarely achieves a solid audience for its content. On average, videos received 2824 videos, but the median is only 360. As **Figure 1.** shows, most publications get between 100 and 500 views, and only three of the 5000 published videos received more than 1,000,000 views. The strategy of CGTN en español is, therefore, achieved by publishing an outstanding level of content that is focused on international relations, and not by producing a continuous sample of impactful videos. Some of their titles repeat more than once, and they publish some of their videos in different lengths. As for duration, videos go from ten seconds to over two hours depending on the type of content, and there isn't a correlation between the duration and the impact of the content.
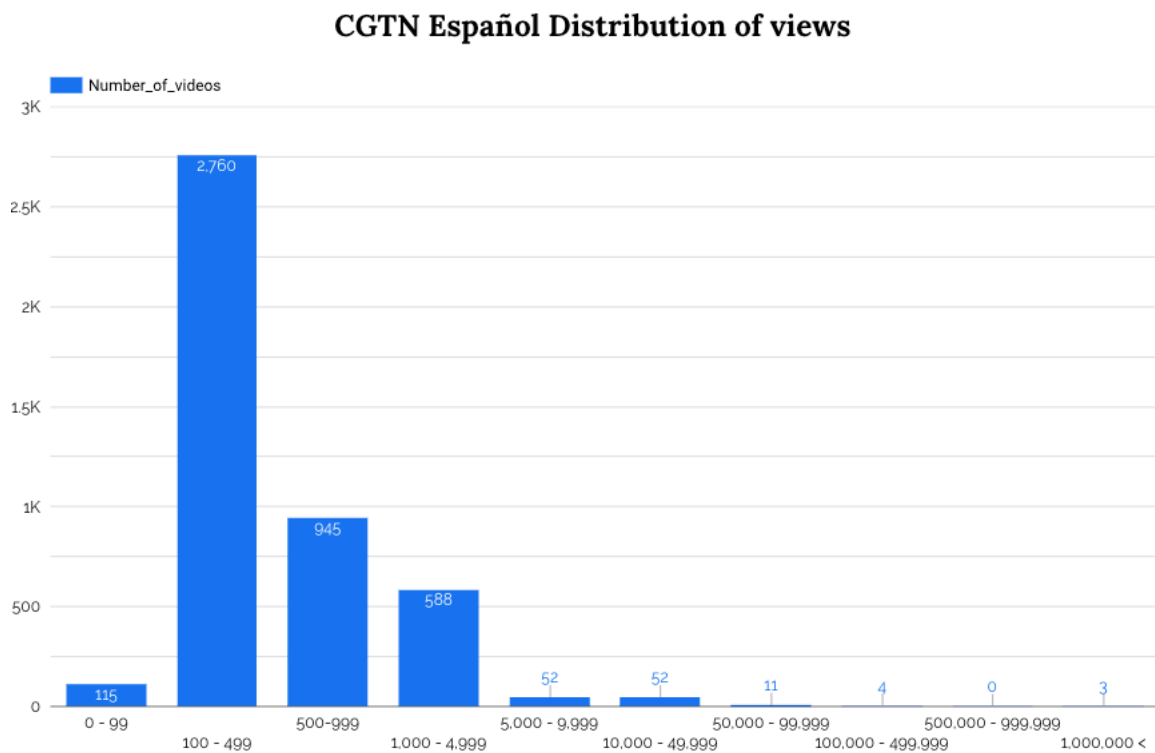

Figure 1.

3. Content analysis

A keyword analysis was conducted on both titles and descriptions of videos published by CGTN en español to identify thematic coherence. Overall, videos appear focused on China's presence in the international sphere and broadcast government figures' narratives when they relate to this issue, such as Wang Yi, Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China Central Committee.
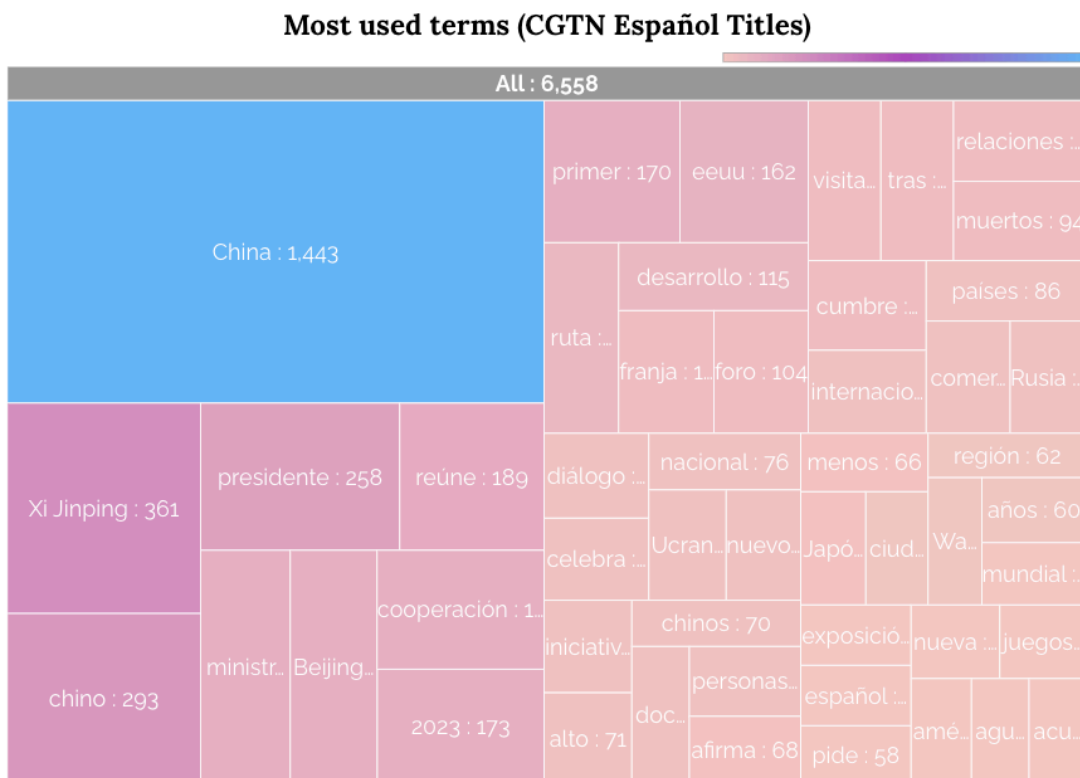

Figure 2.

The most mentioned words on video-titles include: China (1,443 mentions), President Xi Jinping (619 mentions), terms related to cooperation (around 500 mentions across several synonyms or related terms), Belt and Road initiative (around 420 mentions across related terms), Russia and Ukraine's conflict (154 direct mentions), Japan (65 mentions) releasing water from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the ocean, and the United States (162 direct mentions). Terms such as meetings, forums, dialogue, and event celebrations paint a picture of how the channel communicates various topics.

Another important issue to point out is that the word "dead people" (muertos, 94 mentions) is among the most used by the channel, probably because it covers international conflicts, but also because its sensationalist tone might catch the attention of YouTube audiences.

The most-impactful videos of CGTN en español are largely more focused on Russia, than on China or the channel's most frequently pushed narratives. There is also some limited presence of content related to BRICS, the United States, and the Mexico border migration issue.

The CMG uses this channel to present its perspective on both current affairs that are instrumental to their objectives and portray China and cooperation with other nations with a positive tone. Although CGTN avoids discussing political matters, they still provide information about natural disasters in China, such as the floods that affected the country in 2023. When discussing issues such as Xinjiang or Hong Kong, CGTN only addresses political matters in a few videos, solely to dismiss accusations of rights abuses or repression[9]. In the case of the Uyghur ethnical minority, videos emphasize first, the economic progress of the region (mentioning the Belt and Road Initiative), and second, the efforts the government puts to supposedly preserve the culture of the region. CGTN en español also amplifies messages that discredit political accusations against the CCP such as interviewing Western sources who deny the existence of re-education camps in Xinjiang[10]. This is arguably a direct disinformation campaign to muddy the discussion environment.

Along the same line, there is an obvious intention to cover issues that affect the U.S. and its reputation, portraying topics related to the U.S. in a negative tone. They often mention issues such as migration, the fentanyl drug crisis, or issues with American soldiers or civilians abroad. CGTN also follows the U.S. foreign policy, regarding specific matters that gain international attention.

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[9] For example, CGTN responded to G7 dismissing all accusations on: " East China Sea, the South China Sea, the situation in the Taiwan Strait, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the Xizang Autonomous Region and China's nuclear power" CGTN (2023) El portavoz de la cancillería china critica los asuntos tratados en la cumbre del G7. Cgtn.com. https://espanol.cgtn.com/news/2023-05-21/1660172605014216706/index.html

[10] CGTN Español. (2023). Experta australiana muestra la realidad de la región autónoma uygur de Xinjian [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQrPzIPAH0Y

The network seldom creates content that directly addresses the Latin American region or the Iberian peninsula. This shows a lack of interest or effort from the network to appeal to the Spanish-speaking public, which is also evidenced in the lack of recurrent terms related to that target.

Did these narratives have any impact? To better understand which content appeared most attractive to the target audience, we conducted a similar keyword analysis on the 129 videos that received 10,000 views or more[11]. The most-impactful videos of CGTN en español are largely more focused on Russia (Ukraine, Moscow, Kyiv, Wagner, War, and so on), than on China or the channel's most frequently pushed narratives. There is also some limited presence of content related to BRICS, the United States, and the Mexico border migration issue.
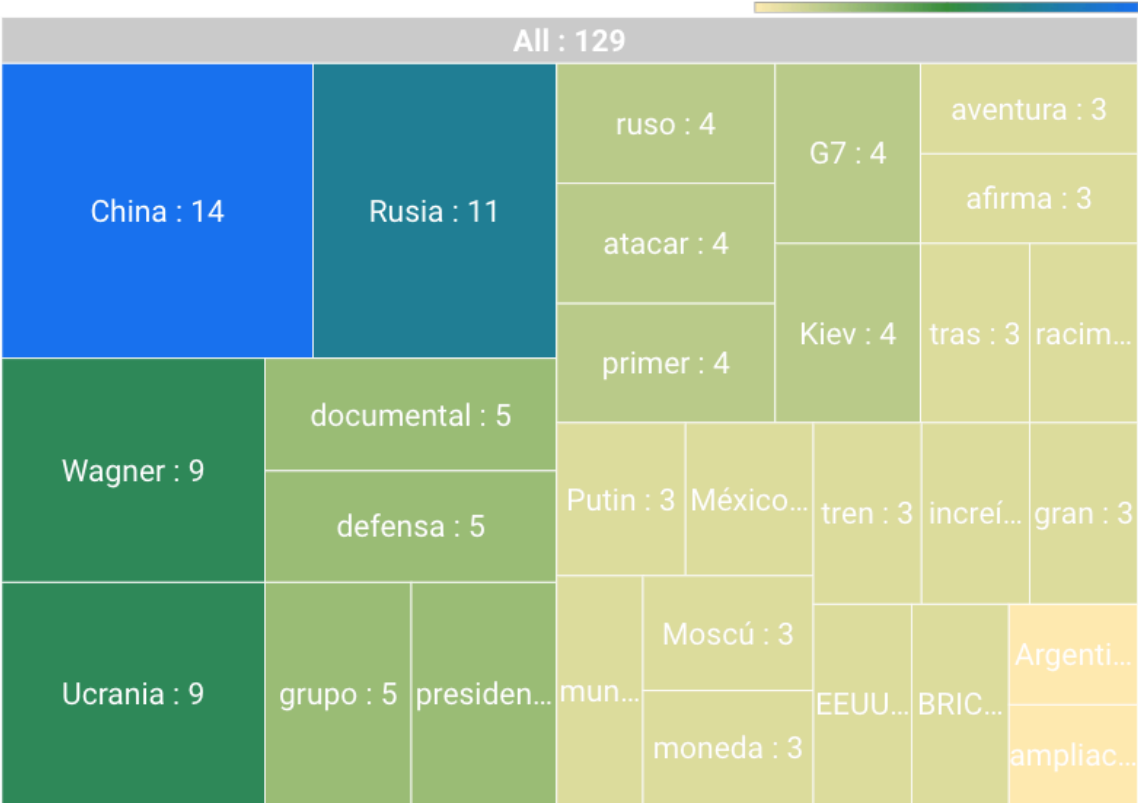

Figure 3.

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[11] Although 10,000 views is not a "viral" video, the sample for 100,000 views or more was too limited.

Therefore, there is a gap between the narratives that this channel wants to put forward and the issues that are promoted by the YouTube algorithm or that gain more traction by users who interact with said channel. The Spanish-speaking audience is not as interested in China's foreign policy as it is interested in the current regional issues, the United States, and the war in Ukraine.

4. Outliers and Significant Cases

a. Most Popular Videos of 2023

The most watched video since January 2023 is "[China announces the discovery of two major shipwrecks at a depth of 1000 meters] *China anuncia el descubrimiento de dos grandes pecios a 1.000 metros de profundidad*" (5,375,784 views, 23 May 2023)[12]. It is a 59-second video about the discovery of two sunken ships with important archeological material in the South China Sea. Comments are mostly positive, and the suggested videos are mostly other publications both by CGTN and other countries' state media.

In terms of volume of views, documentaries and free-to-watch movies are also popular in terms of viewership. The second, third, and fourth most-watched videos in this period are a documentary about tomatoes (1,149,061 views, 2 Jul 2023)[13], and the movie "Cruzando el río Yalu" about the Chinese involvement in the Korean War (1,205,506 views, 27 Jul 2023)[14]. Comments in these publications are mostly positive and many praise both China as a country and its people. This kind of innocuous content is well-received and potentially builds up Chinese soft power across the Spanish-speaking audience.

Another example of an impactful documentary during this period is a piece about the fentanyl epidemic in the U.S., "[The war against Fentanyl, a documentary] *La guerra*

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[12] CGTN Español. (2023). China anuncia el descubrimiento de dos grandes pecios a 1.000 metros de profundidad [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78y4_HEtZoc

[13] CGTN Español. (2023). La increíble aventura del tomate | Documental [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUNmoBPTCfY

[14] CGTN Español. (2023). Cruzando el río Yalu | Película doblada al español [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ck2lqkWmq2w

contra el fentanilo | Documental" (288,163 views 11 Jun 2023)[15], which matches another popular video published in 2022 which garnered over 2.5 million views[16]. This documentary had a wider audience, with some people being skeptical of China's position on the matter and others siding directly with the piece, **as portrayed in the following comments.**

"The reportage is wonderfully suspicious in favor of China. What a wonderful country with such tight control of their labs. An example to the world. If only there was one tiny critic point against the Chinese government and their control over drugs, then I would have believed this video-report. Ha!" - Youtube user.

Translated from: "El reportaje es estupendo, maravillosamente sospechoso en favor de China. Que maravilloso país con tanto control en sus laboratorios. Un ejemplo para el mundo. Si solo hubiese una, solo una pequeña crítica al gobierno de China en cuanto al control de drogas hubiese creído en el reportaje. Ja."

"A lesson for the 'gringos'. China behaves kindly in spite of being constantly attacked and the focus of slander!" - Youtube user.

Translated from: "Lección para los gringos. China se porta buena onda a pesar de que constantemente los atacan, y los envuelven en calumnias !!"

Comments found in: CGTN Español. (2023). La guerra contra el fentanilo | Documental [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-KcVf1booY

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[15] CGTN Español. (2023). La guerra contra el fentanilo | Documental [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-KcVf1booY

[16] CGTN Español. (2022). La epidemia de drogas en Estados Unidos ha devenido en un récord de muertos por sobredosis [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6N8ykZBOSU&t=28s

La epidemia de drogas en Estados Unidos ha devenido en un récord de muertos por sobredosis

CGTN Español · 496K subscribers · Subscribe · 13K · Share · Save · …

A video published in 2022 garnered the public's attention on the war on Fentanyl.

CGTN Español. (2022). La epidemia de drogas en Estados Unidos ha devenido en un récord de muertos por sobredosis [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6N8ykZBOSU&t=28s

News related to Russia, Ukraine, or Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in 2022 gained a lot of traction. The news coverage favored Russia and Putin, with a stronger emphasis on Ukraine's losses and Putin's popularity. The channel strongly condemned and attacked Nancy Pelosi on the platform[17]. Comments under those videos are typically supportive of China and The One China principle.

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[17] CGTN Español. (2022). La oscura historia de hipocresía y mala fe de Nancy Pelosi [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfrpPi0L4JY&t=23s

La oscura historia de hipocresía y mala fe de Nancy Pelosi

CGTN Español
496K subscribers

Subscribe

👍 10K 　👎　　➦ Share　　•••

CGTN is funded in whole or in part by the Chinese government. Wikipedia ⧉　　⋮

CGTN attacked Nancy Pelosi upon her visit to Taiwan.

CGTN Español. (2022). La oscura historia de hipocresía y mala fe de Nancy Pelosi [YouTube Video].
In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfrpPi0L4JY&t=23s

b. Videos that Cover Regional Issues

A small proportion of the videos published by CGTN pertain to Latin America, with just a few terms among the top 50 most frequently used words having a connection to the region. [CM1] The interview featuring footballer Lionel Messi, published on June 15, 2023, has garnered 123,584 views to date[18]. Comments under this interview are also positive both towards the journalist and the overall discussion.

Several videos about the migration wave, including one documenting a dispute between Ferromex and stranded migrants on their way to the United States, have garnered significant attention. For example, a video published on September 26, 2023, has already amassed 144,519 views[19].
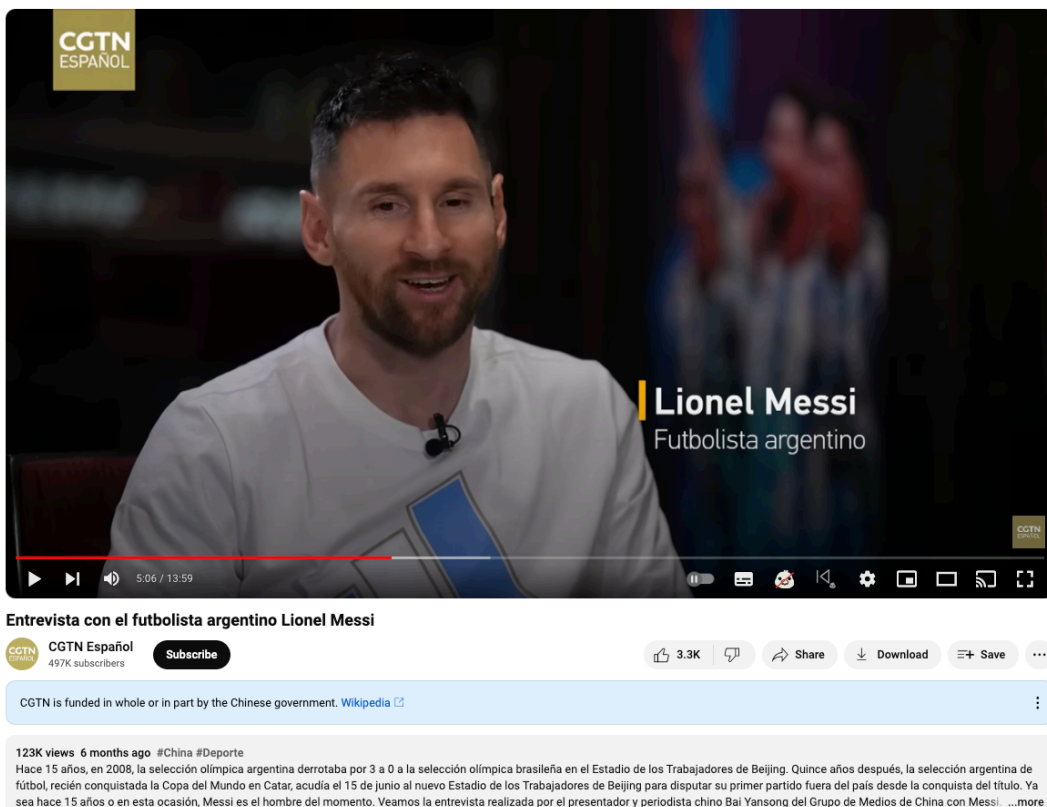
CGTN en español interviewed Footballer Lionel Messi after the world cup.
CGTN Español. (2023). Entrevista con el futbolista argentino Lionel Messi [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-fN3Iv_vAA

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[18] CGTN Español. (2023). Entrevista con el futbolista argentino Lionel Messi [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-fN3Iv_vAA

[19] CGTN Español. (2023). Miles de emigrantes permanecen varados en México tras el cese de operaciones de Ferromex [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ6TAdE0SWk

c. Bypassing YouTube policies for Russian state media

Russian State-run channels were banned from YouTube in 2022 because of the Ukraine invasion[20]. Since then, they have been using proxies and like-minded networks to share their content. After conducting specific searches on the dataset, we found consistent proof that CGTN en Español reposts content from Russian State Media outlets and interviews Russia Today's journalists to discuss issues related to their country, both citing the original content or repeating exact wording. This is something that not only happens on YouTube, but part of content collaboration agreements across other like-minded countries[21]. Although the sample is not large (they only identified ten direct collaboration videos and a handful of suspected reposts in 2023), it indirectly violates YouTube's policies.
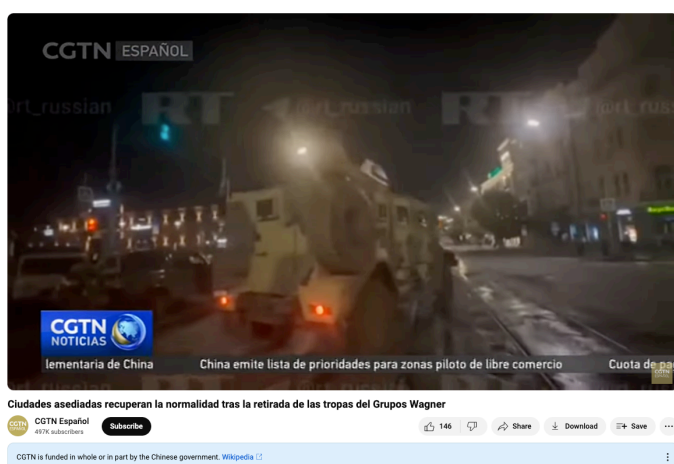
Some videos directly show the cooperation between the Chinese and Russian networks.

CGTN Español. (2023). Ciudades asediadas recuperan la normalidad tras la retirada de las tropas del Grupos Wagner [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25AqnGy5tkA

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[20] Thomas, E. (2022, July 5). Russia Today Digs Deep to Stay on YouTube. ISD. https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/russia-today-digs-deep-to-stay-on-youtube/

[21] Morales, P. S. (2022). Counter-hegemonic collaborations or alliances of the underdogs? The case of TeleSUR with Al-Mayadeen, RT and CGTN. Global Media and Communication, 18(3), 365-382.

An example is a video released after the Wagner mobilization to Moscow, in which CGTN interviewed journalist Semión Sénderov to explain the outcomes of the insurrection attempt. Nevertheless, the video is a direct transmission from RT headquarters and includes footage with RT watermarks with no interaction between the interviewer and the guest[22].

YouTube · CGTN Español
690+ views · 2 months ago

Rusia se retira del Consejo Euroártico de Barents - YouTube
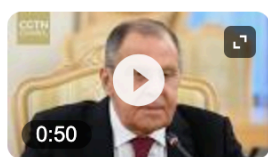
El Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de **Rusia** ha comunicado el 18 de septiembre la decisión del país de retirarse del **Consejo Euroártico** ...

RT en Español
https://actualidad.rt.com › actualidad

Rusia se retira del Consejo Euroártico de Barents

Sep 18, 2023 — **Rusia** ha decidido retirarse del **Consejo Euroártico de Barents** (BEAC, por sus siglas en inglés), informó este lunes el Ministerio de Asuntos ...

Other videos do not show the relationship directly but share the same title and footage, although this could also be a press release from the Russian Government that both media outlets covered.

Mentioning Russia is inevitable when analyzing CGTN en Español, as a substantial number of its most popular videos (according to the sample) revolve around that country. CGTN en Español informs about the Russian Ministry of Defense's press releases and also cooperates directly with its state media.

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[22] CGTN Español. (2023). Ciudades asediadas recuperan la normalidad tras la retirada de las tropas del Grupos Wagner [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25AqnGy5tkA

III. Xinhua Case Study

1. General Takeaways

Xinhua en Español has a smaller audience, output, and engagement ratio compared to the CGTN channel. The crucial difference between those two media is that Xinhua en Español is much more focused on regional affairs, with Latin American countries being its main focus. An analysis of 4,740 videos on that channel reveals that this media outlet also shows a keen interest in promoting Chinese affairs. However, its specific focus lies in bilateral and multilateral relations with countries in Latin America. It also covers regional issues that are unrelated to China, such as sports events, migration conflicts, and regional politics and cultural affairs.

During the analyzed period, from March 2020 through October 2023, most of Xinhua's output efforts were related to COVID-19, whose usage as a keyword was even more frequent than "China." Some videos also focused on raising doubts about the origin of the virus and pointing to the conspiracy theory of "Fort Detrick,"[23] while dismissing accusations against the Chinese government's mismanagement during the early stages of the pandemic. In that regard, perhaps Xinhua News had an instrumental role in pushing for narratives that would help China's image during the pandemic, or at least muddying the information that was circulating on the Spanish-speaking internet.

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As for regional issues covered by the channel, cultural events, festivals, fairs, economic deals, and issues regarding development are at the forefront. Peru is the most mentioned country, followed by Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Cuba. Different from the case of CGTN, Xinhua's most-watched videos during the analyzed sample focus on the region, featuring news about elections, cooperation, disasters, and local

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[23] China Xinhua Español. (2021). Funcionarios de varios países piden investigar Fort Detrick [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfwlT_xnJ7s

events. Xinhua uses its platform to promote policies or candidates in the region that align with the PRC's ideas of governance and covers official visits to China from authorities from Latin American countries[24]. It amplifies news from Cuba and Venezuela, especially when the news pertains to Chinese loans, aid, or cooperation[25].

Our analysis indicates that at least a part of Xinhua's audience uses the outlet as a source of information on events in Latin American events through this media outlet. For example, in the six months before this report was written, the channel's most watched video was: "[Explosion at Popocatepetl volcano forces closure of airports in Mexico Valley] *Explosión en volcán Popocatépetl obliga a cerrar aeropuertos del Valle de México*" (21,732 views, 20, May 2023). The video only features official government footage, joined by a narrator explaining the situation. Said narrator is also featured in some CGTN videos[26].

In other words, the channel succeeded in gaining the audience's attention around the topics that it intended to disseminate across the network during that time, and comments show a general alignment with their general arguments, which include China's help in fighting COVID-19 (with vaccinations, aid, etc…) and the West's incapability of providing assistance. In that same line, the country whose users appeared particularly receptive to these narratives was Chile, as many of the channel's most-watched videos are about the Chilean policy during the pandemic and how China helped said nation at the time.

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[24] China Xinhua Español. (2023). Relación entre China y Chile se basa en confianza trazabilidad y complementariedad, destaca ministro [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzsZe9e7FWU

[25] China Xinhua Español. (2023). Comienzan a operar en Cuba moderno dique flotante fabricado en China [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4fFb-pHYcQ

[26] China Xinhua Español. (2023). Explosión en volcán Popocatépetl obliga a cerrar aeropuertos del Valle de México [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=it-B6RLsjqU

2. Engagement Analysis

Most of Xinhua's videos get between 100 and 499 views, but a large portion do not even get 99 views. As Figure 4 shows, fewer than 45 videos received over 10,000 views, and only one video garnered over 500,000 views. None received more than a million views during the over three years that comprise the sample. This is understandable considering that Xinhua has considerably fewer subscribers than CGTN or Hola China and it publishes fewer videos overall. Therefore, although Xinhua does not have a considerable following, because it covers regional affairs, a few of its videos have gained attention because of other factors, such as relevance to the local audiences

Although Xinhua does not have a considerable following, a few of its videos have gained attention due to other factors, such as relevance to the local audiences.

Normally, videos are between one and three minutes long. They include stock videos and voice-over narration similar to the original article published on their website or several different Chinese platforms. For example, if Xinhua en E>spañol posts a video about a Chilean minister praising Chile-China relations on YouTube[27], it will have the same script in Xinhua News[28], People's Daily[29], etc,

Beginning from at least January 2023, Xinhua appeared to block all comments from the audiences, making interpretation of audience reactions more difficult. The videos with disabled comments included entries containing polemical language on issues such as migration, the competition between the U.S. and China, or human rights issues[30].

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[27] China Xinhua Español. (2023). Relación entre China y Chile se basa en confianza trazabilidad y complementariedad, destaca ministro [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzsZe9e7FWU

[28] (Multimedia) Relación entre China y Chile se basa en confianza, trazabilidad y complementariedad, destaca ministro de Agricultura chileno. (2023). News.cn. https://spanish.news.cn/20231030/029c44b715ab44c793b46edb87b67650/c.html

[29] People's Daily. (2023). Relación entre China y Chile se basa en confianza, trazabilidad y complementariedad, destaca ministro de Agricultura chileno. Peopledaily.com.cn. http://spanish.peopledaily.com.cn/n3/2023/1030/c31619-20090865.html

[30] An example is the following video: China Xinhua Español. (2022). Estadounidenses en México, una migración inversa definida por el nomadismo digital [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNw_yr2mczE
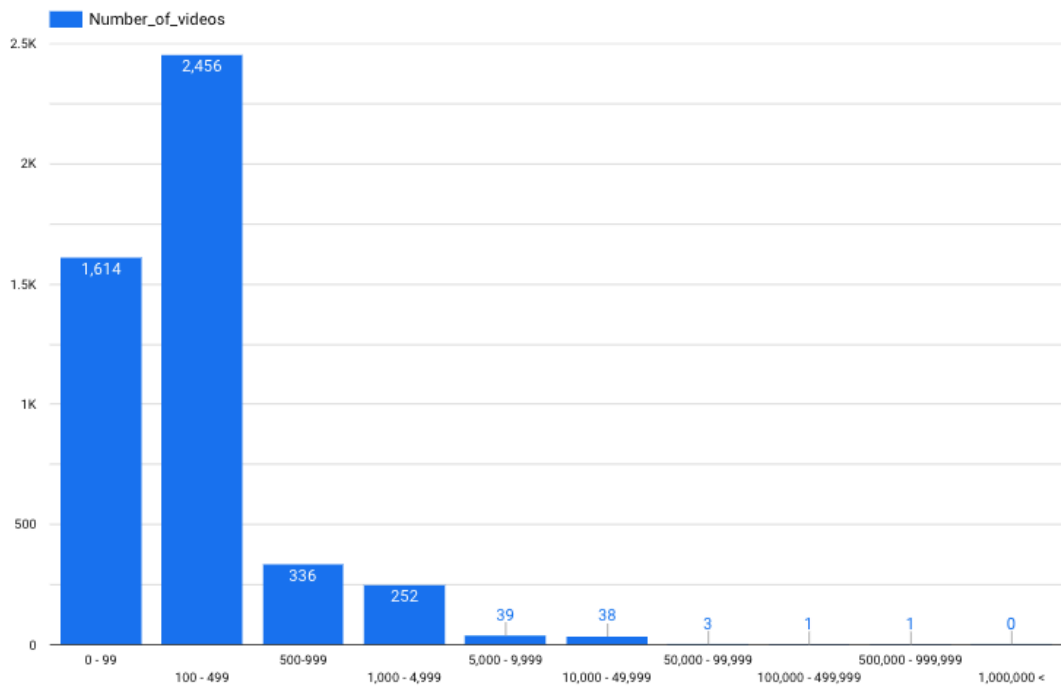
Xinhua Español Distribution of views

Figure 4. (Whole sample)

If we only considered the 601 videos published by the network in 2023 up to the data-gathering date, the impact is even less. 82.9% of all videos had less than 500 views, and only one video gathered more than 10,000 views. This shows that Xinhua's reach and impact have decreased in 2023 compared to previous years. It is possible to make this assumption because, unlike CGTN en Español, Xinhua does not publish documentaries or movies that could still gather views years after their publication.

3. Content Analysis

Latin American affairs and the region's relationship with China are at the forefront of Xinhua's strategy. The network incidentally covered domestic Chinese affairs or international issues. Out of the 50 most mentioned words, 19 were countries, cities, or demonyms. This reflects the intent the channel has to respond to regional audiences by directly competing with local media in informing about these events. Xinhua acts as an amplifier for the PRC's foreign policy in the region, highlighting Chinese activities, projects, and the relationship between the CCP and local governments. Also, it acts as an amplifier for Cuba-related news, with a lot of covering being focused on how China has helped the nation to find alternatives to the sanctions imposed on the island, and how the PRC finances infrastructure, technology, and other aspects. News covering the Cuban economic sanctions is, overall, the most common topic. Cuba was also among the most mentioned countries in this channel from 2022 to October 2023. This shows
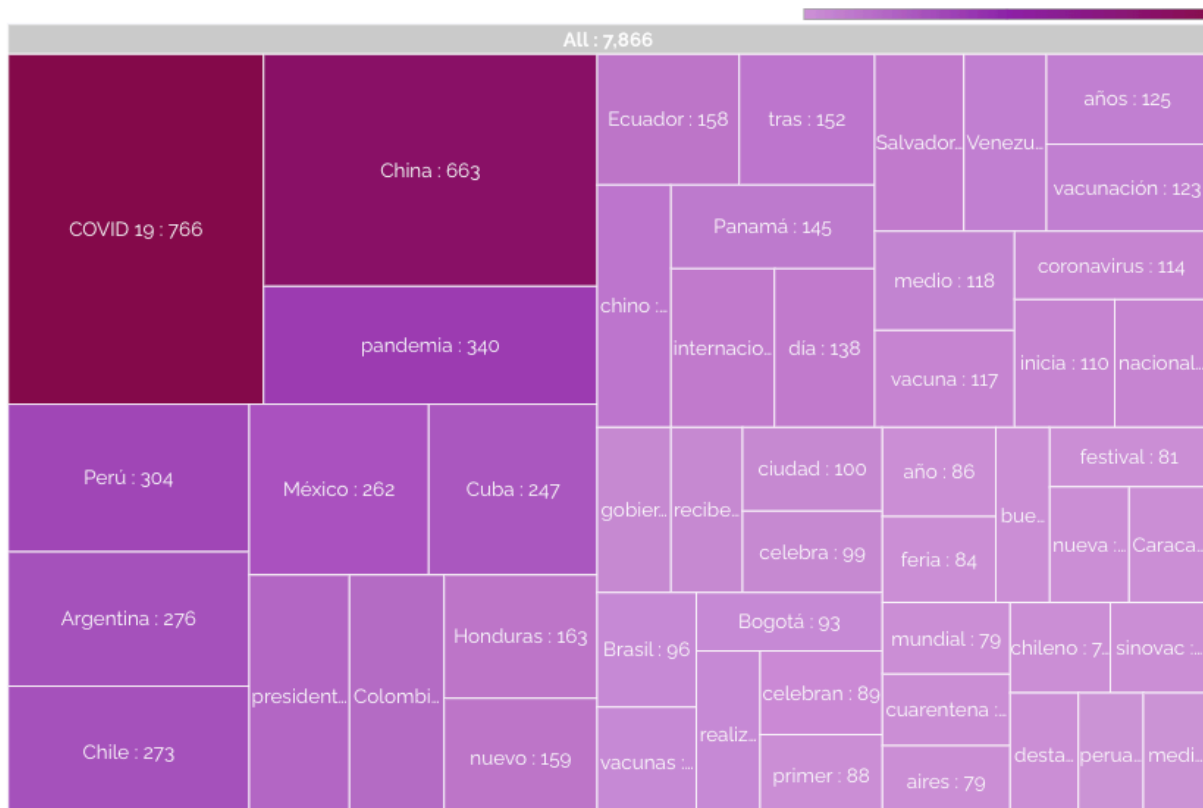

Figure 5.

direct thematic and political coordination between the two nations, based on like-minded agendas, which gained particular attention from Xinhua as the second most discussed topic after the pandemic.

The most repeated words after specific country names relate to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically China's role in the vaccination process and cooperation with the region. Although Xinhua published videos trying to deflect or create doubt about the origin of said pandemic, pointing to the United States, the American nation is not the focus of Xinhua news, with only some specific videos pointing to it.

Chile is the most mentioned country out of the most impactful videos, and the most common keyword when analyzing those 43 videos that received more than 10,000 views.

Videos mentioning the U.S. closely relate to Cuba's perspective on the economic sanctions, migration waves, the impact of COVID-19 in the country (and doubts about its origin), and economic trade deals involving the U.S. and other Latin American nations. This is one of the most significant differences with CGTN, as well as the reduced number of videos related to Russia (only 19 videos mention the keyword "Russia" In three years compared to CGTN's 78 direct mentions). Between June and August 2023, most Xinhua's efforts appeared aimed at promoting transpacific dialogue, disseminating news about Cuba, and promoting festivals and cultural events.

When it comes to sensitive issues, Xinhua limits its coverage instead of using direct counter-narrative videos. For example, in the case of Xinjiang, Xinhua only published 18 related videos during those three years, and they mainly focused on cultural affairs and the region's development. There is not a single video on Taiwan and only 17 videos about Hong Kong, but none of them describe the political conditions in the city. This indicates, again, an attempt to avoid discussing or using the channel to raise polemical topics, contrary to CGTN en Español, which has taken a more direct and confrontational approach against narratives that question China.

What was the trend across more "popular" videos? We analyzed only those 334 examples that collected over 1,000 views (we made this decision considering that only 43 videos received more than 10,000 views) by the time we scraped the sample.

The results show a similar trend. COVID-19-related entries are the most popular ones but with a change related to which countries were among the top most watched videos. Chile is the most mentioned country out of the most watched videos, and the most common keyword when analyzing those 43 videos that received more than 10,000 views. Users with an affiliation or interest in Chile generated more views compared to those interested in countries with larger populations like Mexico or more frequently mentioned nations like Peru. Videos related to Chile are mostly related to the battle against the pandemic, vaccination campaigns, the use of the SINOVAC (Cansino) vaccine, cooperation between the two nations, and donations of healthcare supplies. In fact, the verb "to receive" shows that most of these videos are likely related to these shipments from China.

Figure 6. (Over 1,000 views).

4. Outliers and Significant Cases

There were no viral videos coming from Xinhua in 2023. The most watched one is "[Explosion at Popocatepetl volcano forces closure of airports in Mexico Valley] *Explosión en volcán Popocatépetl obliga a cerrar aeropuertos del Valle de México*" (21,732 views, 20, May 2023), which is only the summary of a press release published by the Mexican government. Compared to two CGTN en Español, Xinhua struggles to get videos to gain more than a hundred views. Most of the popular videos of 2023 are not directly related to China, or the identified narratives that the channel priorities to disseminate. Popular entries include issues related to the region, such as disasters, plus archeological discoveries, festivals, and other cultural events.

a. The Most Significant Videos of 2023

Out of the 601 videos published during 2023, only six other videos could be popular, considering the median 2023 and the channel's average views. This category includes publications where Xinhua publicizes infrastructure and technology provided by the PRC to countries like Colombia or México.

Within the 1,000 to 5,000 views threshold, a video related to declarations by the Mexican president (an official press release and footage) criticizing U.S. interventionism[31], and a video about the U.S. migration crisis appear on the list. All 2023 videos have their comments sections blocked, so it is difficult to measure the actual opinions of the public.

When analyzing older videos, the trend remains similar. The most watched video of the sample is related to the Afghanistan conflict, with a video titled "[Two people fall out of a plane in mid-air in Kabul] *Dos personas caen de un avión en el aire en Kabul*" that collected 932,785 views from August 2021[32], followed by a video related to the 200th anniversary of the Venezuelan army, with 250,598 views.

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[31] China Xinhua Español. (2023). Presidente mexicano dice a Biden que es momento de terminar con "desdén" hacia A Latina y Caribe [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UPsYPmSVHQ

[32] China Xinhua Español. (2021). Dos personas caen de un avión en el aire en Kabul [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lcn03TzdXcU

Presidente mexicano dice a Biden que es momento de terminar con "desdén" hacia A Latina y Caribe

China Xinhua Español
79.1K subscribers
Subscribe
👍 50 👎 ↗ Share ↓ Download ≡+ Save ⋯

Xinhua is funded in whole or in part by the Chinese government. Wikipedia ⤢

4.1K views 11 months ago CIUDAD DE MÉXICO
El presidente de México, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, dijo el lunes a su homólogo estadounidense, Joe Biden, que la época actual es oportuna para que Estados Unidos termine con el "olvido" y el "desdén" hacia América Latina y el Caribe, en aras de una mayor integración regional. ...more

Comments are turned off. Learn more

The video also contains a watermark by the Mexican government that is covered by the Xinhua Logo.

China Xinhua Español. (2023). Presidente mexicano dice a Biden que es momento de terminar con "desdén" hacia A Latina y Caribe [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UPsYPmSVHQ

b. The COVID-19 Effect and Disinformation

Videos related to COVID-19, including vaccination campaigns, were popular compared to other types of content. Among these, some are used to raise suspicion or disseminate conspiracy theories, either by promoting CCP's messages or creating original content.

In 2022, the channel was used to promote the idea that U.S. laboratories in Ukraine were producing dangerous viruses[33], and comments were mostly supportive of the message. The same is true for a video regarding Fort Detrick in which the channel raises doubts about the origin of the pandemic[34].

Another strategy in which the channel manipulates information is by finding supporters and generalizing their opinions or exaggerating their authority. A video titled "[China's new growth and welfare goals are praised in Argentina] *Elogian desde Argentina nuevas metas de crecimiento y bienestar social de China*"[35], uses an expert to overview China's development goal, but the expert is the president of the China-Argentina Friendship Association, who is known for his close ties to the CCP, while not being a mainstream influential figure in Argentina.

Press releases from Mexico, Venezuela, or Cuba published by Xinhua en español show that the Chinese network uses both the text from these official government statements and the footage provided, sometimes hiding or covering watermarks.

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33 China Xinhua Español. (2022). China insta a EEUU a dar detalles sobre los laboratorios biológicos en Ucrania [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J91u6NWE4nM

34 China Xinhua Español. (2021). Funcionarios de varios países piden investigar Fort Detrick [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfwlT_xnJ7s

35 China Xinhua Español. (2021). Elogian desde Argentina nuevas metas de crecimiento y bienestar social de China [YouTube Video]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxV_ppvrd-0

c. Promoting regional governments' agendas

Xinhua reposts regional governments' content on its channel as part of its dissemination strategy. Press releases from Mexico, Venezuela, or Cuba published by Xinhua en Español show that the Chinese network uses both the text from these official government statements and the footage provided, sometimes hiding or covering watermarks.

Since Xinhua operates largely in coordination with local embassies, this can be arguably interpreted to improve diplomatic and institutional relations across specific stakeholders. This is not unique to Xinhua, but since its most-watched videos are sometimes part of these campaigns, perhaps it has become a key element in Xinhua's content strategy and the way it operates. In other words, Xinhua's differentiation from other Chinese media comes from the fact that it has embraced relations with local governments.

IV. CCTV and Hola China Case Study

1. General Takeaways

CCTV en Español, which operates under the brand Hola China (or "Hi China" in English, translated in most of its language-specific channels), operated distinctly compared to the two former channels. Instead of creating content specific to the platform, it reposts dramas, documentaries, series, and movies. Before 2021, it was common for the channel to mix news and short-format content with these long-format publications. As a result, six out of the ten most watched videos of the sample are less than five minutes long, and all of them were published before 2022, making them difficult to compare with the other two channels.

Hola China uploads massive "bundles" that contain hundreds of videos within a brief span, and then the channel is left untouched for prolonged periods. Their last hiatus, or the period in which they did not publish a single video, lasted over two years and ended in November 2023, when they resumed posting.

Since the videos are mostly cultural and since the channel had published no content since 2021, this section does not include a "significant" video analysis section. It does, however, address the general narratives promoted by the channel. Since 2016, only four videos have reached more than one million views, which means its impact is reduced, even when compared to Xinhua en español, which has fewer than a third of Hola China's subscribers.

a. Engagement Analysis

As in the two previous examples, most videos uploaded by Hola China received fewer than 500 views, and 26% of the videos garnered 500 views or more. In that regard, it can be said that the channel has content that could be watched over time and therefore remains technically relevant to the audience.

The channel experienced a decline in terms of content in 2016, which matches the time the channel CGTN en Español was launched. This could demonstrate a more sophisticated disaggregation strategy since the channel has consequently reduced its dissemination of short-format content.
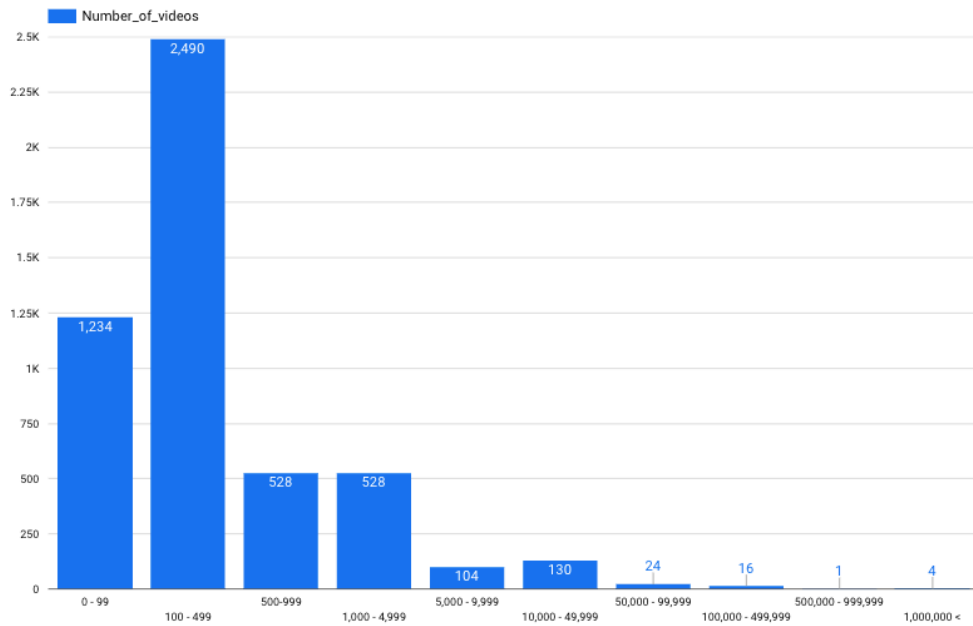
HOLA CHINA (CCTV) Distribution of views

Figure 7.

Hola China published more than two thousand videos in only the last four months of 2016, and this dramatically decreased to fewer than 300 in the following years, it went up again and then stopped between 2021 and 2023. This shows disorganized behavior from the channel, as well as portrays the ever-changing strategy that the CMG enacts on YouTube.
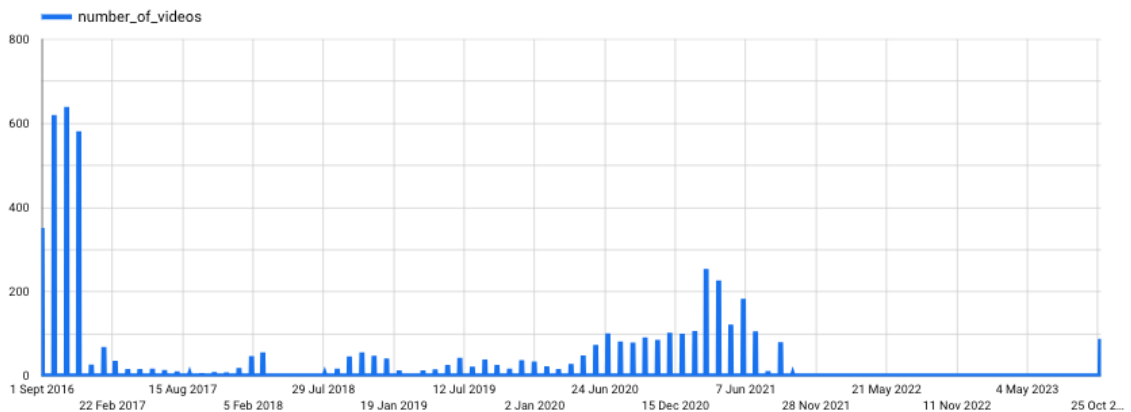
HOLA CHINA (CCTV) publications per month

Figure 8.

b. Content Analysis

The principal subjects covered in Hola China are culture, audiovisual pieces, and documentaries. This is also true for the most used words in the channel's titles. It is a fact that most videos mention "Español", followed by CCTV, China, and an astounding 537 mentions of the term "Soap Opera". Other interesting mentions are "Panda", "Love" (In Chinese and Spanish), "drama", and "episode". Besides those words, videos often portray issues such as beauty, nature, arts, or gastronomy.

Since the network occasionally publishes news or short documentaries with a more political position, the word "president" is commonly mentioned, as are the countries of Japan and the United States. This indicates that CCTV had -at some point- a more focused interest in participating in the debate when it came to those topics. Since it has only published a few videos in recent years, it is difficult to state the level of impact that any of these videos had.
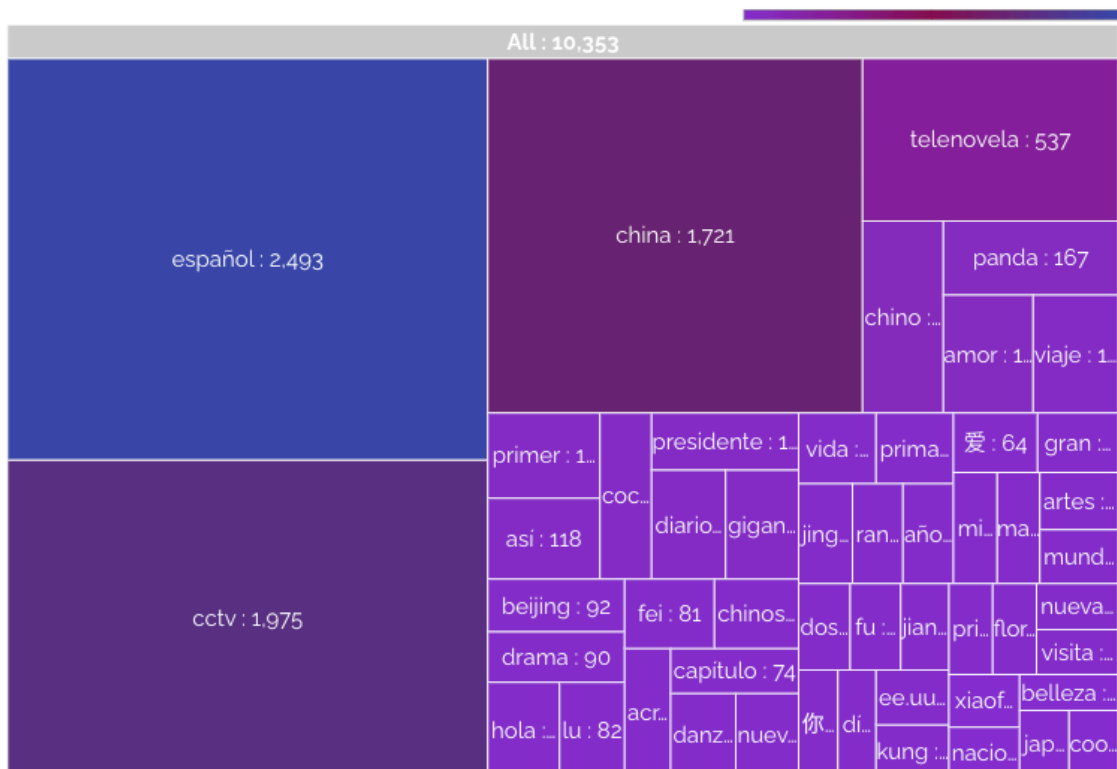

Figure 9.

With Japan, videos are based on either national news or content related to the Japanese invasion of China in the 20th century and the Second World War. The channel also amplifies news condemning Japan's narrative and its post-war reparations policy and uses the platform to criticize other actions by the Tokio administration, such as its position on whale hunting.

In that regard and different from CGTN and Xinhua in Spanish, CCTV (Hola China) has more historical content, or content that is based on individual stories. For example, there are over 40 videos about Xinjiang in the channel's portfolio, of which a quarter are about culinary experiences, another considerable fraction are travel blogs and the rest are either documentaries about the region's economic development or individual stories.

V. Three-month Comparison of CGTN vs Xinhua en Español

To further investigate the different content strategies and reach of CGTN and Xinhua, we conducted a three-month comparison covering June through August 2023. However, CGTN published a significantly higher number of videos during this time frame compared to Xinhua. Hola China published no videos during this window and so was excluded from the analysis. The results of this analysis show similar trends to those described above in terms of the general profile and focus of each channel.

The distribution of views reflects the overall trend, with CGTN having most videos on the 100-499 views tier, though two broke the one million view mark, and Xinhua being under 499, with dozens of videos struggling to break the 100 views threshold and none exceeding 10,000 views.
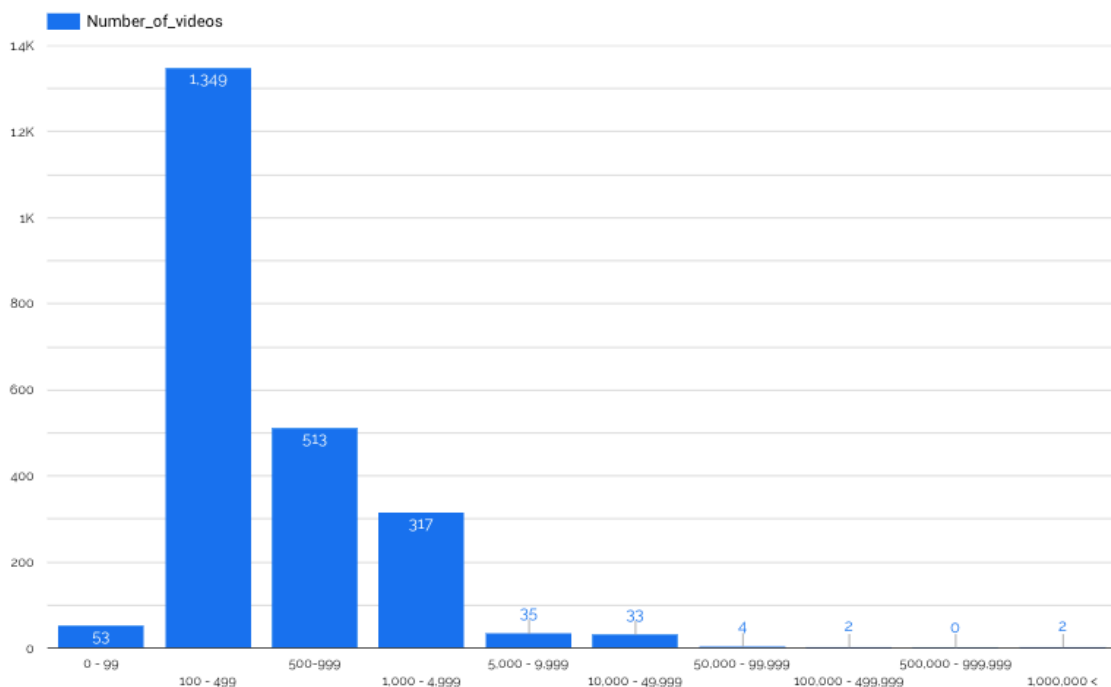

Figure 10.

While Xinhua is focused on regional affairs and countries (most of the common terms are nations or demonyms), CGTN focuses on covering issues related to Xi Jinping, promoting international cooperation, BRICS, and following the United States' foreign policy. In the case of CGTN, the word "dead people" appears again, showing that it is common for the network to cover events of this sort. These findings again highlight the different content strategies of these two channels.
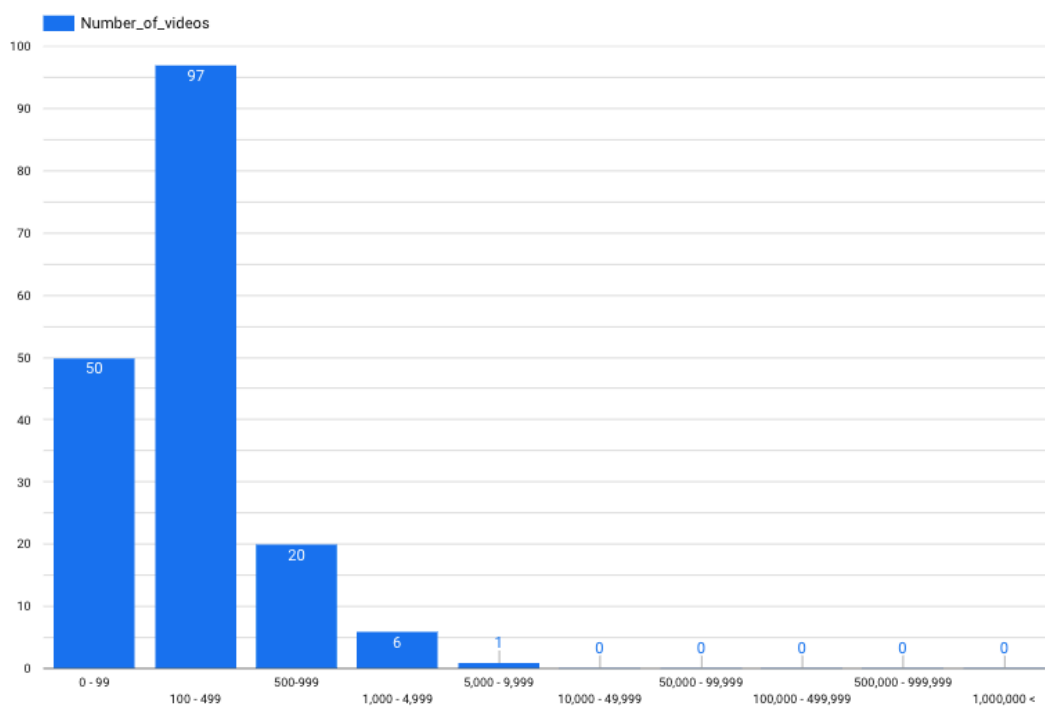
Xinhua Español Distribution of views (3 Months)

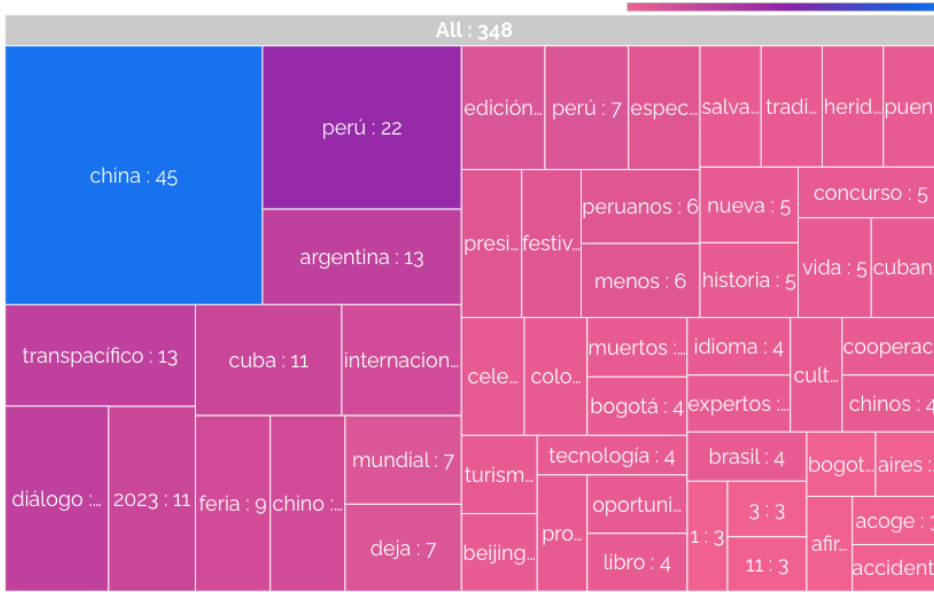Figure 11.

Most used terms (Xinhua Español 3 Months)

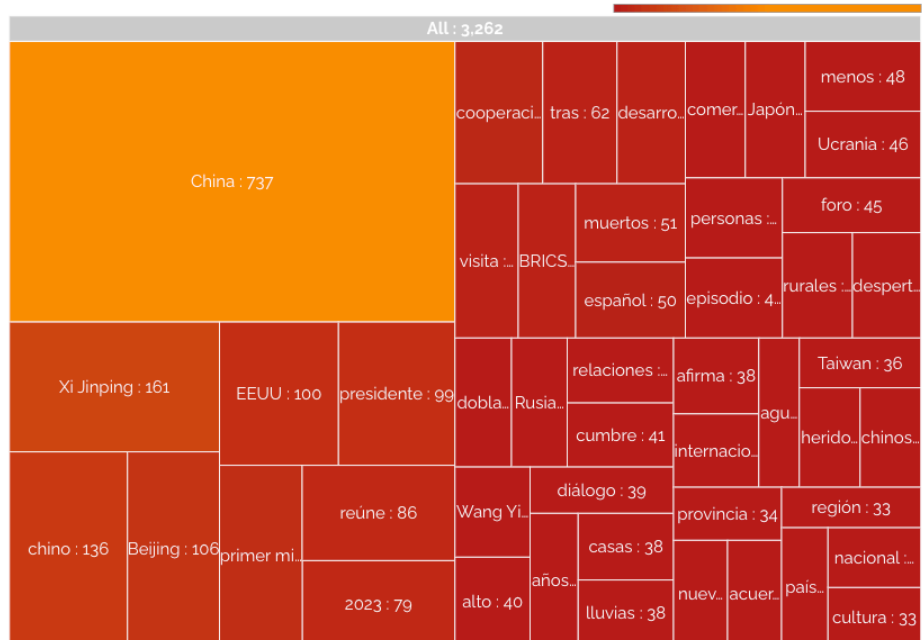Figure 12.

Most used terms (CGTN Español 3 Months)

Figure 13.

VI. Conclusions and Next Steps

In summary, the above analysis of China Media Group (CMG) channels in Spanish underscores their limited reach and impact, with most videos receiving fewer than 500 views. Differences in editorial approach among CGTN en Español, Xinhua en Español, and Hola China (despite a two-year hiatus) highlight the nuanced landscape of Chinese state online content dissemination. In 2023, Xinhua's reduced impact and strategic shift, marked by the disabling of audience comments, show an evolving approach to content strategy on the platform.

Despite diverse strategies regarding thematic focus, audience targeting, and amplification of other governments' narratives, a common thread emerges in CMG channels on YouTube—a focus on high-volume content creation to engage audiences, foster a following, and subtly advocate for political perspectives. The analysis reveals specific instances of disinformation, conspiracy theories, and fake news dissemination, particularly related to COVID-19, across CGTN and Xinhua en Español. These channels consistently promote narratives that endorse the People's Republic of China (PRC) system, infrastructure, and development, while emphasizing cultural aspects and poverty alleviation efforts in Xinjiang. CMG Channels aid Russia in circumventing content restrictions or support regional governments such as Cuba and Mexico by amplifying their content. Further research should also look into the effects, reactions, and reach of these channel's most popular videos, analyzing both the content of said pieces and the comments more comprehensively.

Another key research angle is to analyze narratives disseminated by independent YouTubers on China-related affairs and narratives promoted by the CMG channels, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, Cuba, or COVID-19. Since these independent accounts might have a much wider and more diverse audience than CMG channels, it is valuable to assess whether they amplify PRC narratives and whether the wording used to refer to polemical issues such as Hong Kong or Xinjiang matches the Chinese official narrative. By doing this, it would be possible to assess the region's access to information regarding PRC propaganda and also to sensible voices that challenge those propaganda messages.

Finally, during this initial review, some videos were identified to have an unusual tone and movements that could be matched with the use of Text-to-Speech (TTS) or

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the production of the content, but that requires confirmation. Future analysis could delve into the evolving strategies of CMG channels on YouTube and confirm whether it can be proven that these tools were or are being used.

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VIII. Resources

FOR GITHUB ON SCRAPPING YOUTUBE VIDEOS: *https://github.com/MiNombreEsPablo/yt-channel-data-scraper#readme*

PLEASE CONSULT THE INTERACTIVE FIGURES IN THE FOLLOWING LINK: *https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/96435184-da57-4c37-b2b5-e26ba58d413c/page/p_a75bvqgtcd*

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