

# U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission

Staff Research Report



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## **China's Overseas United Front Work Background and Implications for the United States**

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## Executive Summary

China uses what it calls “United Front” work to co-opt and neutralize sources of potential opposition to the policies and authority of its ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP’s United Front Work Department (UFWD)—the agency responsible for coordinating these kinds of influence operations—mostly focuses on the management of potential opposition groups inside China, but it also has an important foreign influence mission. To carry out its influence activities abroad, the UFWD directs “overseas Chinese work,” which seeks to co-opt ethnic Chinese individuals and communities living outside China, while a number of other key affiliated organizations guided by China’s broader United Front strategy conduct influence operations targeting foreign actors and states. Some of these entities have clear connections to the CCP’s United Front strategy, while others’ linkage is less explicit. Organizations such as Chinese Students and Scholars Associations are less directly tied to the main United Front-related organizational structure, but many of their activities and acceptance of oversight from the CCP shows some level of guidance from the United Front strategy.

Today, United Front-related organizations are playing an increasingly important role in China’s broader foreign policy under Chinese President and General Secretary of the CCP Xi Jinping. It is precisely the nature of United Front work to seek influence through connections that are difficult to publically prove and to gain influence that is interwoven with sensitive issues such as ethnic, political, and national identity, making those who seek to identify the negative effects of such influence vulnerable to accusations of prejudice. Because of the complexities of this issue, it is crucial for the U.S. government to better understand Beijing’s United Front strategy, its goals, and the actors responsible for achieving them if it is to formulate an effective and comprehensive response. This staff report provides an overview of the United Front, its history and ideology, the structure and operations of the UFWD and other organizations carrying out United Front work, and the implications of this activity for the United States.

## Introduction

The CCP advocates for its political interests through the use of what it calls “United Front” work, a strategy borrowed from the former Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> President Xi has placed a greater emphasis on United Front work since assuming office in 2012, describing it as important for the “whole [Chinese Communist] Party” and elevating its role within China’s broader foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> At the national level, China’s United Front strategy is “given concrete institutional form”—according to June Teufel Dreyer, senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute—by the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a critical coordinating body that brings together representatives of China’s other interest groups and is led by a member of China’s highest-level decision-making authority, the CCP’s Politburo Standing Committee.<sup>3</sup> At the operational level, United Front activities are coordinated by the CCP’s United Front Work Department (UFWD), although a number of other organizations also play important roles carrying out United Front work abroad.<sup>4</sup>

The United Front strategy uses a range of methods to influence overseas Chinese communities, foreign governments, and other actors to take actions or adopt positions supportive of Beijing’s preferred policies.<sup>5</sup> A number of official and quasi-official entities conduct overseas activities guided or funded by the United Front including Chinese government and military organizations, cultural and “friendship” associations, and overseas academic groups such as Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSAs) and Confucius Institutes.<sup>6</sup> The UFWD also oversees influence operations targeting Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau that aim to suppress independence movements, undermine local identity, and promote support for Beijing’s political system.<sup>7</sup> In all of these cases, United Front work serves to promote Beijing’s preferred global narrative, pressure individuals living in free and open societies to self-censor and avoid discussing issues unfavorable to the CCP, and harass or undermine groups critical of Beijing’s policies.<sup>8</sup>

The CCP continues to lay the groundwork in the United States for United Front operations that could be similar to those that have achieved success in some U.S.-allied countries (e.g., Australia and New Zealand, where the CCP has effectively monopolized Chinese-language media outlets and taken over Chinese community organizations).<sup>9</sup> The CCP has sought to influence academic discourse on China and in certain instances has infringed upon—and potentially criminally violated—rights to freedoms of speech and association that are guaranteed to Americans and

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those protected by U.S. laws.<sup>10</sup> Despite the CCP's candid discussion of its United Front strategy, the breadth and depth of this issue remain relatively unknown to U.S. policymakers.<sup>11</sup>

## Background and Role of United Front Work

United Front work—which is inspired by the Leninist theory of uniting with lesser enemies to defeat greater ones—has been a key element of the CCP's strategy to consolidate its hold on power, both domestically and internationally, since the Party's founding.<sup>12</sup> The first incarnation of United Front work was an attempt to join and subvert the then ruling Nationalist government, the Kuomintang, in the early 1920s.<sup>13</sup> The CCP then formed an alliance of convenience with the Kuomintang to discourage it from trying to wipe out the fledgling CCP while uniting their efforts against Japan.<sup>14</sup> According to Gerry Groot, senior lecturer at the University of Adelaide and renowned expert on the United Front, this campaign evolved into a systematic effort to recruit “fellow travelers,” mostly “famous intellectuals, writers, teachers, students, publishers, and business people who were not necessarily themselves Communists.”<sup>15</sup> Through co-opting or subverting potential opponents, the CCP has proven highly successful in neutralizing large-scale or open political opposition, including from religious groups and ethnic minorities, while incentivizing public displays of loyalty to the CCP.<sup>16</sup> It is also trying to use this strategy against the rising Chinese middle class and other new groups of potential opposition.<sup>17</sup> Since its early successes inside China, the CCP has extended its United Front work overseas to influence foreign individuals and the policies of foreign states to serve Beijing's interests.<sup>18</sup> According to a UFWD training manual from 2014 reviewed by the *Financial Times*, an important goal of United Front work is to “unite all forces that can be united” to thwart “enemy forces abroad.”<sup>19</sup> Within China, United Front work is carried out by the CCP's United Front Work Department.

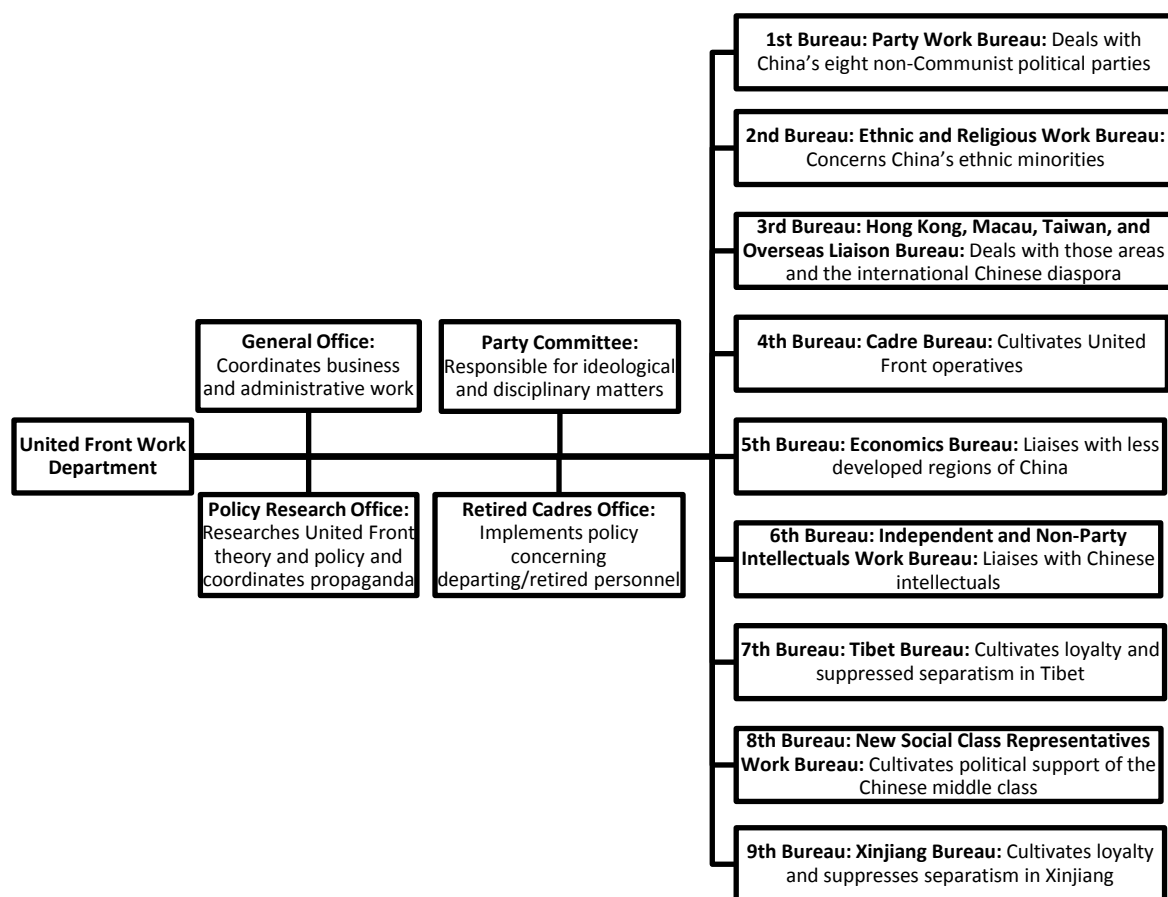
### The United Front Work Department

The UFWD, which is the primary organization responsible for United Front work within China and United Front operations targeting Chinese communities abroad,\* is a high-level Party body that reports directly to the CCP's Central Committee.<sup>20</sup> The UFWD follows the direction of China's broader United Front strategy set forth by the CPPCC, a coordinating body led by a member of the Party's Politburo Standing Committee that brings together representatives of China's other interest groups under the CCP's overall leadership.<sup>21</sup> The UFWD comprises four subordinate offices and nine specialized bureaus, each dealing with a particular targeted group such as China's eight officially-approved non-communist political parties, ethnic minorities, and Chinese communities overseas.<sup>22</sup> President Xi recently expanded the UFWD by establishing two new bureaus. One, which targets representatives of the “New Social Classes,” is responsible for garnering support from China's new middle class, and the other cultivates loyalty and suppresses separatism in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of western China, home to the Uyghur ethnic group and other Muslim minorities.<sup>23</sup>

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\* For more on United Front work targeting Chinese diasporas, see “Focus on Influencing Overseas Chinese Communities” below.

**Figure 1: United Front Work Department Organization**



*Note:* According to its website, the UFWD oversees the UFWD Organization Service Center, the Taiwan Guild Halls, the Huaxing Economic Advisory Service Center, Cadre Training Centers, the *China United Front* magazine, the *China Tibet* magazine, the Guangcai Program Guidance Center, the UFWD Information Center, the Taiwanese Classmates Academic Exchange Center, the Office of the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification, and the High-Level Tibetan Buddhism College of China.  
*Source:* The United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, *Organization Structure*, May 3, 2017. Translation. <http://www.zyztb.gov.cn/tzb2010/jgsz/201012/690112.shtml>.

## Resurgence of the United Front under President Xi

President Xi views United Front work as an important tool to strengthen support for the CCP both inside and outside China by exploiting individuals' emotional and ideological sympathies for China and providing financial support to key groups and individuals.<sup>24</sup> Although the importance of United Front work declined after the founding of the People's Republic of China,<sup>\*</sup> a number of Western analysts agree it has regained its prominence since then, and especially since the rise of Xi Jinping, as Beijing has embraced a much more assertive approach to foreign policy.<sup>25</sup> In his address to the 19th National Congress of the CCP<sup>†</sup> in October 2017, President Xi called United Front work "an important way to ensure the success of the [Chinese Communist] Party's cause" and urged the CCP to form the "broadest possible patriotic United Front."<sup>26</sup> President Xi has also called United Front work a "magic weapon" that is important for bringing about "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."<sup>27</sup> This elevation of the importance of United Front work has resulted in an increased number of UFWD officials assigned to top CCP and government

<sup>\*</sup> Professor Groot argues Mao Zedong "lost interest" in United Front work after the mid-1950s because he preferred "class struggle" over conciliation, the latter of which is a necessary element of United Front co-option. However, according to Professor Groot, the CCP continued to rely on the United Front strategy to regain political stability each time it "had to recover from a Mao-induced crisis." Gerry Groot, "The United Front in an Age of Shared Destiny," *China Story*, 2014. <https://www.thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2014/forum-begging-to-differ/the-united-front-in-an-age-of-shared-destiny/>.

<sup>†</sup> At the National Party Congress, which occurs every five years, delegates set the CCP's national policy goals and choose new top leaders. *Brookings Institution*, "China's 19th Party Congress." <https://www.brookings.edu/product/chinas-19th-party-congress/>.

posts, adding roughly 40,000 new UFWD cadres overall in the first few years after Xi became president.<sup>28</sup> According to Professor Groot, most of the new UFWD cadres are tasked with United Front work within China, although Beijing has also strengthened its overseas United Front work, with almost all Chinese embassies now including personnel working with the UFWD.<sup>29</sup>

The CCP has also recently taken steps to increase the bureaucratic authority of the United Front and ensure that it follows President Xi's personal directives. In 2015, the CCP held its first Central Committee Conference on United Front Work\* and President Xi established a leading small group† on United Front Work with himself at its head, signifying “a direct line of command from the [CCP] Politburo to [the] United Front,” according to the *Financial Times*.<sup>30</sup> At a 2017 national conference on United Front work, Yu Zhengsheng—former member of the Politburo Standing Committee, former head of the UFWD, and then Chairman of the CPPCC National Committee‡—called on UFWD officials to “resolutely safeguard the authority of the [CCP] Central Committee with comrade Xi Jinping as the core.”<sup>31</sup>

## Seeking to Control the Narrative

Merriden Varrall, director of the Australian think tank Lowy Institute's East Asia program, argues that since Xi Jinping assumed office the Party has had “a sense that China must dictate how it's perceived and that the world is biased against China.”<sup>32</sup> To advance its narrative, the CCP has stepped up its United Front work to further stifle criticism of the CCP, spread positive views of China, and incentivize voters in foreign democracies to influence their domestic policies in ways favorable to China.<sup>33</sup> According to Professor Groot, United Front work tells what President Xi has called Beijing's preferred “China story”—or an interpretation of history that is flattering to the CCP—and encourages co-optees to promote CCP views.<sup>34</sup> Since President Xi came to power the CCP has also cracked down on what it terms “historical nihilism,” or attempts to undermine Beijing's official history, which an internal CCP memo in 2012 identified as one of seven existential threats to the Party.<sup>35</sup>

According to Peter Mattis, a research fellow in China studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, CCP intimidation and efforts to promote Beijing's narrative “sometimes crosses the line into criminal actions, such as conspiracy against rights.”<sup>36</sup> Mattis argues the CCP has infringed upon the freedoms of association and speech

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\* The UFWD held 20 “national” conferences between 1995 and 2006, but the 2015 conference was the first “central” meeting. According to analyst Marcel Angliviel de la Beaumelle, “The ‘Central’ qualifier represented a rise in status for a previously ‘national’ ... conference. The elevation in status corresponded with [President] Xi's new vision for the department.” Marcel Angliviel de la Beaumelle, “The United Front Work Department: ‘Magic Weapon’ at Home and Abroad,” *China Brief*, July 6, 2017. <https://jamestown.org/program/united-front-work-department-magic-weapon-home-abroad/>.

† Leading small groups are powerful advisory bodies that formulate and help implement policies concerning particular topics, including coordination across Party and state bureaucracies. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), CCP leading small groups predominantly address domestic political and security issues, and state leading small groups predominantly address domestic social and economic issues. Christopher K. Johnson, Scott Kennedy, and Mingda Qiu, “Xi's Signature Governance Innovation: The Rise of Leading Small Groups,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, October 17, 2017. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/xis-signature-governance-innovation-rise-leading-small-groups>; Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao, “The People's Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics,” *Project 2049 Institute*, October 14, 2013, 16–17. [https://www.project2049.net/documents/PLA\\_General\\_Political\\_Department\\_Liaison\\_Stokes\\_Hsiao.pdf](https://www.project2049.net/documents/PLA_General_Political_Department_Liaison_Stokes_Hsiao.pdf); Alice Miller, “The CCP Central Committee's Leading Small Groups,” *China Leadership Monitor* No. 26 (2008): 1. <http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM26AM.pdf>.

‡ Wang Yang became CPPCC chairman in March 2018. Sidney Leng and Tony Cheung, “Wang Yang Takes the Helm of China's Top Political Advisory Body,” *South China Morning Post*, March 15, 2018. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2137223/wang-yang-takes-helm-chinas-top-political-advisory-body>.

§ This also includes exerting pressure on the language used by others to discuss “core” issues; for example, by conditioning Western media to use the word “reunification” instead of “unification” when discussing Taiwan, implying that being subject to Mainland rule is Taiwan's proper state even though the People's Republic of China has never ruled the island. Mercy A. Kuo, “China's United Front Work: Propaganda as Policy,” *Diplomat*, February 14, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/chinas-united-front-work-propaganda-as-policy/>; Bruce Jacobs, “Taiwan Was Never Part of China,” *Taipei Times*, January 6, 2016. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2016/01/06/2003636520>.

\*\* U.S. law defines “conspiracy against rights” as conspiring to “injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate any person ... in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him by the Constitution or laws of the United States, or because of his having so exercised the same” or going “in disguise ... or on the premises of another, with intent to prevent or hinder his free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege so secured.” Conspiracy against Rights, 18 U.S. Code § 241. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/241>.



afforded to U.S. citizens and others protected by U.S. laws—by, for example, suppressing protests on U.S. soil—making CCP efforts to promote its narrative as much a problem of civil rights as of national security.<sup>37</sup> During anti-CCP protests in San Francisco surrounding the 2008 Olympic torch relay, former U.S. intelligence officials said Chinese security officials monitored and directed counterprotesting blocs of thousands of Chinese students to drown out Beijing’s critics, which *Politico* called an “operation ... by a hostile foreign intelligence service to forcibly suppress First Amendment activities in a major American city.”<sup>38</sup>

## Focus on Influencing Overseas Chinese

Recent official statements by Chinese leaders and in CCP documents echo the increased focus on “overseas Chinese work” to influence the behavior and views of Chinese living abroad. In his address to the 19th National Congress of the CCP, President Xi declared the Party would “maintain extensive contacts with overseas Chinese nationals, returned Chinese, and their relatives and [will] unite them so that they can join [the Party’s] endeavors to rejuvenate the Chinese nation.”<sup>39</sup> Information in the UFWD teaching manual reviewed by the *Financial Times* further suggests an increased focus on United Front work targeting overseas Chinese, saying “the unity of Chinese at home requires the unity of the sons and daughters of Chinese abroad.”<sup>40</sup> A 2015 CCP Central Committee trial regulation\* said the primary mission of United Front work includes “guiding” overseas Chinese.<sup>† 41</sup>

The goal of “overseas Chinese work” is to use ethnic, cultural, economic, or political ties to mobilize sympathetic overseas Chinese communities—ideally of their own accord—to advocate for the interests of the CCP and marginalize its opponents.<sup>42</sup> The UFWD teaching manual directs operatives to win overseas Chinese over to the CCP’s side by emphasizing “flesh and blood” ties to China with the goal of securing political, moral, and financial support for the CCP.<sup>43</sup> To achieve these ends, UFWD officials often meet with local chapters of “Hometown Associations” (groups that connect Chinese emigrants from the same locale), sometimes along with senior staff from Chinese consulates.<sup>44</sup> In March 2018, the UFWD absorbed a number of State Council offices, including its Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, further consolidating its responsibility for activities that seek to sway the overseas Chinese communities.<sup>45</sup> This consolidation emphasizes the CCP’s subjugation of issues concerning nationality to United Front work.<sup>46</sup> According to John Fitzgerald, director of the CSI Swinburne Program for Asia-Pacific Social Investment and Philanthropy and an expert on the United Front, the Chinese state agencies working with overseas Chinese had been “admirably transparent about their activities to date,” but “there is a risk that the [CCP’s] United Front work among overseas Chinese will be more difficult to track publicly” once the UFWD fully absorbs them.<sup>47</sup>

Chinese intelligence services have been known to coerce overseas Chinese to function as operatives targeting other overseas Chinese in both the United States and other countries, indicating that these agencies actively participate in overseas Chinese work that seeks to hide official connections. In January 2018, Chen Yonglin, a former Chinese diplomat who defected to Australia in 2005, told Radio Free Asia (RFA) that the Chinese government uses both threats and rewards to incentivize Chinese students abroad to act as CCP informants.<sup>48</sup> Sulaiman Gu (a student at

\* Although it is a “trial” regulation, it nonetheless appears to be used as official guidance in provincial, city, and district-level UFWDs. Universities have also held study sessions on the regulation despite its trial status. In a “Top 10” list of major United Front events in 2015 posted by the official UFWD Wechat account, the promulgation of this trial regulation was second only to the CCP Central Committee’s Conference on United Front Work. Baoshan City United Front Work Department, “Concentrating the Will of the People, Assembling Power, Innovation and Reform—2017 Baoshan United Front Work Summary,” August 2, 2018. Translation. <http://www.zytzb.gov.cn/tzdk/293143.jhtml>; CCP Central Committee United Front Work Department, “Guangzhou City Tianhe District Makes Solid Progress on Multiparty Cooperation: Highlights Brilliant, Results Clear,” July 9, 2018. Translation. <http://www.zytzb.gov.cn/tzcx/291102.jhtml>; Tongji University United Front Work Department, “‘Chinese Communist Party’s United Front Work Regulation (Trial)’ Study,” June 17, 2016. Translation. <https://tzb.tongji.edu.cn/82/7e/c3405a33406/page.htm>; *United Front Newspeak*, “United Front Major Events – TOP 10,” January 5, 2016. Translation. <http://www.zytzb.gov.cn/tzb2010/wxwb/201601/51aa90eae1bd4c6bb4d2990bf06d25de.shtml>; Tianjin University, “Tianjin University Holds Lecture to Study ‘Chinese Communist Party’s United Front Work Regulation (Trial),’” November 16, 2015. Translation. <http://news.tju.edu.cn/info/1003/23835.htm>. Central United Front Work Department, “Guangdong Province Party Committee Standing Committee Studies the Spirit of the Central United Front Work Meeting,” May 25, 2015. Translation. <http://www.zytzb.gov.cn/tzb2010/xxgc/201505/02ff117f4d1a470d93be3328088f730d.shtml>.

† The CCP established its first organ responsible specifically for liaising with overseas Chinese communities in 1940; currently, the third bureau of the UFWD oversees United Front work targeting Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, and overseas Chinese. James Kynge, Lucy Hornby, and Jamil Anderlini, “Inside China’s Secret ‘Magic Weapon’ for Worldwide Influence,” *Financial Times*, October 26, 2017. <https://www.ft.com/content/fb2b3934-b004-11e7-beba-5521c713abf4>; James Jiann Hua To, *Qiaowu: Extra-Territorial Policies for the Overseas Chinese*, Brill Academic Publishers, 2014, 57.

the University of Georgia) and Wu Lebao (a student at Australian National University) both told RFA that Chinese security personnel attempted to recruit them as informants on overseas Chinese dissident groups.<sup>49</sup> Mr. Gu provided RFA with recordings of his conversations with Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS) agents, in which the agents requested information on pro-democracy groups in the United States and on Guo Wengui, a U.S.-based Chinese billionaire who has repeatedly made allegations of high-level CCP corruption and whom the CCP has persecuted and sought to discredit.<sup>50</sup>

Chinese intelligence services have also specifically targeted ethnic minorities such as Uyghurs living overseas, threatening to send their families still in Xinjiang to internment camps, or keep them there, if the former do not agree to spy for China.<sup>51</sup> According to Uyghurs who have been threatened in this way, this coercion is intended “not only to gather details about Uyghurs’ activities abroad, but also to sow discord within exile communities in the West and intimidate people in hopes of preventing them from speaking out against the Chinese state.”<sup>52</sup> Megha Rajagopalan, *BuzzFeed*’s former China bureau chief who has reported extensively on these issues, told the Commission that Beijing’s harassment of overseas Uyghurs matches characteristics of the United Front strategy to neutralize potential political opposition, though she was not aware of direct UFWD involvement in this particular campaign.<sup>53</sup> Consistent with Beijing’s effort to silence overseas critics, RFA has reported that Chinese security forces have recently detained dozens of Xinjiang-based family members of RFA Uyghur service journalists in retaliation for their reporting on these events.<sup>54</sup> In August 2018, when the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination received testimony regarding the ongoing mass detentions of Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, it was the deputy director-general of the UFWD Ninth (Xinjiang) Bureau, Hu Lianhe, who spoke out to flatly deny the detentions were occurring and insist that “Xinjiang citizens, including the Uyghurs, enjoy equal freedoms and rights,” clearly revealing the UFWD’s involvement in Beijing’s campaign to silence Muslim minorities.<sup>55</sup>

The CCP’s United Front strategy targeting overseas Chinese presents a number of difficulties to U.S. law enforcement and counterintelligence agencies. For instance, in light of the fact that United Front work and China’s intelligence services specifically target ethnic Chinese, U.S. law enforcement agencies attempt to design their counterintelligence protocols to avoid the perception of discrimination, with investigators focusing on tracking the activities of intelligence collectors to find out whom they have targeted, not the other way around. Michelle Van Cleave, former U.S. national counterintelligence executive, testified to the Commission in June 2016 that counterintelligence in the United States is not “about finding the traitors ... as much as it is understanding how an adversary uses intelligence against [the United States].”<sup>56</sup> David Major, former Federal Bureau of Investigation supervisory agent and president of the Alexandria, Virginia-based CI Centre, testified to the Commission in 2016 that “It’s not how [the U.S. government looks] at ethnicity; it’s how the [intelligence] collector looks at ethnicity. The Chinese intelligence services specifically target people who are [Han]. [Chinese-Americans] ... have a higher probability of being targeted because of what [China’s] world view is.”<sup>57</sup>

## Other Organizations Involved in United Front Work

In addition to the UFWD, a range of CCP military and civilian organizations are active in carrying out United Front work, either working directly for the UFWD or under the broader leadership of the CPPCC.<sup>58</sup> The broad swath of actors involved in this work underlines that while certain organizations like the UFWD and CPPCC are explicitly involved in implementing United Front work, the strategy is a priority for the “whole Party.” For instance, the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification (CPPRC)—a prominent organization promoting China’s unification with Taiwan—is directly subordinate to the UFWD and has at least 200 chapters in 90 countries, including 33 chapters in the United States registered as the National Association for China’s Peaceful Unification.\*<sup>59</sup> The CPPRC has become one of the most prominent groups claiming to represent Chinese diaspora

\* Its chairman is Yu Zhengsheng, the CCP official responsible for United Front policy, and its executive vice-chair is Sun Chunlan, the head of the UFWD until late 2017. John Dotson, “The United Front Work Department in Action Abroad: A Profile of the Council for the Promotion of the Peaceful Reunification of China,” *China Brief*, February 13, 2018. <https://jamestown.org/program/united-front-work-department-action-abroad-profile-council-promotion-peaceful-reunification-china/>; James Kynge, Lucy Hornby, and Jamil Anderlini, “Inside China’s Secret ‘Magic Weapon’ for Worldwide Influence,” *Financial Times*, October 26, 2017.



communities and is a leading organization mobilizing international Chinese communities in support of Beijing's policies.<sup>60</sup> A separate entity, the Liaison Department\* of the former People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Political Department (GPD),<sup>†</sup> facilitated the activities of a number of front organizations—including “friendship” and “cultural” associations—as part of its broader mission to conduct propaganda operations, perform perception management,<sup>‡</sup> and gather intelligence.<sup>61</sup> For example, the China Association for International Friendly Contact (CAIFC), a front organization for the former General Political Department, performs dual roles of intelligence collection and conducting propaganda and perception management campaigns, such as its work through the Sanya Initiative, a series of track two dialogues between retired senior flag officers of the U.S. and Chinese armed forces.<sup>62</sup>

The National Endowment for Democracy argued in its December 2017 report, *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, that targets of CCP influence operations are often under the mistaken impression that media, academic, and friendship organizations operate independently from the CCP, but “[m]ost, if not all, of the Chinese entities that engage with their peers abroad unequivocally serve national party goals—either by following official or unofficial guidelines, or by avoiding taking positions that might violate [CCP] guidelines or jeopardize the regime's goals.”<sup>63</sup> According to another expert, the UFDW's approach to foreign intelligence using an “overt and benign appearance” and innocuous-sounding language while purporting to promote Chinese culture to both Chinese and non-Chinese is “distinct from other [CCP-affiliated] organizations.”<sup>64</sup>

## The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

The CPPCC, an advisory committee “under the leadership of the [CCP],” is the highest-ranking entity overseeing the United Front system.<sup>65</sup> It has been part of the “patriotic United Front” since 1954, according to official Chinese government websites.<sup>66</sup> Senior members of China's non-communist political parties are elected as CPPCC members and are permitted to directly submit proposals to local and national CPPCC committees.<sup>67</sup> A declassified Central Intelligence Agency study on the United Front produced in 1957 noted, “Without exception, the non-Communist parties have acknowledged and frequently reaffirmed their subordination to the [CCP] Central Committee and the Chinese Communist program. The presence of CCP members who are responsible to the Central Committee ... assures Central Committee control of those organizations.”<sup>68</sup> Military and civilian officials coordinate foreign influence operations through the CPPCC's External Friendship Subcommittee.<sup>69</sup>

## China Association for International Friendly Contact

CAIFC is a front for the former PLA GPD which may now report directly to the PLA Central Military Commission's Political Work Department.<sup>70</sup> CAIFC's website claims it is “a national social organization devoted to fostering international and regional people-to-people friendly exchanges” and “promoting international people-to-people

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<https://www.ft.com/content/fb2b3934-b004-11e7-beba-5521c713abf4>; China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification, “Council Introduction.” Translation. <http://www.zhongguotongcuihui.org.cn/bhjs/>.

\* The Liaison Department of the PLA GPD has traditionally been responsible for conducting propaganda and psychological operations directed at other militaries. Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao, “The People's Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics,” *Project 2049 Institute*, October 14, 2013, 3. [https://www.project2049.net/documents/PLA\\_General\\_Political\\_Department\\_Liaison\\_Stokes\\_Hsiao.pdf](https://www.project2049.net/documents/PLA_General_Political_Department_Liaison_Stokes_Hsiao.pdf); Interagency Operational Security Support Staff, *Intelligence Threat Handbook*, 2004, 23. <http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/handbook/foreign.pdf>; Howard DeVore, *China's Intelligence and Internal Security Forces*, Jane's Information Group, 1999, 50–51.

† As part of the PLA's ongoing reform, the four former departments of the Central Military Commission (CMC)—the General Staff Headquarters, the GPD, the General Logistics Department, and the General Armaments Department—were disbanded in 2016 and replaced by 15 functional sections comprising seven departments, three commissions, and five directly affiliated bodies. Of these, the CMC Political Work Department likely took over the foreign perception management mission from the former GPD. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2016 Annual Report to Congress*, November 2016, 291. *China Military Online*, “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle,” January 12, 2016. [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-01/12/content\\_7160588.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-01/12/content_7160588.htm).

‡ According to the Department of Defense, perception management comprises “actions to convey and/or deny selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, and objective reasoning as well as to intelligence systems and leaders at all levels to influence official estimates, ultimately resulting in foreign behaviors and official actions favorable to the originator's objectives.... Perception management combines truth projection, operations security, cover and deception, and psychological operations.” U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, April 12, 2001 (as amended through October 31, 2009), 411. [http://jtrc.fhu.disa.mil/jtrc\\_dri/pdfs/jp1\\_02.pdf](http://jtrc.fhu.disa.mil/jtrc_dri/pdfs/jp1_02.pdf).

exchanges and cooperation, and enhancing world peace and development.”<sup>71</sup> The organization’s website says it establishes “close ties with [foreign] government agencies, political parties, and prominent political and military figures” to promote China’s policies, achievements, and goals, which John Garnaut—a former journalist and adviser to Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull—argues is intended to outsource the CCP’s messaging to “self-interested or naïve intermediaries.”<sup>72</sup> CAIFC has additional ties to the Ministries of State Security, Civil Affairs, and Foreign Affairs, and it is a platform for deploying undercover intelligence gatherers.<sup>73</sup> In addition to sending intelligence collectors abroad, CAIFC sponsors trips to China by foreign military and veteran groups, businesspeople, and former politicians which typically include contact with hand-picked PLA personnel.<sup>74</sup>

## Chinese Students and Scholars Associations

After the Tiananmen Massacre, the Chinese government increased ideological work targeting domestic Chinese university students and subjected overseas Chinese students to “aggressive methods ... of group management [and] extraterritorial influence,” according to researcher James Jiann Hua To.<sup>75</sup> These efforts resulted in the creation of CSSAs, which Mr. To argues have received critical support from Chinese embassies since their inception.<sup>76</sup> CSSAs have proliferated in the United States since this time and now include at least 142 U.S. chapters;<sup>\*</sup> they act as social hubs that “help Chinese students adjust to life in a foreign country, bring Chinese students together on campus, and showcase Chinese culture,” according to *Foreign Policy*.<sup>77</sup> Independent analyst Tanner Greer argues CSSAs provide important social goods to Chinese students, such as assistance in finding roommates and housing, which Western universities hosting Chinese students often provide “little instruction or knowledge” on how to obtain.<sup>78</sup>

Despite the useful social services CSSAs provide for their members, they receive guidance from the CCP through Chinese embassies and consulates—governmental ties CSSAs frequently attempt to conceal—and are active in carrying out overseas Chinese work consistent with Beijing’s United Front strategy.<sup>79</sup> Journalists and activists have also shown CSSAs to routinely coordinate with the Chinese government and to have been involved in the suppression of free speech and the harassment, intimidation, and surveillance of Chinese student activists.<sup>80</sup> In at least one case, a CSSA has been implicated in industrial espionage: in 2005, the French newspaper *Le Monde* reported that a CSSA in Leuven, Belgium was a front for a “Belgian-based economic espionage network” comprising “hundreds of Chinese spies working at various levels of European industry.”<sup>81</sup> According to a former U.S. intelligence official, Chinese intelligence officers posted in diplomatic facilities are the primary point of contact for CSSA members; in multiple cases, CSSA members have reportedly cooperated directly with Chinese security personnel outside of China.<sup>82</sup> In the mid-2000s, a CSSA member in the United States informed on another CSSA member to China’s MSS for having contact with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and in the mid-2010s, U.S. counterintelligence officials believed a University of California, Berkeley CSSA member was reporting the activities of other Chinese students to the MSS.<sup>83</sup> In other cases, CSSA members have performed similar functions outside the United States. For instance, in 2017, after Chinese security agents working with Egyptian plainclothes police officers rounded up more than 200 Uyghur students in Cairo at Beijing’s request and jailed or deported many of them, two Uyghur students who had been held in a police station told RFA that Bai Kecheng (the president of the CSSA in Egypt) and three other Chinese men had interrogated them about their Islamic religious practices.<sup>84</sup>

Alex Joske, a Chinese-Australian student journalist who says he has been harassed by CSSA members because of his reporting, argues CSSAs are “active adherents to a mentality that exacerbates the divide” between Chinese students and their university communities.<sup>85</sup> Mr. Greer asserts that the “entire purpose” of United Front work is “to [co-opt] the movements, organizations, and people that provide social ... goods and mobilize or manipulate them into aiding the Party in its endeavors.”<sup>86</sup> This co-opting, based on publicly available information provided by CSSAs, includes receiving funding from the Chinese government, advocating for Beijing’s foreign policy priorities, and responding to direction from—or even being directly subordinate to—Chinese embassies and consulates. In 2018, *Foreign Policy* reported that budget documents from the Georgetown University CSSA showed the CSSA received roughly half of its annual budget from the Chinese government and “confirm a link between the Chinese government and Chinese student organizations ... that is often suspected but difficult to verify.”<sup>87</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> ChineseInUS, a website providing immigration resources for Chinese students in the United States, lists 142 individual U.S. CSSA chapters. This list is not exhaustive. *ChineseInUS*, “CSSA List.” [http://www.chineseinus.com/cssa\\_list.htm](http://www.chineseinus.com/cssa_list.htm).

Receiving funding from the Chinese government is not necessarily tantamount to being under direct oversight, and the funding provided to individual CSSAs appears to vary. Sarah Cook, senior research analyst for East Asia at Freedom House, points out that other governments “generally do not provide [comparable levels of funding] to student groups.”<sup>88</sup> For example, the Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC paid hundreds of students with cash distributed through the George Washington University CSSA to attend events welcoming President Xi to Washington in 2012 and 2015, according to messages sent by the CSSA to its members and a George Washington University student who participated.<sup>89</sup> When then-President Hu Jintao visited Chicago in 2011, the University of Wisconsin-Madison CSSA bused in members to greet him and also gave them cash gifts which the CSSA president told them to keep secret, according to an attendee.<sup>90</sup> Because this kind of petty cash for CSSA activities is often deposited into CSSA officers’ personal bank accounts or unofficial CSSA bank accounts, *Foreign Policy* reports university administrators may not be aware these organizations are receiving funding from Beijing; when violations of host universities’ financial and student organizational policies have occurred, at least one CSSA has been temporarily closed.<sup>91</sup> According to Professor Dreyer, Confucius Institutes—Beijing’s official overseas language and culture educational organizations—have also subsidized CSSA political activities.<sup>92</sup>

In addition to funding, ties indicating supervision of CSSAs by the Chinese Embassy or consulates have also been documented, raising serious concerns about the organizations’ operational independence.<sup>93</sup> The nature of the ties appears to involve direct subordination and political direction rather than mere affiliation or cooperation. For example, in a promotional video from 2017, the president of the George Washington University CSSA explicitly says the CSSA is “directed by the Chinese Embassy” and “works with” the embassy; Cao Yaxue, founder and editor of ChinaChange.org (a civil society activist website), asserted that all CSSAs are funded by the Chinese government.<sup>94</sup> Chen Yonglin claims most CSSAs are “installed by the Chinese government” and noted that the constitution of the Southwestern CSSA—a coalition comprising 26 CSSAs in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Hawaii, according to its website<sup>95</sup>—says the Chinese Consulate in Los Angeles must approve all Southwestern CSSA presidential candidates.<sup>96</sup>

China is not the only country that provides support for overseas student organizations, but its use of CSSAs to politically mobilize students in support of Beijing’s foreign policy objectives and enforce support for the CCP goes well beyond just funding for cultural and educational activities.<sup>97</sup> For example, in February 2017, after the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) invited the Dalai Lama to give that year’s commencement address, the UCSD CSSA threatened “tough measures to resolutely resist the school’s unreasonable behavior” and claimed it had coordinated with the Chinese Consulate and was “waiting for the advice of the Consulate General” regarding the matter.<sup>98</sup> The University of Tennessee CSSA describes itself as apolitical in its charter but requires its members to “fervently love the motherland” and “protect the motherland’s honor and image.” In order for students from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan to be eligible for CSSA membership at the University of Tennessee, they must “support [China’s] national reunification” and “recognize the ‘One China’ principle,” a stipulation indicating the CSSA’s goals include not just celebrating Chinese heritage and cultural interests but explicitly advocating for Beijing’s foreign policy priorities which, in this case, do not align with the United States’ official interpretation of diplomatic arrangements.<sup>99</sup> Not all CSSA members are comfortable with Beijing’s attempts to assume direct control over their activities; some CSSA principals told *Foreign Policy* they are pressured by Chinese consular officials to submit proof they have complied with the Chinese government’s requests.<sup>100</sup>

**Table 1: Selected CSSA Content Indicating CCP Oversight**

CSSA chapter	Website content/principal comments
George Washington University	CSSA president says the CSSA is “directed by” and “works with” the embassy.

\* Beijing’s “One China” principle is based on the “1992 Consensus,” a tacit understanding reached at a meeting between representatives of Taiwan and China in that year that there is only “one China” but that each side may maintain its own interpretation of the meaning of “one China.” The United States’ “One China” policy is the acknowledgement of China’s position that “there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China.” It is not an endorsement of China’s position. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2017 Annual Report to Congress*, November 2017, 182, 373–374; Richard C. Bush, “A One-China Policy Primer,” *Brookings Institution*, March 2017, iii–iv. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/one-china-policy-primer-web-final.pdf>; U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Relations with Taiwan*, September 13, 2016. <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35855.htm>.

CSSA chapter	Website content/principal comments
Southwestern CSSA	Says the Chinese Consulate in Los Angeles must approve presidential candidates.
University of Tennessee	Requires members to “fervently love the motherland” and “protect the motherland’s honor and image.” Members from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan must “support [China’s] national reunification” and “recognize the ‘One China’ principle.”
University of Alberta	Chinese-language frequently asked questions page on the group’s website says the group was established by the Chinese Embassy in Canada; the English version does not mention the embassy.
University of California, San Diego	An older version of the group’s website says the group is “a subordinate organization of the Chinese [Consulate] in Los Angeles”; the website has since been changed.
Harvard Medical School	The Chinese version of the group’s “About Us” page mentions receiving sponsorship from the Chinese Consulate, but the English version does not mention the consulate’s support and says the group is nonpolitical.

Source: Various.<sup>101</sup>

Further complicating concerns about their independence, CSSAs often attempt to conceal or obscure their ties to the Chinese government, frequently omitting incriminating language from the English-language versions of their websites—the ones typically reviewed by university administrators.<sup>102</sup> After the Dalai Lama’s commencement address at UCSD was announced, *Quartz* reported that a UCSD CSSA principal claimed it had been a “mistake” to admit that the CSSA had been in touch with the Chinese consulate and insisted the group was “100 percent student-run.”<sup>103</sup> The current website of the UCSD CSSA says the organization was “spontaneously established by overseas international students,” but an archived version of the website from 2015 shows it previously said the UCSD CSSA is “a subordinate organization of the Chinese [Consulate]\* in Los Angeles.”<sup>104</sup> According to Sandra Fu, senior editor at *China Digital Times*, an activist website that tracks Chinese censorship, the page was altered after the CSSA’s Dalai Lama protest “because people started digging” into its ties to the Chinese government.<sup>105</sup> CSSAs have also attempted to conceal financial ties to the Chinese government; the president of the University of Pittsburgh’s CSSA posted on China’s microblogging platform Sina Weibo in June 2017 that the Chinese Consulate provides the group an annual budget of \$6,000, but later deleted the post, potentially indicating a desire to conceal that support.<sup>106</sup>

## Confucius Institutes

Confucius Institutes are CCP-sponsored education organizations that teach Chinese language, culture, and history at the primary, secondary, and university level around the world.<sup>107</sup> However, they also advance Beijing’s preferred narrative and subvert important academic principles such as institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Significantly, Confucius Institutes are funded by the CCP Propaganda Department—formally affiliated with the UFWD—and are also overseen by personnel based in Chinese embassies and consulates, according to Richard Fadden, former director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.<sup>108</sup> The Confucius Institute program has longstanding and formal ties to the UFWD, as Liu Yandong—a former Chinese vice-premier and Politburo member—was the head of the UFWD when she launched the program in 2004.<sup>109</sup> Ms. Liu now serves as chair of the Office of Chinese Language Council International, which is the Confucius Institutes’ parent organization, also known as the “Hanban,” short for “National Chinese Language Office.” As of 2014, according to the Hanban, there were at least 110 Confucius Institutes in the United States alone and, according to *Xinhua*, there were more than 500 institutes in 142 countries as of late 2017.<sup>110</sup> Ethan Epstein, associate editor of the *Weekly Standard*, argued that a key factor in the spread of Confucius Institutes in U.S. universities is “an alarming willingness to accept

\* The older page states the CSSA is subordinate to “the Chinese embassy in Los Angeles.” China has a consulate in Los Angeles; the embassy is in Washington, DC. “About UCSD CSSA,” March 13, 2015, accessed via Internet Archive Wayback Machine. Translation. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150313160810/http://www.ucsdcssa.org:80/about/about-ucsd-cssa/>.



money at the expense of principles that universities are ostensibly devoted to upholding.”<sup>\*\* 111</sup> According to United Front expert John Fitzgerald, “Universities that accept [Confucius Institutes] on Beijing’s terms, with all the compromises they entail, signal they are willing to set aside academic principles<sup>†</sup> to build good relations with China [and] indicate normal due diligence does not apply to relations with Chinese universities and firms.”<sup>112</sup>

In addition to providing Chinese language instruction to students in the United States—including sending hundreds of teachers to help meet U.S. government goals for Mandarin instruction—the Chinese government also sponsors trips for U.S. students to study abroad in China.<sup>‡ 113</sup> The Hanban has paid for more than 6,000 U.S. high school students to visit China since 2007 through its Chinese Bridge Program for Secondary School Students, an opportunity *Foreign Policy*’s Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian argues many students would not be able to have without the Hanban’s sponsorship.<sup>114</sup> An important goal of these exchanges is to try to build a friendly environment for China’s interests by giving participants favorable views of China, which they then disseminate, helping to legitimize the CCP.<sup>§ 115</sup>

However, Confucius Institutes’ Chinese-language instruction also serves as an important platform for a larger program to increase China’s soft power and advance Beijing’s version of history, according to Li Changchun, a former CCP Politburo Standing Committee member responsible for propaganda.<sup>116</sup> Liu Yunshan—another former Politburo Standing Committee member and head of the CCP Central Propaganda Department—wrote in 2010 that China should “actively carry out international propaganda battles” on core issues and “do well in establishing cultural centers and Confucius Institutes,” suggesting China’s vision of soft power aims more to combat Western and other foreign narratives about China than to cultivate China’s attractiveness.<sup>\*\* 117</sup> In addition to hosting cultural

\* There are more than 500 Confucius Institutes in universities—with plans for 1,000 by 2020—and more than 1,000 Confucius Classrooms in primary and secondary schools worldwide, including at least one Institute in a government department, the New South Wales Department of Education. Ethan Epstein, “How China Infiltrated U.S. Classrooms,” *Politico*, January 16, 2018. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/01/16/how-china-infiltrated-us-classrooms-216327>; Louisa Lim and Anders Furze, “Confucius Institute in NSW Education Department ‘Unacceptable’ – Analyst,” *Guardian*, December 7, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/08/confucious-institute-in-nsw-education-department-unacceptable-analyst>; Mareike Ohlberg and Bertram Lang, “How to Counter China’s Global Propaganda Offensive,” *New York Times*, September 21, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/22/opinion/how-to-counter-chinas-global-propaganda-offensive.html>; Rachele Peterson, “American Universities Are Welcoming China’s Trojan Horse,” *Foreign Policy*, May 9, 2017. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/09/american-universities-are-welcoming-chinas-trojan-horse-confucius-institutes/>.

† For example, according to the Association of American Universities, core academic principles include institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and shared governance. Association of American Universities, “Academic Principles: A Brief Introduction,” April 2013. <https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU%20Files/AAU%20Documents/Academic-Principles.pdf>.

‡ For example, in 2014, following a 2013 meeting with then Vice-Premiere Liu Yandong brokered by the China-U.S.-Exchange Foundation (CUSEF), a delegation from eight U.S. historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) signed a memorandum of understanding in Beijing for the Chinese Ministry of Education to provide 1,000 scholarships for HBCU students to visit China. CUSEF is run by Tung Chee-hwa, a vice-chair of the CPPCC. For more on Dr. Tung and CUSEF, see “Funding of U.S. Academic and Policy Discourse” below. U.S. Department of Education, “PRESS RELEASE: Chinese Government Signs MOU with Historically Black Colleges & Universities in Beijing Today,” July 9, 2014. <https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/2014/07/09/press-release-chinese-government-signs-mou-with-historically-black-colleges-universities-in-beijing-today/>.

§ The CCP uses “friendship envoys” to outsource propaganda, in part because Beijing believes foreigners are more accepting of propaganda if it appears to come from other foreigners instead of Chinese sources. In many cases, friendship envoys go on to assume important positions in their respective governments. Language study through the Hanban constitutes “friendship” activities, according to Liu Yandong. For example, in June 2017, then Vice Premier Liu visited the Hungarian-Chinese Bilingual Primary School in Budapest and praised the “sincere friendship” reflected by the students’ Chinese language ability. In March 2018, Chinese Ambassador to the United Kingdom Liu Xiaoming encouraged participants in a Confucius Institute-sponsored Chinese language proficiency contest to become friendship envoys. People’s Republic of China in Kolkata, “Liu Yandong: Hope Hungarian-Chinese Bilingual Primary School Will Cultivate More Envoys of China-Hungary Friendship,” June 20, 2017. <http://kolkata.china-consulate.org/eng/zgbd/t1472741.htm>; Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, “Ambassador Liu Xiaoming Attends the 17th ‘Chinese Bridge’ Chinese Proficiency Competition for Foreign College Students UK Regional Final,” March 26, 2018. <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/tpxw/t1545912.htm>; Juan Pablo Cardenal, “‘Sharp Power’: Rising Authoritarian Influence,” Washington, DC, December 6, 2017; Li Baoping, “On the Issues Concerned with China-Africa Education Cooperation,” China-Africa Links Workshop, Hong Kong, November 11–12, 2006, 5. <http://www.cctr.ust.hk/materials/conference/china-africa/papers/Li,Baoping-Eng.pdf>; Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People’s Republic*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, 19–20.

\*\* For more comments made by senior CCP officials on the politics of culture and the Confucius Institutes, see Marshall Sahlins, “Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware,” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 12:46 (November 2014): 3–5.



and linguistic courses, Confucius Institutes have been documented to organize protests against topics deemed threats to the stability of CCP rule\* and to distort history (e.g., by inviting speakers who repeat CCP propaganda points about Tibet and by claiming the United States drew China into the Korean War by bombing Chinese villages, as a video posted to the Hanban's website did).<sup>118</sup>

A 2017 report on Confucius Institutes by the National Association of Scholars—a U.S. organization advocating for intellectual freedom—made a number of concerning findings, including that Institute faculty “face pressure to self-censor”; contracts between Confucius Institutes and host universities are “rarely publicly available”; universities with financial incentives not to upset China† “find it more difficult to criticize Chinese policies”; and that Confucius Institutes present students with “selective knowledge” of Chinese history, including “avoid[ing] Chinese political history and human rights abuses.”<sup>119</sup> The Confucius Institute constitution requires the hosting institutions to avoid “tarnish[ing] the reputation of the Confucius Institutes,” and the eight contracts with U.S. universities that the National Association of Scholars report reviewed duplicated this language nearly verbatim.<sup>120</sup> Finally, Confucius Institute officials have also personally intervened to censor material regarding Taiwan, including at U.S. academic conferences.<sup>121</sup>

In recent years, U.S. policymakers have increased their scrutiny of the activities of Confucius Institutes and their relationship to the Chinese government based on concerns over propaganda, censorship, and interference in U.S. universities’ decision-making processes, which has led some universities to withdraw from the program.<sup>122</sup> As part of this increased scrutiny, Members of Congress have sought explanations from universities partnering with Confucius Institutes and introduced legislation to increase the transparency of the organizations. In February 2018, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, wrote to five universities in Florida asking them to end their affiliations with the Confucius Institutes, citing the risk posed by Beijing’s “increasingly aggressive attempts to use ‘Confucius Institutes’ ... to influence foreign academic institutions and critical analysis of China’s past history and present policies.”<sup>123</sup> One of the schools that received Senator Rubio’s letter, the University of West Florida, cut ties with its Confucius Institute a day later, citing “a lack of student interest.”<sup>124</sup> In March 2018, Representative Seth Moulton (D-MA) urged Tufts University and the University of Massachusetts Boston to close their Confucius Institutes, and in April 2018, two Texas representatives, Michael McCaul (R) and Henry Cuellar (D), urged several Texas universities to cut ties with the Confucius Institute.<sup>125</sup> Because of this scrutiny, the Texas A&M University system announced shortly thereafter that Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M would terminate their contracts with the Hanban.<sup>126</sup>

Several pieces of U.S. legislation in 2018 have included important provisions for countering CCP and other malign foreign influence.‡ Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC) and Senators Rubio and Tom Cotton (R-AK) introduced legislation in March 2018, titled the Foreign Influence Transparency Act, which would require organizations that promote the political agendas of foreign governments to register as foreign agents§ and would require universities to disclose certain donations and gifts from foreign sources.<sup>127</sup> Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) introduced the Stop Higher

\* The “five poisons” that the CCP believes threaten its rule are Uyghurs, Tibetans, Taiwan independence proponents, democracy activists, and the Falun Gong spiritual group. Sarah Cook, “The Long Shadow of Chinese Censorship: How the Communist Party’s Media Restrictions Affect News Outlets around the World,” *Center for International Media Assistance*, October 22, 2013, 11. [http://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CIMA-China\\_Sarah%20Cook.pdf](http://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CIMA-China_Sarah%20Cook.pdf).

† Every Hanban contract the report’s author reviewed stipulated that “action that ‘severely harms the image and reputation of the Confucius Institute’” can result in a loss of funding. For example, in 2008, the dean at the University of Tel Aviv closed a student art exhibit depicting oppression of Falun Gong members out of fear the exhibit would “jeopardize Chinese support for the University’s Confucius Institute and other campus activities,” according to Marshall Sahlins, emeritus professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago. An Israeli district court later ruled the university had violated the students’ freedom of expression. Marshall Sahlins, “Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware,” *Asia-Pacific Journal* 12:46 (November 2014): 10. Rachele Peterson, “Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education,” *National Association of Scholars*, April 27, 2017, 46. [https://nas.org/images/documents/confucius\\_institutes/NAS\\_confuciusInstitutes.pdf](https://nas.org/images/documents/confucius_institutes/NAS_confuciusInstitutes.pdf).

‡ The National Defense Authorization Act for 2019 defines “malign foreign influence operations and campaigns” as “coordinated, direct, or indirect application of national diplomatic, informational, military, economic, business, corruption, educational, and other capabilities by hostile foreign powers to affect attitudes, behaviors, decisions, or outcomes within the United States.” John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for 2019 § 1043, Pub. L. 115-232, 2018. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5515/text>.

§ The Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938 “requires persons acting as agents of foreign principals in a political or quasi-political capacity to make periodic public disclosure of their relationship with the foreign principal, as well as activities, receipts, and disbursements in support of those activities.” U.S. Department of Justice, *FARA: Foreign Agents Registration Act*. <https://www.fara.gov/>.

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Education Espionage and Theft Act in May 2018, which is intended to strengthen the U.S. government’s ability to counter foreign intelligence organizations working inside the U.S. educational system.<sup>128</sup> Senator Rubio and his Congressional-Executive Commission on China co-chair Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ), along with co-sponsors, introduced companion bills in the Senate and House in June 2018 calling for the establishment of an interagency task force to compile an unclassified report on CCP influence operations targeting the United States and certain U.S. allies.<sup>129</sup> Most significantly, the National Defense Authorization Act for 2019 contains important provisions to coordinate the U.S. government response to malign foreign influence operations and campaigns—including specifically by China.\*

## United Front Activities in the United States and Other Target Countries

As concerns over China’s overseas United Front activities have grown, reporting and analysis have brought to light a few examples of Chinese influence campaigns notable for their characteristic United Front tactics and clear intent to influence policy toward China in the United States and other countries. These cases include United Front influence on academic and policy discourse in the United States, political interference in Australia and New Zealand, and political warfare in Taiwan, which are discussed further in this section.

### Funding of U.S. Academic and Policy Discourse

In November 2017, *Foreign Policy* reported that the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)—a major nexus of foreign policy education and analysis in Washington, DC—had received part of the funding for a new endowed professorship and research project from Dr. Tung Chee-hwa, a vice-chairman of the CPPCC National Committee.<sup>130</sup> Dr. Tung’s Hong Kong-based nonprofit that provided the direct funding for the endowment, the China-United States Exchange Foundation (CUSEF), is registered under the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA).<sup>131</sup> According to *Foreign Policy*, CUSEF’s partnership with Johns Hopkins SAIS is not its first with U.S. academic institutions and think tanks, as it has also cooperated with the Brookings Institution, CSIS, Atlantic Council, Center for American Progress, East-West Institute, Carter Center, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, all of which are influential in the U.S. foreign policy community.<sup>132</sup> Demonstrating the extent of CUSEF’s ties to the Chinese government and its involvement in influence operations, the organization has also cooperated on projects with CAIFC, uses the same public relations firm as the Chinese Embassy, and has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars lobbying for “China-U.S. relations” as a registered foreign agent.<sup>133</sup>

In response to concerns the CUSEF endowment could negatively influence SAIS publications and research on China, David Lampton, director of SAIS’s China studies program, explained CUSEF granted the funding without “conditions or limitations imposed upon the [research project] or [SAIS] faculty members.”<sup>134</sup> However, the goal in these kinds of investments, according to Mr. Mattis of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, is for China to “cultivate enough people in the right places [so that the CCP starts] to change the debate without having

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\* It requires the president to designate a National Security Council staffer responsible for interagency coordination in combating malign foreign influence and requires a report outlining a strategy for doing so; it directs the president to submit to Congress a report detailing a whole-of-government strategy regarding China including strategic assessments of and responses to, among other factors, China’s “use of political influence, information operations, censorship, and propaganda to undermine democratic institutions and processes, and the freedoms of speech, expression, press, and academic thought;” and it directs the Department of Defense to add a section in its *Annual Report on Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China* addressing China’s “efforts ... to influence the media, cultural institutions, business, and academic and policy communities of the United States to be more favorable to its security and military strategy and objectives” as well as China’s use of “nonmilitary tools in other countries, including ... information operations.” It also prohibits Department of Defense funds from being used for Chinese language instruction by Confucius Institutes. John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for 2019 § 1043, 1091, 1260, 1261, Pub. L. 115-232, 2018. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5515/text>.

to directly inject [its] own voice.”\*<sup>135</sup> According to Senator Cruz, the primary concern over collaboration with United Front-affiliated entities is that the CCP attempts to use “Americans who unwittingly promote CCP ideology” as a “countering voice” in the China debate.<sup>136</sup> Josh Rogin, columnist at the *Washington Post*, argues that “by influencing the influencers, China gets Americans to carry its message to other Americans.”<sup>137</sup> Beijing seeks to outsource its messaging in part because it believes foreigners are more likely to accept propaganda if it appears to come from non-Chinese sources.<sup>138</sup>

In January 2018, Senator Cruz, citing the Commission’s *2017 Annual Report to Congress*, wrote to the president, chancellor, and chairman of the University of Texas (UT)-Austin regarding the university’s consideration of a partnership with CUSEF, which he called a “pseudo-philanthropic foundation,” noting Dr. Tung’s ties to the United Front and CPPCC as reasons for concern.<sup>139</sup> After several professors and university officials raised their own concerns, and following the receipt of Senator Cruz’s letter, UT-Austin President Greg Fenves announced the university’s China Public Policy Center would not accept any funding from CUSEF.<sup>140</sup>

## Political Interference in Australia and New Zealand

Australia and New Zealand have received a great deal of political donations and media investment from United Front affiliates since the mid-2000s and have even seen United Front and PLA affiliates hold political office, raising deep concerns over the CCP’s exercise of undue influence on Australia and New Zealand’s policies toward China.<sup>141</sup> China’s United Front work has targeted a range of Australian and New Zealand organizations and actors and achieved significant success exerting political influence, controlling important media outlets, and subverting narratives China believes to be unfavorable to its interests.

**Political Influence:** According to Clive Hamilton—a professor of public ethics at Charles Sturt University in New South Wales, Australia whose book on CCP influence in Australia was initially canceled by three separate publishers due to fears of potential lawsuits from Beijing—United Front organizations groom members to participate in politics in target countries, both as candidates for election and as staff in important positions.<sup>142</sup> The Australian Security Intelligence Organization has reportedly estimated at least ten recent Australian state and local government political candidates are connected to Chinese intelligence agencies.<sup>143</sup> United Front activities in Australia have involved political donations, influence operations targeting high-ranking politicians, and harassment of members of the Chinese-Australian community. Huang Xiangmo, a China-born permanent Australian resident and real estate magnate who was president of the Australian chapter of the UFWD subordinate organization CPPRC from 2014 to 2017, has been a key figure in these events due to his significant donations to Australian political parties.<sup>144</sup> An Australian senator, Sam Dastyari, who had argued in favor of China’s position on territorial disputes in the South China Sea while standing by Mr. Huang’s side, announced in late 2017 he would resign from Parliament after it was revealed he had warned Mr. Huang that the latter was likely being surveilled by Australian intelligence agencies.<sup>145</sup> Senator Dastyari had previously faced criticism for allowing a bill incurred by his office to be paid by Mr. Huang’s company.<sup>146</sup> These influence operations have been arguably much more successful in New Zealand, as the case of Yang Jian shows.

Independent analyst and United Front expert Jichang Lulu argues New Zealand is an example of successful United Front “domination” of a Chinese diaspora.<sup>147</sup> Yang Jian, a China-born New Zealand Member of Parliament, spent 15 years working in China’s military intelligence sector before naturalizing in New Zealand, and he was later found to have concealed his previous PLA affiliation on his permanent residency and employment applications.<sup>148</sup> Mr.

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\* The CCP has also attempted to directly inject its own voice into policy discussions: in 2015, the Chinese state-run think tank National Institute for South China Sea Studies established the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington, DC, as part of a campaign to introduce Beijing’s views on its territorial claims in the South China Sea to Washington. Chinese think tanks such as the China Energy Fund Committee (CEFC), which is funded by the private conglomerate CEFC China Energy, are also involved in influence operations and propaganda. Prominent representatives of CEFC are known to have held senior positions in CAIFC, according to the think tank Project 2049 Institute. Reuters, “U.S. Charges Two with Bribing African Officials for China Energy Firm,” November 20, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-corruption/u-s-charges-two-with-bribing-african-officials-for-china-energy-firm-idUSKBN1DK2Q6>; Isaac Stone Fish, “Beijing Establishes a D.C. Think Tank, and No One Notices,” *Foreign Policy*, July 7, 2016. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/07/07/beijing-establishes-washington-dc-think-tank-south-china-sea/>; Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao, “The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics,” *Project 2049 Institute*, October 14, 2013, 26–27. [https://www.project2049.net/documents/PLA\\_General\\_Political\\_Department\\_Liaison\\_Stokes\\_Hsiao.pdf](https://www.project2049.net/documents/PLA_General_Political_Department_Liaison_Stokes_Hsiao.pdf).

Mattis assesses Mr. Yang was almost certainly an officer involved with the intelligence system during his time in the PLA based on where he is known to have taught.<sup>149</sup> Afterward, while attending Australia National University in the 1990s, Mr. Yang was the president of the CSSA there, long before he moved to New Zealand, naturalized, and entered politics.<sup>150</sup> Mr. Yang's position has likely given him access to sensitive intelligence on China, and according to the *Financial Times*, he has "consistently pushed for closer ties with Beijing and for international policies and positions echoing" those Beijing favors.<sup>151</sup> Christopher Johnson, Freeman Chair in China Studies at CSIS, argues China likely sees New Zealand as a softer target than the United States for "cultivating people at the grassroots political levels of western democracies and helping them to reach positions of influence" and may be "using it as a testing ground for future operations in other countries."<sup>152</sup>

**Controlling the Media:** Dr. Chau Chak Wing, a China-born Australian citizen, business magnate, and member of the CPPCC,<sup>\*</sup> has also been prominent in United Front operations in Australia, both via donations and by seeking to exert control over Australia's formerly vibrant Chinese-language media landscape.<sup>153</sup> According to an editor at a pro-Beijing publication in Australia cited by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "Nearly 95 percent of the Australian Chinese newspapers have been brought in by the Chinese government to some degree."<sup>154</sup> Australian National University professor Bates Gill and independent researcher Linda Jakobson cited the *Australian New Express Daily* as a particularly striking example of Chinese government influence, which Mr. Chau praised for "never hav[ing] any negative reporting [about China]."<sup>†</sup><sup>155</sup> According to John Garnaut, Dr. Chau "made himself known as the point man for organizing the Chinese diaspora in Australia" using his "Beijing-friendly Chinese media empire."<sup>156</sup>

**Subverting Unfavorable Narratives:** United Front work in Australia aimed at both Chinese and non-Chinese communities has attempted to "influence the choices, direction, and loyalties of its targets by overcoming negative perceptions of CCP rule in China and promoting favorable perceptions," according to Professor Hamilton and Mr. Joske.<sup>157</sup> They argue that in the 2000s, "trusted individuals sympathetic to the CCP, encouraged by the [Chinese Embassy in] Canberra ... and [Chinese] consulates, took over most of the established Chinese community and professional associations in Australia."<sup>158</sup> They argued further that CCP officials "typically aim to guide ... rather than directly control" these organizations.<sup>159</sup> CSSAs have been very active in Australia, as well,<sup>‡</sup> according to Mr. Joske, CSSA executives in Australia are "prolific in their output" of pro-CCP statements, and each year they travel to Canberra at the Chinese Embassy's cost "to discuss the latest party doctrines and collaboration with the embassy."<sup>160</sup> In 2013, then Chinese Ambassador to Australia Ma Zhaoxu, in an act emphasizing the close connection, personally presented awards to CSSA members in recognition for being "outstanding cadres," with the implication being that the recipients were essentially CCP officials.<sup>161</sup>

Observers have been careful to note that the CCP and its proxies—not the wider Chinese-Australian community—are responsible for these United Front activities, and that it is important not to play into the CCP's hands by

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<sup>\*</sup> Dr. Chau has denied being a member of the CCP, but he is a member of the Guangdong Province chapter of the CPPCC. According to researcher James To, Guangdong Province is one of the most important provincial-level units for overseas Chinese work due to the large number of emigrants from Guangdong. Rebecca Trigger, *Australian Broadcasting Network*, "Chinese Businessman Subject of ASIO Warning Donated \$200,000 to WA Liberals," June 10, 2017. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-10/chinese-businessman-asio-warning-chau-chak-wing-wa-liberals/8607372>; *China Federation of Overseas Returned Chinese Entrepreneurs*, "Chau Chak Wing," May 9, 2016. Translation. <http://www.qiaoshang.org/staticpages/ryhz/20160509/2993.html>; James Jiann Hua To, *Qiaowu: Extra-Territorial Policies for the Overseas Chinese*, Brill Academic Publishers, 2014, 85.

<sup>†</sup> For more information on CCP influence in Chinese-language Australian media, see U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2017 Annual Report to Congress*, November 2017, 468–470.

<sup>‡</sup> In 2014, *People's Daily* reported China had become the top country of origin for international students in Australia and praised these students for being "determined to work hard to realize the great China Dream." As of July 2017, students from China comprised approximately 29 percent of Australia's 564,869 international students. Australian Department of Education and Training, *International Student Data Monthly Summary*, July 2017. <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/MONTHLY%20SUMMARIES/2017/Jul%202017%20MonthlyInfographic.pdf>; Li Jingwei, "Chinese International Students in Australia Are Determined to Work Hard to Realize the Great China Dream," *People's Daily*, March 4, 2014. Translation. <http://world.people.com.cn/n/2014/0304/c1002-24527089.html>.



presenting an opening for claims of racism, even while the CCP attempts to exploit ethnic Chinese communities.\*<sup>162</sup> According to Mr. Joske, CSSAs do not fairly represent either Chinese students in Australia or the interests of the Chinese diaspora in the country; in addition, Chinese-Australians have been instrumental in exposing the CCP's covert influence operations.<sup>163</sup> Importantly, the investigative journalism at the center of the ongoing debate in Australia over CCP influence has made specific claims about a few individuals that have engaged in questionable behavior rather than broad assertions about Chinese-Australians in general.<sup>†</sup><sup>164</sup> However, CSSAs and other CCP-backed groups have demonstrably carried out United Front activities in Australia.<sup>165</sup> Mr. Joske argues the CCP exploits Chinese students to expand its influence and has fostered the idea among Chinese-Australians that the liberal West and supporters of freedom are China's enemies.<sup>166</sup>

## Political Warfare in Taiwan

The CCP is active in waging information warfare against Taiwan to suppress independence movements, undermine Taiwan's government, and recruit politicians in Taiwan and third countries to advocate for China's preferred cross-strait outcome: unification of Taiwan with the Mainland.<sup>167</sup> As with other United Front campaigns, these activities include sponsoring trips to mainland China and offering other opportunities such as jobs and trade deals.<sup>168</sup> J. Michael Cole, a Taiwan expert and former Canadian intelligence official, argues the goal of United Front operations in Taiwan is not to brainwash the general population into supporting unification, but rather to create unrest that the CCP can then claim as justification for military intervention to protect the people there.<sup>‡</sup><sup>169</sup> United Front operations against Taiwan include lobbying efforts in third countries to change the international narrative about the status of Taiwan. For example, CCPRC President Huang Xiangmo sponsored an event in the Tasmanian Parliament in October 2017 advocating for Taiwan's unification with the Mainland.<sup>170</sup>

Mr. Cole argues authoritarian regimes such as the CCP often try to create and capitalize on instability to further their political agendas.<sup>171</sup> This approach has been evident in United Front activities in Taiwan, where United Front operations have involved sponsorship of organized crime to destabilize society and meddle in politics, which intend "to turn Taiwan's democracy against itself," according to Mr. Cole.<sup>172</sup> For example, Chang An-lo, the Triad-linked head of Taiwan's Chinese Unity Promotion Party—which advocates for unification with the Mainland—mobilized about 200 pro-Beijing activists and Triad associates to protest the arrival in Taiwan of Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong and pro-self-determination Hong Kong legislators.<sup>173</sup> Chang has admitted he has regular contact with China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) and has friends in the United Front, but he also denies receiving funding from Beijing or following its orders.<sup>174</sup> In January 2017, pro-Beijing activists and Triad associates of Chang An-lo mobilized about 200 people to protest the arrival in Taiwan of Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong and pro-self-determination Hong Kong legislators.<sup>175</sup> In December 2017, the Taiwan pro-unification New Party announced its intent to open a liaison office in China, and its chairman Yok Mu-ming met with then-CPPCC chairman Yu Zhengsheng and TAO head Zhang Zhijun in Beijing.<sup>176</sup> Later that month, Taiwanese authorities detained and questioned four members of the party about their Mainland ties; authorities also raided New Party spokesman Wang Ping-chung's home on

\* In March 2018, scholars of China and of the Chinese diaspora published an open letter expressing concern that the debate in Australia surrounding "Chinese influence" risked threatening intellectual freedom and civil liberties. Days later, a second group of scholars signed an open letter arguing that an open debate on CCP influence operations in Australia is "essential to intellectual freedom, democratic rights, and national security"; both letters agreed authorities should take action to counter unacceptable forms of influence when evidence of it exists. Open Letter Respondents, "China's Influence in Australia: Maintaining the Debate," *Policy Forum*, March 27, 2018. <https://www.policyforum.net/chinas-influence-australia-maintaining-debate/>; Concerned Scholars of China, "An Open Letter from Concerned Scholars of China and the Chinese Diaspora," *Policy Forum*, March 26, 2018. <https://www.policyforum.net/an-open-letter-from-concerned-scholars-of-china-and-the-chinese-diaspora/>.

† Professor Fitzgerald at the CSI Swinburne Program for Asia-Pacific Social Investment and Philanthropy also argues the proportion of articles in Australian Chinese-language media irresponsibly declaring Chinese-Australians should primarily be loyal to Beijing has been "comparably" small. John Fitzgerald, "No, China Is Not Being Demonized," *Lowy Institute*, October 6, 2017. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/no-china-not-demonised>.

‡ According to a declassified National Intelligence Estimate produced by the U.S. National Foreign Intelligence Board in 1999, widespread instability or unrest in Taiwan is one of four "red lines" concerning Taiwan that could result in the use of force to compel unification. These "red lines" have likely not changed in recent years. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2017 Annual Report to Congress*, November 2017, 237; U.S. National Foreign Intelligence Board, *National Intelligence Estimate China-Taiwan: Prospects for Cross-Strait Relations*, September 13, 1999.



suspicion of his being involved in a Chinese spy ring.<sup>177</sup> In June 2018, authorities indicted Mr. Wang and two other New Party members for violating Taiwan’s law and seeking to recruit Taiwan military officers on behalf of China.<sup>178</sup>

## Implications for the United States

The challenges posed by the CCP’s United Front operations to the United States are significant, and addressing them is complicated by the CCP’s insistence that the CCP is inseparable from China.<sup>179</sup> Western experts have cautioned against equating the CCP with China or the Chinese people, and *New York Times* reporter Michael Forsythe has written that reporters must approach this issue “thoughtfully and with sensitivity” so as not to “slip into a tone that could be construed as racism,” using phrases like “the Chinese” and “Chinese influence” when discussing CCP influence operations risks falsely equating the CCP and anyone who is ethnically Chinese.<sup>180</sup> Instead, Mr. Forsythe recommends focusing on how CCP-connected funds affect the “missions or focus” of universities, think tanks, and other institutions.<sup>181</sup>

Simplistically framing the debate over China’s overseas United Front work as “Chinese” influence conflates the positive influence that Chinese culture and people have with the targeted subversive influence of a foreign power designed to shape U.S. policy in ways that may be against the United States’ own interests. This framing also risks stoking Chinese nationalism and could provide the CCP with an additional pretext to accuse the United States of racism toward Chinese-Americans.<sup>182</sup> In framing this issue, it is also important to differentiate illegitimate influence and coercion from legitimate forms of influence. For example, when introducing Australia’s new anti-foreign influence legislation in December 2017, Prime Minister Turnbull explicitly singled out “covert, coercive, or corrupt” foreign influence activities as unacceptable but welcomed transparent engagement based on legitimate soft power.<sup>183</sup> Prime Minister Turnbull argued further that refusing to seriously address the question of political interference by the CCP is also not helpful, and he warned the CCP that Australia is open and optimistic, but not naïve.<sup>184</sup> Bill Bishop, curator of the widely read *Sinocism* newsletter, told the Commission in March 2018 that it is “vital” to examine China’s influence operations, albeit with precision, because while CCP influence activities in the United States may not yet have achieved the same success as elsewhere, the United States should not ignore the “nodes and networks” Beijing is setting up for potential future use.<sup>185</sup> Australia and New Zealand are useful case studies in how these kinds of networks function in advanced stages, and they serve as warnings to other democracies that may be targeted in the future.<sup>186</sup> United Front organizations such as the National Association for China’s Peaceful Unification actively cultivate ties to campaign donors and politicians in the United States in order to lobby for Beijing’s policy priorities, encourage overseas Chinese to get involved in politics to advocate for Beijing’s interests and, according to Peter Mattis, aim to “turn Americans against their own government’s interests and their society’s interests.”<sup>187</sup>

Despite the CCP’s general candor in Chinese-language publications and recent English-language research and reporting on the United Front, the extent of its organization and influence is still relatively unknown among policymakers.<sup>188</sup> Jichang Lulu argues that “it speaks volumes about the level of knowledge of the politics” of China that Western media coverage often uses “scare quotes” when referring to the UFWD or the United Front strategy, indicating a lack of comprehension of the UFWD’s formal role.<sup>189</sup> Individuals clearly associated with the United Front—such as Dr. Chau Chak Wing and Dr. Tung Chee-hwa—simply deny their association or knowledge of it, and front organizations such as CSSAs and the CPPCC insist they are run by private citizens, even as they take money or guidance from the CCP.<sup>190</sup> For example, Dr. Tung published an editorial in *The Diplomat* in February 2018 scolding “some Americans” for viewing China as an “adversary,” and claimed China has “no interest in

\* The National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018 and the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018, became law in June 2018. A third bill designed to crack down on foreign political donations is currently in Parliament. Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Bill 2017 (Australia), [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/legislation/bills/s1117\\_first-senate/toc\\_pdf/1728620.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/legislation/bills/s1117_first-senate/toc_pdf/1728620.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf); National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018 (Australia), 2018. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018A00067>; Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018 (Australia), 2018. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018A00063>.

expanding [its] territory or exporting [its] ideology;" the editorial made no mention of the author's CUSEF affiliation or the organization's involvement in CCP influence operations.<sup>191</sup>

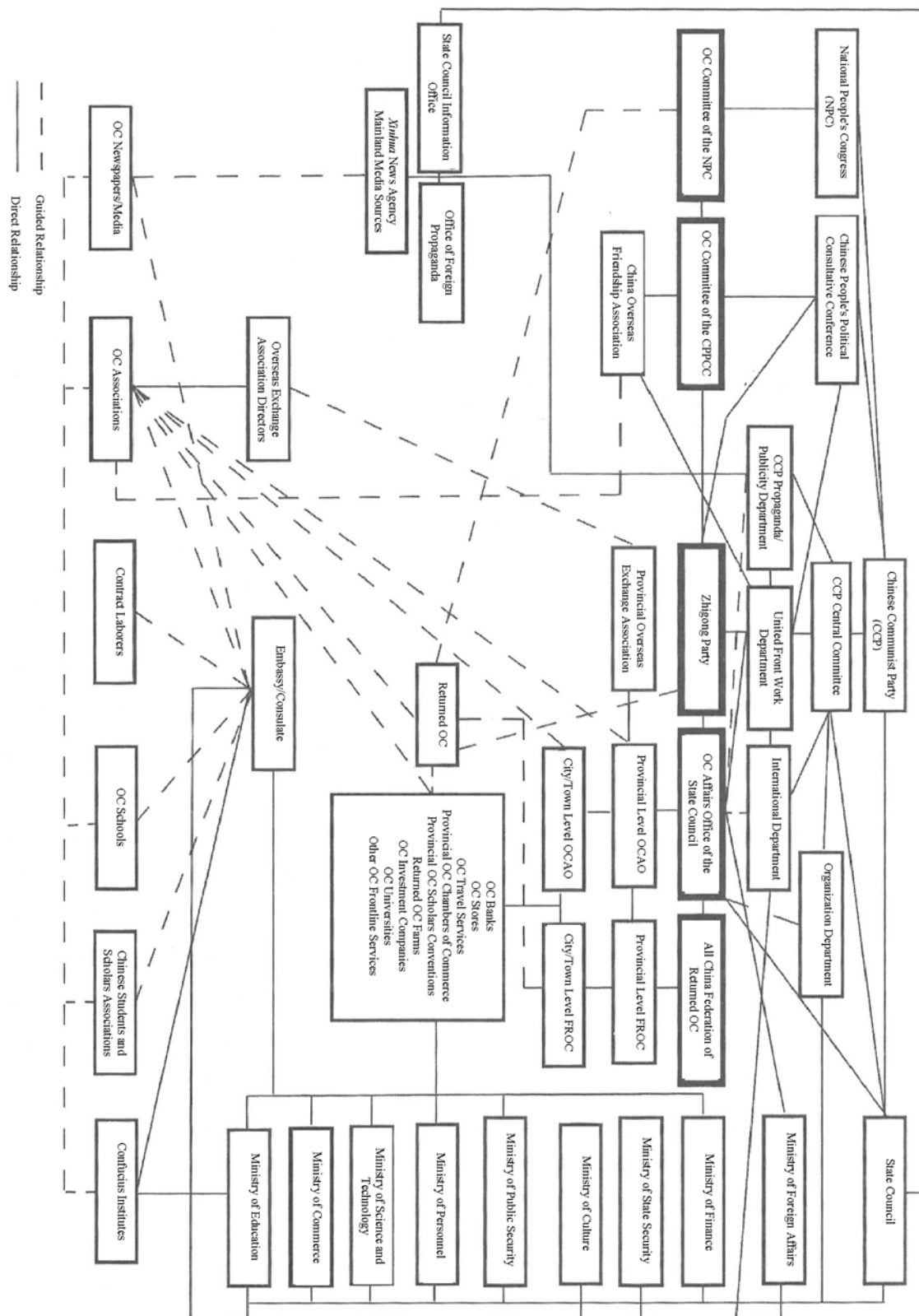
To effectively counter CCP influence operations, continued research and investigation is needed to further bring to light the activities of the United Front, its role in the CCP, how it operates, and its links to other important CCP organs.\* Both Taiwan and Australia, which have long been testing grounds for United Front tactics and are intimately familiar with these operations, can play an important role in coordinating international best practices for responding to the CCP's subversion of democracy abroad.<sup>192</sup> To address concerns over CCP influence and censorship, some experts have recommended the United States invest in and expand its own academic programs in Chinese culture and language so universities will be less reliant on funding from China.<sup>†</sup><sup>193</sup> Experts have also called for increased transparency in contracts between universities and Confucius Institutes and for contracts to be renegotiated to give the host universities control over the content taught in these programs—or, failing that, for the Confucius Institutes to be closed.<sup>194</sup> Increased support for Chinese students could also reduce the influence that CCP-sponsored entities like CSSAs wield based on their ability to provide social goods. More steadfast and visible support from universities for freedom of expression could deter United Front affiliates from harassing those who criticize China or its policies on college campuses.<sup>195</sup> Overall, improved transparency and oversight—combined with an increased understanding of the United Front—hold great promise for countering the most subversive and anti-democratic of the CCP's influence operations.<sup>196</sup>

\* In May 2018, the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars hosted a panel discussion called "Chinese Influence Operations in the U.S.: Shedding Some Light on All the Heat." The panel, which listed United Front Work among the types of influence it planned to address, originally included Wang Huiyao—whom the event's website merely described as the founder and president of Chinese think tank Center for China and Globalization (CCG)—to take the Chinese government's views on the matter into account, according to Robert Daly, director of the Kissinger Institute. Dr. Wang is also the standing director of the UFWDC China Overseas Friendship Association and a member of its advisory council, and he is a Central Committee member and Economic Committee Deputy Director of the Jiusan Society, a non-communist political party subordinate to the CCP via the CPPCC. He is also the vice-chair of the United Front organization Western Returned Scholars Association—members of which founded the CCG—and director of its Expert Committee as well as an adviser to the CPPCC's Beijing Committee. The Wilson Center's website did not initially specify Dr. Wang's United Front ties, but after *Foreign Policy* reported that Senator Rubio had asked whether the Center was aware of Dr. Wang's United Front affiliation and requested that it be disclosed, Dr. Wang withdrew from the event. The CCG issued a press release saying Dr. Wang had never officially accepted the invitation and claiming that portraying Dr. Wang's United Front ties as evidence of CCP overseas influence misrepresented his work. The CCG press release said Dr. Wang "has not been on the payroll of any state apparatus," seeming intentionally to obfuscate the point that the United Front is an organization of the CCP rather than of the Chinese state. Robert Daly, "Chinese Influence Operations in the U.S.: Shedding Some Light on All the Heat," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC, May 9, 2018; Center for China and Globalization, "CCG Release," May 9, 2018. <http://en.ccg.org.cn/ccg-release/>; Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, "Rubio Questions D.C. Panel on China Influence," *Foreign Policy*, May 7, 2018. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/07/rubio-questions-d-c-panel-on-china-influence-united-front-beijing-communist-party/>; Gerry Groot, "United Front Work after the 19th Party Congress," *China Brief*, December 22, 2017. <https://jamestown.org/program/united-front-work-19th-party-congress/>; Wang Huiyao, "Personal Introduction," October 11, 2017. Translation. <http://scgti.org/wanghuiyao/a/jieshao/2011/1004/11.html>; "Chinese Influence Operations in the U.S.: Shedding Some Light on all the Heat," May 2, 2018, accessed via Internet Archive Wayback Machine. [https://web.archive.org/web/20180502013618/http://pages.wilsoncenter.org/index.php/email/emailWebview?mkt\\_tok=eyJpIjoiTVRBMU1qa3pNbVVV4TURKaSIsInQiOiJhb2dCS1NZRE52NVAwUU4WlBcL3hYenByY2tXaXBhU016alhWMmk0dEpqREN5R2JHbVwvamFhZXd0MUhIWlVhUWw3dlptUVd6NzVJRmRoTXE1QXJmY1VEcUpHWlFjdnczaU5Ha0c3MFhJbXB4RDRCcWNMazV0NEh1djUzaGlT0JHIn0%3D](https://web.archive.org/web/20180502013618/http://pages.wilsoncenter.org/index.php/email/emailWebview?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiTVRBMU1qa3pNbVVV4TURKaSIsInQiOiJhb2dCS1NZRE52NVAwUU4WlBcL3hYenByY2tXaXBhU016alhWMmk0dEpqREN5R2JHbVwvamFhZXd0MUhIWlVhUWw3dlptUVd6NzVJRmRoTXE1QXJmY1VEcUpHWlFjdnczaU5Ha0c3MFhJbXB4RDRCcWNMazV0NEh1djUzaGlT0JHIn0%3D); Center for China and Globalization, "Leadership." <http://en.ccg.org.cn/staff-member/wang-huiyao/>; Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, "The Jiu San Society (JSS)," 2012. [http://english1.english.gov.cn/2005-08/16/content\\_23652.htm](http://english1.english.gov.cn/2005-08/16/content_23652.htm).

† Public spending on community colleges and universities in 2017 fell about \$9 billion from 2008 levels. Michael Mitchell, Michael Leachman, and Kathleen Masterson, "A Lost Decade in Higher Education Funding," *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, August 23, 2017, 1. [https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/2017\\_higher\\_ed\\_8-22-17\\_final.pdf](https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/2017_higher_ed_8-22-17_final.pdf); Jonathan R. Cole, "The Pillaging of America's State Universities," *Atlantic*, April 10, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/the-pillaging-of-americas-state-universities/477594/>.

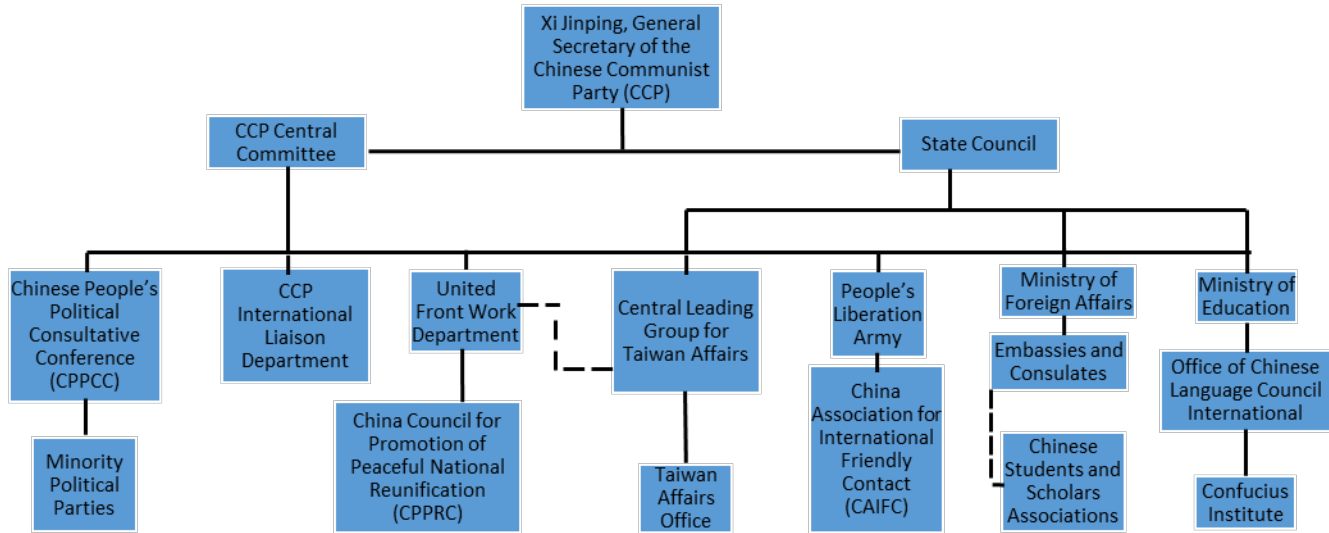
## Appendix

Figure 2: Relationships between the Overseas Chinese Work Apparatus and Extended State Bureaucracy



Source: Adapted from James Jiann Hua To, *Qiaowu: Extra-Territorial Policies for the Overseas Chinese*, Brill Academic Publishers, 2014, 74.

**Figure 3: Selected United Front-Affiliated Organizations and Officials**



Name	UF-Affiliated Roles	Name	UF-Affiliated Roles
Bagatur	CPPCC Vice-Chair; CCPCC Member; State Ethnic Affairs Commission Director and Party Group Secretary; UFDW Deputy Director	Ran Wanxiang	UFDW Deputy Director; UFDW General Secretary, Party Committee Secretary, and Discipline Committee Secretary; CPPCC Deputy General Secretary
Cai Dafeng	China Association for Promoting Democracy Chair (Political party)	Shao Hong	CPPCC Vice-Chair; Jiusan Society Central Executive Vice-Chair
Chen Changzhi	CPPRC Vice-Chair	Shen Beili	Assistant to ILD Minister and Office Director
Chen Xiaoguang	CPPCC Vice-Chair; China Democratic League Vice-Chair	Song Tao	ILD Minister; CCPCC Member
Chen Yuan	China Association for International Friendly Contact President	Su Bo	UFDW Discipline Inspection Unit Head; CPPCC Economic Committee Deputy Director
Chen Zhu	CPPRC Vice-Chair; Chinese Peasants' and Workers' Democratic Party Chair (Political party)	Su Hui	CPPCC Vice-Chair; Taiwan Democratic Self-Governing League Chair (Political party)
Cheng Guoping	CAIFC Vice-Chair; State Commissioner for Counterterrorism	Sun Chunlan	Politburo Member; Central Leading Group for United Front Work Deputy Head; CPPRC Vice-Chair; Chinese Vice-Premier; former UFDW Minister
Dai Junliang	UFDW Deputy Director; CCDI Member; CPPCC Member	Tung Chee-hwa	CPPCC Vice-Chair
Deng Rong	CAIFC Vice-Chair	Wan Xiang	CPPRC Vice-Chair; Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang Chair (Political party)
Ding Zhongli	China Democratic League Chair (Political party)	Wan Gang	CPPRC Vice-Chair; CPPCC Vice-Chair; Zhigong Party Chair (Political party); former Minister of Science and Technology; China Association for Science and Technology Chair
Gao Yunlong	CPPCC Vice-Chair; All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce Chair; Chinese People's Chamber of Commerce Minister; China Democratic National Construction Association Beijing Chair; China Everbright Group Corporation Vice-Chair and President	Wang Qinmin	CPPRC Vice-Chair
Gu Shengzu	CPPCC Vice-Chair; China Democratic National Construction Association Central Vice-Chair	Wang Yajun	ILD Vice-Minister
Guo Yezhou	ILD Vice-Minister	Wang Yang	CPPCC Chair; Politburo Standing Committee Member; State Council Vice-Premier

Hao Mingjin	China Democratic National Construction Association Chair (Political party)	Wang Yongqing	CPPCC Vice-Chair; CCPCC Member; Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission General Secretary; State Council Deputy General Secretary and Party Committee Member
He Houhua	CPPCC Vice-Chair	Wang Zhengwei	CPPCC Vice-Chair; CCPCC Member
He Lifeng	CPPCC Vice-Chair; CCPCC Member; National Development and Reform Commission Director and Party Group Secretary	Wang Zuonan	UFWD Deputy Director; State Administration for Religious Affairs Head
He Wei	CPPCC Vice-Chair; Chinese Peasants' and Workers' Democratic Party Executive Vice-Chair	Wu Weihua	Jiusan Society Chair (Political party)
Jing Wei	Hanban Deputy Director-General; Deputy Chief Executive of Confucius Institute Headquarters	Xia Baolong	CPPCC General Secretary and Vice-Chair
Leung Chun-ying	CPPCC Vice-Chair; former Chief Executive of HKSAR	Xin Qi	CAIFC Vice-President and Party Group Secretary; China Association for Promotion of Chinese Culture General Secretary; Center for Peace and Development Studies Researcher
Li Bin	CPPCC Vice-Chair; CCPCC Member; National Health and Family Planning Commission Director and Party Group General Secretary	Xu Lejiang	UFWD Deputy Director; All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce Party Secretary and Executive Vice Chair; CCPCC Member; CPPCC Standing Committee Member
Li Jun	ILD Vice-Minister	Xu Lüping	ILD Vice-Minister
Lin Wenqi	CPPRC Vice-Chair	Xu Yousheng	UFWD Deputy Director; Overseas Chinese Affairs Office Director; CCPCC Member
Liue Jieyi	Taiwan Affairs Office Director	Yan Juanqi	CPPRC Vice-Chair
Liu Qibao	CPPCC Vice-Chair; CCPCC Member	Yang Chuantang	CPPCC Vice-Chair; Ministry of Transport Party Group Secretary
Liu Xincheng	CPPCC Vice-Chair; China Association for Promoting Democracy Central Vice-Chair	Yi Xian	CAIFC Vice-Chair
Liu Yandong	Council of Confucius Institute Headquarters Chair; former State Council Vice-Premiere; former Politburo Standing Committee Member; former UFWD Minister	You Quan	UFWD Director; CCP Central Committee (CCPCC) Secretariat Member
Long Mingbiao	Taiwan Affairs Office Deputy Director, Party Committee Secretary, and Discipline Committee Secretary; Executive Vice-President of Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait	Yu Tianqi	Hanban Deputy Party Committee Secretary; Confucius Institute Committee for Discipline Inspection Secretary
Lu Zhangong	CPPCC Vice-Chair; CCPCC Member	Yu Yunfeng	Deputy Chief Executive of Confucius Institute Headquarters; Hanban Deputy Director-General
Ma Biao	CPPCC Vice-Chair; CCPCC Member	Yu Zhengsheng	CPPRC Chair; former CPPCC Chair; former Politburo Standing Committee Member
Ma Jianfei	Hanban Party Committee Secretary and Deputy Director-General; Deputy Chief Executive of Confucius Institute Headquarters	Zhang Baowen	CPPRC Vice-Chair
Tan Tianxing	UFWD Deputy Director	Zhang Qingli	CPPCC Vice-Chair; CCPCC Member
Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai	CPPRC Vice-Chair; CPPCC Vice-Chair; Buddhist Association of China Honorary Chair	Zhang Yijiong	UFWD Executive Deputy Director; CCPCC Member, CPPCC Standing Committee Member
Qi Xuchun	CPPRC Vice-Chair	Zhao Guocheng	Hanban Deputy Director-General; Deputy Chief Executive of Confucius Institute Headquarters
Qian Hongshan	ILD Vice-Minister	Zheng Jianbang	CPPCC Vice-Chair; Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang Vice-Chair; China Soong Ching Ling Foundation Vice-Chair

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