

**STAND WITH TAIWAN:
COUNTERING THE PRC'S POLITICAL WARFARE
AND TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
**CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA**
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2025

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA,
Washington, DC.

The hearing was held from 10:05 a.m. to 12:17 p.m., in Room 222, Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC, Senator Dan Sullivan, Chair, Congressional-Executive Commission on China, presiding.

Also present: Co-chair Chris Smith, Senators Merkley, Kim, and Blunt Rochester, and Representatives Nunn and Strong.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN, A SENATOR
FROM ALASKA AND CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA**

Chair SULLIVAN. It's my honor to join you this morning to host the first hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China in the 119th Congress. I am to serve as the chair of the Commission. I'm very honored for that responsibility, alongside my co-chair Representative Chris Smith, who I understand is going to run a few minutes late today. We're going to make sure he's here, but we want to get this going. I want to thank my Senate colleagues who are here.

This Commission has a really long history of bipartisan work, bicameral work, on one of the most important relationships that we have in the United States, and that's with the Chinese government and the Chinese people. It's an honor to serve with Congressman Smith, who's been such a champion on so many of these issues for decades. I look forward to engaging with Senator Merkley as well, who's also been a leading voice on so many of these issues, and who has led this Commission with skill and passion over the past four years. It's a good group and I appreciate my colleagues who are here right now.

Today's hearing comes at a pivotal moment. For 75 years, the People's Republic of China has vowed to bring Taiwan under its control. We have our own Taiwan Relations Act. We have the One China policy. However, in recent years that pressure—not just, by the way, with regard to the Taiwanese, but other people, including American citizens—has intensified and globalized, with Beijing not only targeting Taiwan across the strait, but projecting intimidation

across borders and institutions, using political transnational repression as a tool of coercion against people across the globe.

The title of this hearing rhymes with major legislation of mine, the Stand with Taiwan Act. That bill, which I've introduced in the last two Congresses and will soon be introducing again, has great bipartisan support. Senators Graham, Duckworth, and Coons are the top co-sponsors. And I would encourage strong bipartisan support with my colleagues here. What it would do, if there is a military invasion of Taiwan by the Communist Party and the PLA of China, is trigger punishing, comprehensive sanctions on the Chinese economy, and particularly on leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, punishing economic, trade, financial, energy. We all want deterrence in the Taiwan Strait, and I think the threat of these massive sanctions might be critical in terms of deterring a cross-strait invasion of Taiwan by the PLA.

We also need to deal with the here and now of Chinese coercion abroad. And, again, this hearing is going to focus on the coercion of Taiwanese citizens, but I certainly will be asking questions in my Q&A with the witnesses, about repression of others, people from Hong Kong, American citizens—which is really unacceptable when it's by the Chinese Communist Party. You know, they're good at coercing their own citizens, but they're not going to, with this Congress, be allowed to coerce Americans or those who are our allies.

These threats are multifaceted—AI-generated disinformation, the extraterritorial application of PRC laws, of course, diplomatic pressure on Taiwan's allies, the public intimidation of democratically elected leaders. By the way, that's something the Chinese Communist Party would never do. They'd never stand for election themselves. They fear their own people, because they know they probably wouldn't get elected if they had to stand for election. So that makes them nervous—that there are people who actually stand for elections, like we do, and, you know, go before the people.

The PRC is also attempting to rewrite international norms, distorting U.N. General Assembly Resolution 2758 and pressuring countries to embrace Beijing's view that all necessary measures be taken to achieve unification regarding Taiwan. Most disturbingly, the PRC has labeled Taiwan's vice president, whom I know well and who is a good friend of mine, and other officials, as obstinate Taiwan independence diehards, threatening them with life imprisonment or worse. It has declared that any Taiwanese citizen, including those living abroad, can be punished under PRC law.

In a closed-door meeting earlier this year, senior CCP official Wang Huning reportedly called for a global expansion of these intimidation tactics. According to credible reporting, Wang instructed embassies and security services—hopefully they're not doing it here in America, but they probably are—to implement “proactive intimidation” against so-called radical Taiwanese independence advocates worldwide, including in the United States of America. These are not abstract threats. Last year, Czech intelligence uncovered a planned “kinetic operation” by the PRC to intimidate then-Vice President-elect Hsiao on her visit there. Again, she's a friend of mine, a great person. The PRC has also harassed international media outlets for interviewing Taiwanese leaders. Individuals

around the world who criticize Beijing's Taiwan policy have been doxed and placed under surveillance.

This is transnational repression. It is a coordinated strategy to isolate Taiwan and dominate the global narrative through fear and coercion and again, not only against Taiwanese citizens but other citizens, including our own citizens. Every day, the CCP grows bolder and more aggressive in its threats against Taiwan. The United States and our allies in the Indo-Pacific need to call them on that, have open hearings like this, and push back against this transnational repression.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Dan Sullivan appears in the Appendix.]

I want to thank our witnesses. I want to thank my colleagues who are here. We're going to be waiting on Congressman Smith, but we're going to begin this hearing. I'd ask Senator Merkley, who's been a longtime champion and leader of this Commission, and again, I'm very honored to serve with him—and Senator Blunt Rochester, Senator Kim as well—if he would like to make an opening statement before we call our first witness and our first panel.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MERKLEY,
A SENATOR FROM OREGON**

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations on your appointment. And welcome to the members of the Commission. I'm very glad to see that the CECC has been reconstituted—it's holding its first hearing. I've served as chair, as co-chair, and as a returning member. And I look forward to working with you in the months ahead on these important issues of China's transgressions against basic dignity and human rights. And there are threats that extend around the globe.

Last Congress, I introduced the bipartisan Transnational Repression Policy Act to address the very threat we're addressing in this hearing, so I really appreciate that this topic is gaining more attention. I will introduce an updated version this year. This hearing is quite timely. The U.S. must take concrete steps to limit the ability of authoritarian states to carry out repression, and hold perpetrators accountable, including as it relates to attacks against Taiwan and the Taiwanese diaspora. It's particularly important that we establish a clear governmentwide definition of transnational repression, one that recognizes it as a threat to democratic institutions and to fundamental rights. I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses on the PRC's expanding use of this strategy and the broader efforts to suppress dissent abroad, and how we best respond to it. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Jeff Merkley appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Great. Thank you, Senator Merkley. And before we call our first witness, I'd ask if my Senate colleagues want to make an opening statement at all on this. Okay, great. Well, thank you for being here.

PANEL I

Our first panel, I am honored to welcome Ms. Fan Yun, a member of the legislature of Taiwan—she will be Zooming in with us,

I believe—for the Democratic Progressive Party, who joins us virtually from Taiwan. MP Fan was previously an associate professor at the Department of Sociology, National Taiwan University, and served as ambassador-at-large for Taiwan. She holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Yale University. We'll forgive her for that—that's a joke. She's been a champion of democracy for decades, participating in various pro-democracy movements in Taiwan, including the 1990 Wild Lily Student Movement and the 2014 Sunflower Movement. She also currently serves as an advisor for Democracy Without Borders and is a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China. So without further ado—hopefully we have the connection here. Virtually, we'll have MP Fan with her testimony. You are now recognized.

**STATEMENT OF FAN YUN,
MEMBER, LEGISLATIVE YUAN OF TAIWAN**

Ms. FAN. Okay. Chair Sullivan, Co-chair Smith, Senator Merkley, and CECC members, thank you for having me as a witness today. I would also like to thank the U.S. Congress and administration for your longstanding bipartisan support for Taiwan.

Last fall, our national baseball team won the World Baseball Softball Confederation's Premier 12th championship. But our players were not allowed to wear jerseys bearing our country's name, nor could they proclaim our country's name in public. After hitting a decisive three-run home run, our team's captain pointed to the blank space on his jersey where Taiwan should be, celebrating the name that cannot be named. This is the reality we live with, constantly being silenced by the PRC. However, enduring such political warfare has also built up our capacity to resist.

As the title of this hearing suggests, in addition to growing military threats and economic coercion, the PRC's political warfare against Taiwan has also escalated. Their tactics include manipulation of international laws, united front work activities, espionage, infiltration, and disinformation campaigns. In terms of lawfare, the PRC has twisted U.N. Resolution 2758 for political propaganda in the international arena. They not only aim to separate Taiwan's participation in various international organizations but also seek to legitimize the use of force to annex Taiwan.

In addition, the PRC has intensified its united front and infiltration efforts within Taiwan. According to our National Security Bureau, the number of spying activity indictments in 2024 was four times higher than in 2021, rising from 16 to 64. Targets include the military, the parliament, both the ruling party and the opposition, and civic groups. The PRC has even recruited gangsters to build an armed support network all over Taiwan. The PRC has also established united front organizations in Taiwan to invite religious groups, village chiefs, and college students on heavily subsidized trips to China. For college students, there are special programs attracting young Taiwanese to study, work, or start businesses in China. These activities aim to integrate them into China's economy and eventually have them come to view China's politics and culture in a positive light.

After last year's elections, the two major opposition parties formed a majority voting bloc in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan. After

their electoral victory, the caucus leader of the leading opposition party, the KMT, led 17 of its lawmakers, nearly one-third of the entire caucus, to visit China and to meet Chinese officials. Shortly thereafter, the KMT, along with the TPP, rushed to push through a series of unconstitutional bills, prevented the national security legal amendments from proceeding to a first reading, and froze or slashed the national defense budget without proper justification. Many Taiwanese believe these actions show how pro-China forces are exploiting Taiwan's democratic mechanisms to undermine both its sovereignty and democracy.

In terms of disinformation, our National Security Bureau reported that messages with China's influence increased from 1.3 million in 2023 to 2.2 million in 2024, expressed through newspapers and TV stations, as well as social media platforms such as TikTok. According to a think tank, GTI, some media outlets have received direct instructions from the CCP's Taiwan Affairs Office regarding news coverage and editorial commentary. The PRC also funds Taiwanese influencers to produce content in China that aligns with its political agenda.

What's the goal of the PRC's political warfare? First, it seeks to distort the world's understanding of Taiwan, specifically by framing cross-strait conflict as a domestic issue, to isolate Taiwan. Second, the PRC works to erode the Taiwanese people's confidence in the United States. A recent poll found that TikTok users in Taiwan are more likely to view China favorably and more likely to believe that a pro-U.S. government [in Taiwan] might provoke war. This is a clear sign that the disinformation is influencing TikTok users, most of whom are young people.

Third, by spreading false narratives the PRC aims to make the Taiwanese either lose confidence in their government or disengage from politics. Potentially, these actions can ultimately lead people to lose the motivation and willpower to defend our democracy. As to transnational repression, recently the PRC released an investigation report claiming that Taiwan's military conducted cyberattacks against China. They publicized the names of 20 Taiwanese military officers and threatened them with arrest warrants and judicial punishment.

Last month, the PRC launched a first-ever large-scale disinformation campaign to attack DPP legislator Puma Shen, who was advocating tightened national security legislation. These transnational attacks against members of the military and the government, including the planned car collision targeting then-VP-elect Hsiao in Czechia, are tactics the PRC is using to intimidate the Taiwanese, to show the cost they will have to bear if they dare to resist China.

How is Taiwan countering these threats? It takes cooperation between the government and civil society. In addition to raising the national defense budget to a historical high, President Lai adopted a whole-of-society defense resilience strategy aimed at strengthening the civil defense capacity. To counter the united front, he has proposed further national security reforms to enhance our resilience against China's united front and infiltration tactics.

To tackle disinformation, all government agencies are asked to rapidly respond to misleading information. More importantly, many

NGOs have created independent fact-checking websites, as well as tools that can be embedded in apps. For cognitive warfare aiming to affect the young generation, the Ministry of Education is developing teaching materials about understanding China. It aims to teach students how to critically assess Chinese propaganda.

In a highly polarized politics, the effort of the ruling government alone is insufficient. Luckily, Taiwan has a robust civil society with a strong will to defend democracy. I had the honor of serving as the chief commander of the Wild Lily Student Movement in 1990, calling for the democratic election of our Parliament. Decades later, as a professor in 2014, I was even prouder to be part of the Sunflower Movement, witnessing the younger generations successfully opposing deeper economic integration with China.

Through struggles like this, our society has built a strong democratic tradition. Even now, as I am speaking, Taiwan is in the middle of an unprecedented mass recall campaign launched by civic volunteer groups. The vote will take place this coming Saturday. Thirty-one of the KMT's 36 elected district legislators are facing bottom-up recall, because many Taiwanese believe these lawmakers have forgotten that the KMT used to be an anti-communist party.

As Taiwanese, we know that our freedom did not fall from the sky. Generations of Taiwanese have fought and made sacrifices for our own democracy. We are working very hard to prevent a war from happening. However, Taiwan alone will not be enough to deter China's aggression. As you must all be aware, Taiwan security is not only critical to the stability of the region but also key to the global economy. Standing with Taiwan, we can work together to protect our shared values, prosperity, and the rules-based global order. Thank you all for your time and support.

[The prepared statement of Fan Yun appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Well, thank you, MP Fan. And I want to thank you for testifying today and for your courage over many years and decades on these important issues. And we very much appreciate you participating in this important hearing.

Now we are going to turn to our next panel. We are joined by three distinguished panelists to discuss the intricacies of the PRC's multifaceted campaign against Taiwan and others. I would like everybody to please take their positions, and I'm going to introduce each of our witnesses today, starting with Rear Admiral Mike Studeman.

PANEL II

I'd like to welcome retired Rear Admiral Mike Studeman, a former commander of the Office of Naval Intelligence. Throughout his career, Admiral Studeman has led intelligence operations at every level, from the tactical to the strategic, and supported combat operations including Desert Storm, the Balkans, and Afghanistan. Admiral Studeman's joint assignments as a flag officer included director of intelligence for the Nation's largest combatant command, INDOPACOM, where I first got to meet and know Admiral Studeman when our military billets overlapped, and as the director of intelligence for the U.S. Southern Command in Miami. He has held major command posts as a captain, including the Joint Intel-

ligence Operations Center for U.S. Cyber Command. And Admiral Studeman currently serves as a national security fellow at MITRE and is on the board of advisors of the National Bureau of Asian Research. Admiral, thank you for your decades of service to our country. We appreciate you being here.

I also want to introduce Mr. Peter Mattis, who's president of the Jamestown Foundation. Mr. Mattis previously served as a staff director on this very Commission from 2019 to 2021, appointed by then-Senator Marco Rubio, now our distinguished Secretary of State. So welcome home, welcome back. During his time as staff director at the CECC, he was part of the legislative team that passed and wrote the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, and the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. So thank you very much, Peter, for your great work here.

And finally, I want to introduce our third witness, Dr. Audrye Wong. Dr. Wong is a Jeane Kirkpatrick Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and assistant professor of political science and international relations at the University of Southern California. Her research covers China's economic statecraft, as well as China's foreign influence activities and propaganda campaigns. Dr. Wong received a Ph.D. in security studies from Princeton University's School of Public and International Affairs, where she was a National Science Foundation graduate fellow.

We have a very distinguished panel. We will begin with opening statements from each of our witnesses. Admiral, we will begin with you.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL W. STUDEMAN, REAR ADMIRAL, USN (RET.), FORMER COMMANDER, OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

Admiral STUDEMAN. Sir, thank you. Good morning, Chairman Sullivan, Co-chairman Smith, and distinguished members of this Commission. I appreciate the kind introduction, and also, in addition to our time in Hawaii together in the four-star admiral's office, it was great to have you come over to the Office of Naval Intelligence for our chat. I value that greatly and hopefully it was useful to you. I spent 35 years in the military and at least half a dozen tours dealing with Indo-Pacific matters in one way or another. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss PRC political warfare against Taiwan.

I'd like to open by describing my direct engagements with Taiwan over recent years. I visited Taiwan three times as the director of intelligence for INDOPACOM. I happened to be the first two-star active-duty flag or general officer to visit Taiwan in over 40 years when I flew to Taipei to brief President Tsai in 2021. I was directed by the NSC and the Office of the Secretary of Defense to outline PRC military courses of action, up to an invasion. During this briefing, and another one I delivered a year later in 2022 to share lessons from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, I highlighted the most serious threats to Taiwan's survival.

While we mainly discussed high-intensity combat operations under modern conditions, one of the major points that I made was that Taiwan wouldn't survive if it only focused on an outside-in

strategy of hardening its outer shell with military forces. Taiwan would need to apply equal efforts at strengthening its gooey center to ward off threats from the inside. Decades of PRC political warfare machinations have created vulnerabilities inside Taiwan that the PRC wouldn't hesitate to exploit during an attempted takeover. Taiwan would need to get real about these pre-existing, omnidirectional threats.

This conversation naturally led to discussions that went beyond merely stopping the PRC offshore or on the beaches, to improving defense-in-depth capabilities, urban operations, strengthening internal security, counterintelligence, fostering better civil-military coordination, and the merits of mobilizing society to engage in "people's war"-like actions that allow an inferior to defeat a superior. After my presentation, President Tsai declared that she had waited four years for such a briefing. And she came over to me, in the time of COVID, and we knocked elbows.

To Taiwan's credit, they had already passed an anti-infiltration act in 2020 and taken other measures to protect themselves over time. But in the three years since those engagements that I had out in Taiwan, and as the PRC became more aggressive in all domains, Taipei has done even more to strengthen its porcupine defenses, including by fielding more asymmetric capabilities, and has undertaken a range of judicious measures to better protect itself internally. In my written testimony, I provided a specific list of actions Taiwan has taken or is in the process of taking to deal with persistent PRC attempts to co-opt, subvert, and manipulate Taiwan citizens.

You should know that Beijing's political warfare efforts are relentless, pervasive, and all-encompassing. The aim of CCP political warfare is to isolate Taiwan internationally, weaken domestic support for either *de jure* or *de facto* independence, and soften the Taiwanese people's resistance to annexation. Beijing uses all instruments of national power to convince the Taiwan people that unification is inevitable and resistance is futile. It may be useful to think about Beijing's political warfare efforts as a highly orchestrated, interconnected, and multitiered set of activities that include white, gray, and black elements.

White, or overt means, involve CCP diplomatic actions, official media propaganda, military operations, and trade relations that are all used as levers of influence. Gray, or semi-overt means, involve such actions as Chinese coast guard, maritime militia, and ghost fleet encroachments in the maritime space, the use of foreign media to propagate and reinforce disinformation, funding and manipulation of political parties, discounted junkets for politicians, academics, journalists, and students to visit China where they're then influenced by United Front Work Department reps, and co-optation of social media influencers and celebrities, and so much more. Black, or covert means, involve agents in place for the purpose of espionage, influence, and/or sabotage, recruitment of former Taiwan military, police, and coast guard personnel, establishment of sleeper cells and weapons caches, offensive cyber operations, and activation of criminal groups such as the Triads in Taiwan, for various purposes ranging from harassment to potential assassinations.

I have offered a number of ideas about how the U.S. might assist Taiwan in dealing with these clear and present dangers. A few of them include helping to strategically reduce Taiwan's international isolation, further encouraging Taiwan to spend more of its GDP on defense, while giving due regard to their political and industrial realities, developing deeper Taiwan and U.S. cooperation on cybersecurity and helping Taiwan upgrade its classified clearance system and adopt more advanced insider threat technologies. Thank you for the chance to testify. I look forward to your Q&A.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Studeman appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Admiral. And thanks again for your decades of service. You are truly one of the experts in the world, certainly in the United States, on these issues. It's great to have you here.

Turning to another expert, Mr. Mattis. The floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF PETER MATTIS,
PRESIDENT, THE JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION**

Mr. MATTIS. Well, thank you very much, Chairman Sullivan, and Co-chairman Smith, and all the other members of the Commission. You know, this is a little bit of an odd hearing for the CECC, but I think it's important to recognize that all the tools that are applied against Taiwan are also applied in other areas that the CECC cares a great deal about. These are fungible political tools that can be leveraged for these things. As awareness of the Central Committee's United Front Work Department has grown, never mind that there's an entire policy system associated with it, I don't think the awareness has grown of the approach.

It is sort of a theory of politics or a practice of politics that the Party pursues. And it is fundamentally one that is defined by warfare and struggle, because it is about how you identify your friends, how you mobilize them, and how you use them to convert neutrals and to strike or isolate your enemies. This is language that has been clear and consistent. Xi Jinping has used it, and it has been used all the way back to the founding of the Party in the 1920's. As Admiral Studeman said, this is a global perpetual campaign against Taiwan, against the idea of the Republic of China, that this somehow has gone away, much less any sort of political future of Taiwan that is separate from the PRC and what the Party chooses to define as China.

I think it's worth noting that for decades the Party's intentions have been clear, in part because there are many people that would like to deny that the CCP, using its armed wing, the People's Liberation Army, would choose to attack Taiwan. There are all sorts of reasons that this would be a terrible outcome. It could have trillions of dollars of consequences for the global economy. But we need to appreciate that this is where the Party's intentions are and where they have said this. It's easy to dismiss this as propaganda, but the statements that have been made are not simply speeches. They are directed at Party cadres to guide them, to mobilize them, to tell them what is expected of their work. This is one of the objectives that they're going after.

The second is to look at the way the CCP has treated what it considers to be Chinese people, whether you're talking about Uyghurs in East Turkestan, whether you're talking about Tibetans or Mongolians, but also many, many other Chinese. If you look at the statistics, something like 40 to 80 million people have died under the CCP, depending on how you count the Great Leap Forward and the famine that ensued, things like the suppression campaign of Sichuan, supposedly after liberation, that killed hundreds of thousands of people, led by the so-called reformer Deng Xiaoping. This is the kind of fate that is actually awaiting the Taiwanese if the island is conquered.

The third is that the CCP has been willing to take far higher costs to do certain things than external observers have ever been willing to give them credit for. If you ask most Americans who are aware of the 1979 war with Vietnam, they will say Vietnam won based on the casualties—based only on the casualties that Beijing took. But if you look at the political objectives, did Vietnam learn the lessons that Beijing wanted them to, did the Soviet Union learn the lessons that Beijing wanted them to, did you look at the way in which the United States sort of responded positively and rewarded Deng Xiaoping for that war? They achieved everything politically. And last time I checked, war was about achieving some sort of political objective.

As Admiral Studeman mentioned, the intelligence cyberattacks inside Taiwan have been really quite remarkable. And there are a few new things that are worth highlighting, even though this has been constant. The first is that some sources have been forced to record videos professing their loyalty to the PRC, to be held for a time of war to be used for propaganda purposes—here are other military officers or other soldiers saying, Oh, well, actually, I profess my loyalty to the PRC. Another is the targeting of the military police command, which has sort of increasingly stepped up, because this is the presidential protection detail. It is about learning about where the leader is at all times and demonstrating real-time awareness of this, because one of the lessons they learned from the Ukraine war is that you don't want smart political leadership to survive.

Internationally, we've seen a number of different things from the campaign to get countries to move recognition from the ROC to the PRC. And this is something where, when you look at the countries that have done this, like the Solomon Islands and others, you can see a concerted effort to build influence with key politicians, mostly through the united front system or through companies like Huawei investing in a telecom restructure in one province or another, to essentially build a relationship and make the flip happen by cultivating those individual leaders. More than 600 Taiwanese in the last decade have been extradited to the PRC from other countries. You know, if there's something more fundamental about sovereignty than your ability to take care of your citizens, it's hard to imagine what that would be.

There have been perpetual efforts, especially since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, to use U.N. Resolution 2758 to say that the U.N. has already settled what has taken place, it's already settled Taiwan's status, has already settled that Tai-

wan is a part of China. And all it simply said is that the ROC cannot represent China in the U.N. and that the PRC was the representative of that. In international organizations, the CECC was the organization responsible for highlighting that the World Bank was supporting the vocational training programs that were a disguise for mass incarceration and labor transfer programs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Well, the same tools that allowed them to do that—control over budget and H.R. in the World Bank—are also what allowed them to block the Taiwanese from working at the World Bank, except on anything other than a short-term contract.

So all of this is really about trying to undermine Taiwan as a polity, as a society, as a separate, distinct political entity. And pushing back against this is, in fact, going to be a political act. Taiwan's politicians are going to have to decide about what is okay in terms of business, in terms of education, in terms of culture, in terms of entertainment, in terms of travel. What is acceptable or not? These are difficult decisions. Look at our own discussion about research security and how we cooperate with PRC companies. It is a deeply political question. And it's going to require presidents and parliamentarians in Taiwan to mobilize their population to talk about these issues in ways—about what the political choice is—what do we want to do?

And we really shouldn't punish Taiwan's politicians for having to carry on a conversation in a democracy, because the country that is actually destabilizing the status quo, which is of an ROC and a PRC that actually exists, is Beijing. It is the Chinese Communist Party. And we should punish those that are actually responsible.

[The prepared statement of Peter Mattis appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Mattis.

Now, before we turn to Dr. Wong, I know Senator Kim has to leave here in a minute. Do you want to ask the witnesses any questions before you head out? Okay.

And then I'd like Chairman Smith to be able to say a few words if you'd like to, sir, in welcome. And then we'll turn to Dr. Wong for her testimony. And then we'll open up for all members for questions. So, Mr. Chairman, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE
FROM NEW JERSEY AND CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL-
EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

Co-chair SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for the tremendous experience that you bring to bear as the new chairman of this Commission. You know, nobody knows Taiwan like you do, and you have been a true leader when it comes to Taiwan, both when you wore the uniform and now. So I can't thank you enough. That enhances this Commission in a very real way. You know, I've been on the Commission for decades. I've chaired it, co-chaired it. I'm so glad to work with you. It's a privilege. And so I want to thank you for that.

I do have a full opening statement. I was late because I was giving a major address on human trafficking. I had a lot of questions from people, so I couldn't get out of there in time. I apologize for

my lateness. I won't go through my opening statement. Maybe at the end I will, but I thank our witnesses. You know, this Commission has made a difference over the years. Just ask Xi Jinping's Chinese Communist Party what they think of it. I'm barred, like so many other people, from going to China, in large part because of the work that we do here. I see Pastor Fu behind you, just a tremendous leader on religious freedom—especially on mainland China.

You know, we need to do more. We need human rights issues to be even more front and center than they are. I would note for the record, and I say this not as a partisan thing—I actually wrote op-eds on it. Nancy Pelosi and I were joined on this years ago when Bill Clinton delinked human rights and trade on May 26th, 1994. That's when we lost China. They took the measure of us and said the only thing they care about in Washington is trade. Clinton, you know, having been an outspoken linkage guy to human rights and trade, totally delinked them on a Friday afternoon, when everybody was leaving here. I did a press conference. Speaker Pelosi did a press conference. And we all said, How could you? I mean, the people of China had been hurt. The people of Taiwan, I think, by extension, are further at risk because of the Chinese Communist Party being so emboldened, enabled.

And then, from a military point of view, the dual-use items that were conveyed to them beginning then, have made them a super-power militarily. And that is very tragic. And it was all—I say it again—all preventable. Others have enabled it over the years, but that was the pivotal time when we lost China. And I'm not the only one who thought that. We had the votes to sustain linking MFN with trade. And what happened? We never got the vote because it was all taken away with that one fell swoop of the executive order that delinked human rights and trade.

So we've been playing catch-up ever since. For the victims of—name the abuse—forced organ harvesting and all the other abuses that are committed daily by Xi Jinping. He poses an existential threat to Taiwan. And, again, to have people who know it, live it, understand it—we need to do more. We have a chairman who understands Taiwan like nobody else in the U.S. House or Senate. So we are very blessed to have that. Again, I'll put my full statement on the record, but I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to serving with you.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Chris Smith appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You, too. Thank you very much. And thanks for your leadership and passion. We're going to get a lot done here.

Dr. Wong, you're up. And welcome.

STATEMENT OF AUDRYE WONG, JEANE KIRKPATRICK FELLOW, AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE AND ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Ms. WONG. Chairman Sullivan and Congressman Smith, honorable members of the Commission, thank you for the invitation to

testify today. In my remarks, I'd like to highlight a few main points. First, transnational repression against the Taiwanese diaspora and supporters of Taiwan is the tip of the spear of broader PRC political influence efforts in the United States and other free societies. Such activities are driven in large part by the United Front Work Department, a CCP organ that seeks to co-opt allies and silence enemies domestically and abroad. And so in the context of Taiwan, that means suppressing supporters of Taiwanese democracy and independence and pushing the CCP's sovereignty claims and narratives over Taiwan's status.

Transnational repression and political influence activities consist of multipronged community and political mobilization to not only engage in direct surveillance and harassment of Taiwan supporters on U.S. soil but also to rally portions of the overseas Chinese and Chinese American communities to engage in public and highly visible displays of support for Beijing's position on Taiwan. We have official united front organizations like the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification, which has multiple branches in the United States and globally, with the explicit goal of asserting Beijing's sovereignty claims over Taiwan. But these influence activities also involve the co-optation and mobilization of a broader array of overseas Chinese hometown associations and other grass-roots organizations.

So if you look at Chinese writings on the united front, they explicitly call for these societal organizations and overseas Chinese community leaders and elites to play a role in promoting Beijing's interests, including regarding Taiwan. These groups are often rallied, often in tandem with the Chinese consulate, for public demonstrations and protests, for example, around former Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen's transit through New York and Los Angeles in late March and early April 2023.

Through open-source research, examining online videos and photos of these events, I was able to identify close to 30 groups involved in on-the-ground demonstrations. And there was one protest leader that claimed that over a hundred of these community associations were represented in these demonstrations. They gathered outside Tsai Ing-wen's hotel, or in L.A., outside the Reagan Presidential Library, where President Tsai met then-Speaker McCarthy, waving Chinese and American flags, shouting slogans such as "Tsai Ing-wen's a traitor" and holding banners proclaiming Taiwan as part of China.

These protests also illuminate another trend that we're seeing, which is that the Chinese government also seeks to co-opt Western voices and form tactical alignments with domestic interest groups such as far left, anti-imperialist movements in the United States. So in these protests in New York and Los Angeles, we see a number of these anti-war, anti-imperialist groups, like Code Pink, ANSWER Coalition, and Pivot to Peace, protesting alongside Chinese groups—overseas Chinese associations and united front-linked groups as well.

In their messaging they're framing U.S. support for Taiwan as part of U.S. imperialism and warmongering, and reframing China's position as one of preserving peace and the status quo. And so by extension, this implicitly recognizes Beijing sovereignty claims over

Taiwan. The Chinese government may not be directly controlling these groups, but they see this as a way to further legitimize its narratives and reframe the Taiwan issue.

And perhaps even more worryingly, we're seeing united front actors reshaping the political landscape in the United States in favor of pro-Beijing actors, while suppressing supporters of Taiwan, with the goal of reshaping the public discussions and political discourse around the Taiwan issue. My own research and other reporting has examined how these Chinese Communist Party-linked groups and individuals not only try to get positions as political aides and power brokers in local and state politics, for example, but also are trying to increasingly act as a political machine of sorts, to try to get pro-Beijing individuals into elective office.

So the Chinese government is playing identity politics, exploiting contentious social and political issues—such as anti-Asian hate and public safety—with the goal of gaining currency among overseas Chinese populations and legitimizing Beijing-linked individuals and organizations as grassroots leaders that are defending the community's interests and rights. This mobilization then in turn serves as a foundation for Beijing's political machine to field preferred candidates and rally votes to get them elected. And this has direct implications for the Taiwan issue, as well as other issues that the Beijing government—the Chinese government—cares about.

As one example, in New York City last year during the election, a Republican candidate endorsed by united front groups won a tight state senate race against a Taiwan-born Democrat incumbent, Iwen Chu, who had attended a dinner when Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen transited through New York in 2023. And so these political influence tactics, even at the state and municipal levels, can have a very powerful trickle-up effect where you get politicians who may be increasingly aligned with Beijing's interests or beholden to CCP-linked actors. This has the ultimate effect of influencing broader policy discourse on Taiwan, on Xinjiang, on human rights, and in China, in favor of the Chinese government's positions.

Now just to conclude with two points, reiterating that the actors and tactics used in these cases are just part of a broader pattern of intensifying PRC influence activities, not just stamping out Taiwanese "separatism," but also trying to shape narratives and policies on Hong Kong, on Xinjiang, and even getting involved in U.S. politics. And the second point I'd like to conclude with is that these CCP political influence and interference operations include, but go beyond, transnational repression.

So there's definitely coercion, intimidation, surveillance, but alongside that, there are also a lot of broader attempts at co-optation and control of overseas Chinese communities, who can have very diverse viewpoints and diverse backgrounds. They're really trying to change beliefs and behavior and have the broader goal of ultimately shaping U.S. discourse on Taiwan and other issues that the Chinese Communist Party cares about. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Audrye Wong appears in the Appendix.]

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Dr. Wong. And thank you for your courage in testifying on a lot of these issues. We have votes and

other hearings, so we're going to be kind of moving in and out here, some of the members, but I'll begin with my questioning of all the panelists. We'll have 5-minute rounds of questions.

Let me begin just with the most basic question that I think—and I'd like to open it up to all of you—that I think every American should be aware of. You know, there's transnational issues all over the world, of course, but can you describe—and you already did it, Dr. Wong, but in other ways for other witnesses—how is the Chinese Communist Party on all of these issues taking action in America? That's the one that really boils my blood. So you mentioned it. You know, are they trying to influence our elections?

By the way, the irony of that is huge. Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party, they would never stand for elections. They fear their own people. We know that. But they're going to come and try and influence American elections? That is just unacceptable. And I don't care if you're a Democrat, Republican, Independent—no American would want the Chinese Communist Party trying to influence our elections when these authoritarians would never have the guts to stand for their own elections. So that's number one.

But also in terms of intimidation. How are they intimidating either Taiwanese citizens who are in the United States, Chinese citizens who are in the United States, or, more important from my perspective, Taiwanese Americans, Chinese Americans, Hong Kong Americans? How is the Chinese Communist Party trying to intimidate American citizens? You know, we read about these crazy police stations in New York City. We need to know about this, because this is completely unacceptable. And I guarantee you, heck, even Code Pink might be against this, Dr. Wong, if the Chinese Communist Party is in our country trying to influence our wonderful democracy.

So can I get some exact examples from all of you of how they're trying to do that—either through influencing our elections or intimidating American citizens of Taiwanese or Chinese or Hong Kong origin, to be quiet? And what should we do about it? I'm really interested in this question. And I think every single American—we need to know more about it. If the Chinese Communist Party is in America doing all these things, boy oh boy, that is unacceptable. And I guarantee you, every single American would agree with that. So you want to start, Admiral? Do you have a sense of this?

Admiral STUDEMAM. Thank you, sir. I appreciate you bringing this up. Probably the least discussed topic within the United States of America today, that requires the most discussion and action. I think it's fair to say that there's been a silent invasion of the United States. There was a book that was written—

Chair SULLIVAN. "Silent Invasion."

Admiral STUDEMAM. "Silent Invasion." There's a book written about that when Australia faced the same kinds of things, and they addressed it. And they've taken measures to better protect themselves. And we need to do so as well. I have a list of things that maybe would provoke some thought here about examples of Chinese influence. First of all, Hollywood remains beholden to CCP censors. And they're actively painting a benevolent PRC. And so we don't have the entertainment industry that's available to describe these things to the American people in a way that they might over

time come to understand, particularly if they distrust government. But government itself has failed, I think, to be able to describe also—

Chair SULLIVAN. I want to make sure you get through your list. But just on that, “Hollywood is beholden to Chinese communist censors.” That’s a pretty dramatic statement. Hollywood’s very powerful in America, around the world. Do they go to the masters in Beijing and say, Please, Mr. Xi Jinping, is it okay to do a movie or not? How bad is that?

Admiral STUDEMAN. There is less dependency today on the Chinese market because many movies can’t actually go there and profit the way they used to. But for many years, the movie makers would, in fact—if they wanted to sell their movie in China, they would allow their scripts to be reviewed by the CCP’s censors. And over time they knew what the left and right limits were, and then they could self-censor, which is actually a metric of the success of political warfare—when you self-censor because you know what you’re supposed to say and not say.

Chair SULLIVAN. Yes. That’s shameful.

Admiral STUDEMAN. Right. Other issues—universities have been hooked on Chinese tuition dollars. Academic freedom has been threatened. There are examples of this. Scientific and laboratory cooperation continues to transfer the seeds of innovation to the Chinese. There’s been recruitment of ethnic Chinese from inside the U.S. Government and businesses, influence attempts at the local and state level designed to create dependencies that then the Chinese can leverage, including pressure on the federal system. Multimedia influence operations with Chinese-owned or -influenced media capabilities in our country and globally. Purchase of property near U.S.-sensitive facilities and bases, which we’re getting after, of course, thanks to Congress’s help.

We have operations inside U.S. critical infrastructure that CISA has talked about. But this is at the national level all the way down to the municipal level in the United States. Cyber espionage has been well covered, but that continues to be \$200 billion to \$600 billion—that’s trillions of dollars of U.S. intellectual property that has gone over to fuel China’s modernization and their rise. Also buying stakes in U.S. companies to get tech secrets. All of these are part of standard CCP exploitation and malign actions. There’s been discussion about many of these things. We’ve taken certain actions to strengthen our capabilities. But I think we have a long way to go.

Chair SULLIVAN. Great. Thank you.

Mr. Mattis.

Mr. MATTIS. I think you can find worldwide some examples of the CCP trying to influence elections. But real power is not caring what the election outcome is because you’ve cultivated the people around a candidate or a candidate themselves. And when you look at the targeting in Taiwan, the United States—

Chair SULLIVAN. I want to stay with the U.S.

Mr. MATTIS. No, no, it is the same piece. You can see examples. What you see in Canada, what you see in the United States, is what you see in Taiwan, Australia, elsewhere. And it is the effort to cultivate the individual candidates and the people around them because, you know, today’s council member, today’s mayor, is to-

morrow's governor, tomorrow's senator. So you can cultivate people going through the system and shape the way they understand China, the PRC, Taiwan.

And if you think about how you interact with your constituents, you don't call every single constituent and try to get them to a place. You go to the Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club, you go to schools, you go to places where people gather. And that's the core of what Audrye was describing with the united front system, of cultivating these organizations so that when you say, Ah, I've got 500,000 Chinese Americans as constituents, maybe I need to go find a way to speak to them, these groups are fundamentally stealing their voice as citizens and now representing the Party, pretending that they're representing American citizens to you, to say, Here's what we want, even though that "we" is actually the Party, not those supposed groups.

And that's one of the ways that those groups are, in fact, dangerous. That it's the Party taking the people's voice and providing it. Another way is the cultivation of officials. If you think about the charges that were put against Linda Sun, a former New York State government official, she was a liaison to the Asian American community. If you were a Taiwanese American or if you were Uyghur American and you were going through her, you were seeing things blocked. You were not getting a response from the state government. And pro-PRC interests that were being represented through the state would continue to funnel through and reach the attention of state officials.

So you could see someone who is blocking these issues out, not representing all of the Americans that she ostensibly represented, or that New York State represents, but only those that Linda Sun and the people that she worked with from the PRC government approved of. And so you can continue looking at all of these examples. But what we're talking about is really threats to economic opportunity and creation of economic opportunities. The payoff to Linda Sun was that her husband got a lot of contracts, to the tune of several million dollars, allegedly, from the PRC. And so it's much harder to go after those kinds of relationships because they're a problem. And this is why it is a conversation that has to be discussed—has to be discussed publicly—what's acceptable, what's not—because we're not going to arrest our way out of this.

Chair SULLIVAN. Dr. Wong, do you have a view on this?

Ms. WONG. Yes, I think, just building on what Peter said and my previous comments, I think it's a very challenging issue because, you know, it's not just the CCP claiming to represent the voices of Chinese Americans or anyone of ethnic Chinese descent. Because the CCP sees all ethnic Chinese as having some inherent or innate affinity or loyalty to China and the Chinese government, even though that is certainly not the case.

So that is a threat not just to national security but also to the strength of our democracy and the rights and liberties of Chinese American communities and overseas Chinese. And as Peter mentioned, this comes about because of reliance on these community liaisons who come out of the woodwork and say: I'm here to get your votes. And so it's easy for politicians and political candidates who rely on that as a way. And that element of patronage politics pro-

vides a way for foreign influence and interference to operate in U.S. elections.

And the dominant way that the CCP tries to influence U.S. elections is through positioning themselves as the sole representative, spinning the narrative that the Chinese government is the only one looking out for Chinese Americans and ethnic Chinese communities. And so using this identity-based mobilization and getting involved in community organizing to position themselves as leaders of these communities, and to say, We are here to take care of you; the American political system is marginalizing your voice. And that is a way to weaponize a lot of the social and political issues within the United States, to drive a wedge between these overseas Chinese communities and the broader American society. And so I think that's a really important trend to note.

And I think another example—you asked about intimidation of Taiwanese or Chinese Americans—in academia and higher education, where some of this united front influence has permeated these campuses where, again, you see some zealous Chinese students or Chinese student organizations taking up the mantle of CCP interest, for a range of reasons . . . could be sort of ideological support. It could be sort of practical career incentives, a desire to get a leg up, you know, when they return home, and then get the job.

There are these incentives to associate with the Chinese consulate, to get resources, and to engage in peer monitoring surveillance of other Chinese students on campus to report on potential events, potential ways that supporters of Taiwan or opponents or critics of the CCP regime are exercising their freedom of speech on campus. So I think that is another complementary element of transnational repression.

Chair SULLIVAN. Great. Thank you.

I'm going to head to a vote, speaking of voting and democracy. And I will turn it over to Chairman Smith for more questions. And I will be back after this vote.

Co-chair SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, again, thank you to our very distinguished witnesses.

A couple of questions. You know, we all have 5 minutes so I will be as brief as I can. Is the U.S. Government doing enough, using all of the assets we have—including the FBI—to combat this repression that's happening within our own borders? Is there a resolve there? Are sufficient numbers of people—I mean, we do have a transnational repression act that we're trying to get passed in the House. But that said, there are already authorities there. Are they doing enough?

Second, after Afghanistan—I read the Global Times all the time. I was in it once when they put me on their hit list and sanctions list. But my question is, after Afghanistan there was one editorial after another to the people of Taiwan that the United States will not have your back. And they cited the withdrawal from Afghanistan as proof positive. Has that abated, with the new president? Or is it still a part of their narrative?

Third, on offshore wind, I've been leading the effort in the House in exposing that offshore wind carries egregious negative consequences to radar, where you will not see your own planes, ships

will not see ships that are right in front of them. The National Academy of Sciences did in 2022 a big, thick, voluminous, well-documented, heavily footnoted study that said there's no workaround. Radars will be rendered inferior, if not defunct completely. And yet we're looking to build them off my coast, and I'm fighting them like crazy.

Taiwan has a similar problem. And I know academics and others have spoken about the impact it might have on their national security. Admiral, you might want to speak to that, because I think if you're blind, you don't see what's coming, and your own planes can't even operate in a way that's effective, then you've got a problem. If you could maybe speak to that. Even in Norway and countries that are afraid of Putin, they have been raising alarms about offshore wind. And there are five studies. The most important one of all is the National Academy of Sciences. And they have said, watch out. You know, we have a real problem with this in terms of our national security and aviation, that's civilian as well.

On this issue—right behind you is Bob Fu. Two weeks ago, there was a big gathering right here in the capital on the oppression of the Muslim Uyghurs. His wife was accosted by a provocateur who got this close to her in order to incite something. Bob's house, when it was in Texas, had all of these people from the Chinese Communist Party making life miserable. He had to move. Another manifestation of this transnational repression. So, again, going back to the first question, how well or poorly are we doing? Is it a priority?

Admiral STUDEMAN. Thanks for the question. I think there's been substantial effort that's been expended over many years. But too few people, with too little capacity, with too little awareness and education of the American public, have been striving to deal with these issues. And so instead of it being sub rosa or something we just simply can't find a way to talk about, I think we need to actually let sunlight be the best disinfectant and work on the political education of our people on exactly what's going on. People tend to think the tyranny and spy games and things that you read about in the 20th century with the Cold War are over. Tyranny never dies. It's actually resurging in more places and more forms than ever before. And we have to deal with it.

And it's going to require everybody in the country, every citizen, to be alert, to be vigilant, to know what is happening, in order for them to be able to take care of those things at the earliest possible stage and not simply rely on consequence management from the Federal Government all the time. But this is going to require, in my humble opinion, a national conversation. And it's going to have to be led by various key influencers in lots of different sectors in our society. And we haven't had that conversation yet. This is one thing we should all agree on when it comes to the security and the prosperity of our country and so many others.

I wrote an op-ed at one point and I recommended that we have an apolitical spokesperson for China matters, who essentially is up at the White House, who has credentials, who isn't a political, to be able to do press conferences and explain to the American people how to connect the dots about Chinese stratagems and ambitions; how they relate to other red or malicious actors, because they're working together with Russia and others; and then how to think

through how all these things are connected. Until we have such a spokesperson, until we have the entertainment industry turn itself on and become patriotic and do their duty, I'm afraid this will still be something that, without situational awareness, only a few people will be able to tackle.

Co-chair SMITH. Do you want to speak about the offshore wind?

Admiral STUDEMAN. On offshore wind on Taiwan, I would just tell you that they need to go green to diversify their energy sources. They can't be so beholden to liquid natural gas. That is a chokepoint that the Chinese could potentially squeeze in a crisis. And so diversification is really important. I agree with the solar and the wind steps that they've taken. I believe they need to have at least one nuclear plant to stay viable. And I think they need to think through other resilience methods so that they deny the PRC an easy ability to cut off energy flows into Taiwan.

Co-chair SMITH. Okay.

Mr. MATTIS. I think I'll take the propaganda question first, which is, Has Beijing's message that the U.S. is unreliable abated? And the answer is no. It has been continuous. It has been reinforced. And one of the big trends in the way that the PRC has conducted political warfare against Taiwan, going back about eight or nine years, is a deliberate focus on Taiwanese pundits, people with platforms to speak to the Taiwanese people to try to push these narratives through. Because it's much easier to have it come through someone who is Taiwanese than it is to have it come through the Global Times, or the People's Daily, or some other mouthpiece.

Is the U.S. doing enough? You know, we simply don't have enough resources and enough awareness. Because, as I mentioned before, you can't arrest your way out of this. We can't prosecute our way out of this. There's simply too many things and too many ways. And what we actually need is the good judgment of citizens that—you know, it might not be illegal, but it still may not be okay. We have lots of things, you know, as parents, as citizens, as people, as congressional members, as staffers, that, well, it's not illegal, but it's not really okay. We make these kinds of judgments. And to be able to have that awareness in the face of this information that's coming to you, or someone who's ostensibly a community leader who you think is speaking for a number of your constituents, it's hard to do that without a lot of awareness.

And this is a place where we have not made a lot of investment. You may remember, Chairman Smith, the bilateral competition bills from the 116th and 117th Congresses. There was not a single dollar in what was about 2,000 total pages of legislation about funding education in the Chinese language, about replacing Confucius Institutes with Americans, or with Taiwanese, or with others, rather than a PRC-funded push to shape how universities behaved. This is a place where we're woefully underprepared in the U.S. Government. You know, one of the reasons why, for example, some of our regulations on China have been woefully underenforced was because some departments had to use Google Translate because they did not have a single Chinese speaker who could assist in the research that they were required to do to take policy action.

So it is a bigger educational problem. Language is just one part of it, but it is a fundamental part of this, because the number of

Chinese-language students in the United States peaked over a decade ago, I believe, in 2013. And it's been on a steady decline since. But that's simply not going to work with the need to have a public conversation about exploiting the need for the CCP to communicate to its people and its cadres and its collaborators out in the public, because they have to explain some of these things.

Ms. WONG. Sure. I would agree that we definitely need more, rather than less, government resources to study and respond to these issues in a cross-agency and bipartisan manner. And that includes continuing to bolster the Foreign Influence Task Force at the FBI, or continuing dedicating resources to study foreign influence, foreign disinformation, and authoritarian propaganda. And so I think these are efforts that we need to be pushing forward, rather than scaling back.

And I think it's important to do this not just at the federal level, but also at the sub-national level. So at the local and state levels, you know, increasing awareness among elected officials, among politicians and local governments, about the way the CCP works, united front works, the tactics of foreign influence and transnational repression, so that they have the capacity and, hopefully, the resources to understand how this works and then take the corresponding steps to tackle it. And, again, transparency is really important.

The final point I want to make is that I think that also reducing Chinese influence on the ground also requires empowering and encouraging alternative legitimate voices in the form of grassroots organizations and legitimate Asian American community organizations, that are actually responsive to diverse local interests and needs, so that CCP voices are not able to dominate the community-organizing landscape, or political landscape, and claim to represent the Chinese American and Asian American communities.

Co-chair SMITH. Thank you, Dr. Wong.

The chair recognizes Commissioner Dale Strong.

Representative STRONG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's an honor to join you today in my first hearing as a member of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. First and foremost, I want to express my sincere gratitude to Speaker Johnson for the trust and confidence placed in me through this appointment. I'm deeply humbled by the opportunity and look forward to working collaboratively with all members of the Commission to advance our shared goals of promoting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. I'm proud to represent Huntsville in North Alabama, a hub for all things research and innovation, throughout the defense, cyber, logistics, and aerospace sectors. This being said, I'm particularly excited about this Commission's work surrounding these topics.

Admiral, how did China's gray zone tactics, like harassing ships near Taiwan, connect with its larger political and information campaigns against Taiwan? What's the strategic goal of this coordinated effort?

Admiral STUDEMAN. Thank you, Congressman. So multifaceted. One way to think about things, I think, beginning from the strategic, is that China's not going to work with the current president, President Lai. He is the worst possible political leader that they could envision, as somebody that talks about Taiwan as a sovereign

nation and is willing to speak about this often, with much of his history being a firebrand about these issues. And so they believe that they should be penalizing not just the leadership—to show that they are less effective or ineffective in being able to defend Taiwan—but also punishing the voters that put him in power.

And so they are stress testing Taiwan. They are trying to exhaust the military as part of that punitive effort. They are surrounding it to show that it will be cut off, that there will be no chance of rescue. This is a psychological warfare attempt to show that they won't have cavalry coming over the hill, or if it tries it can't get there. At the same time, they are changing and conditioning Taiwan to seeing more forces, more forward, more often, which if you're looking at it through military terms reduces your indications and warning. And it buys more surprise that the PRC can then use in the future, you know, should they plan a major military campaign.

It's also a chance to rehearse, as Admiral Paparo in INDOPACOM has said, to give them practice in the actual wartime op areas here. So this is a strategic operation, and tactically something that the Chinese are doing to advantage themselves, but also to try to show that Taiwan has no hope of defending itself, even if there are intervening forces.

Representative STRONG. Admiral Studeman, in your opinion are U.S. lawmakers aware of how deep China's nonmilitary tactics, like propaganda or legal maneuvering, are woven into its long-term strategy and military plans for Taiwan?

Admiral STUDEMAN. I believe those who study this problem in foreign policy and military circles know it well. I don't think enough people, though, are educated on this facet of how the PRC works. It is all spectrum, all the time, all domains. It's more insidious than we want to give it credit for. And as my fellow panelists have described, this is ambiguous. This is truly a sort of gray zone. And so people don't know how to deal with it. If we don't talk about it and we don't equip them with a way of thinking about how to think—you know, respond to it, and do it in a judicious way that doesn't violate what we stand for in this democracy, still protecting free expression and other things that we're going to require to protect going forward. So I think we can do more to shine a light on those tactics. And there are people that are in positions of influence who should be doing it.

Representative STRONG. A little further into that, do you believe INDOPACOM is giving enough attention to information and political warfare? And are we ready to compete with China effectively in these areas?

Admiral STUDEMAN. INDOPACOM and many other combatant commands certainly get it. Much of Admiral Paparo's Prevail Strategy, as he calls it, has information highlighted in it. He describes that every military operation should be suffused with information elements. The problem is that one military officer in charge of the Pacific can't do it alone. When it comes to dealing with these things, you need support up the chain of command. And you need to have the National Security Council be working, interagency efforts, to use all instruments of national power, including the strategic messaging components that exist at the national level, to be

able to support and complement what would be happening out in a place like INDOPACOM. This is where we've been weak. In fact, we are today gutting some of those diplomatic and informational capabilities that we're going to need to compete and contest in the very area that you talk about.

Representative STRONG. Mr. Mattis, how does espionage play a role in China's political warfare? And what effect does this have at the individual and societal level, both here in the United States and with our allies and partners?

Mr. MATTIS. First and foremost, espionage is an act of violating trust. And if you think about all of the interactions that are required, for example, in Congress, among staff, in an office, trust is fundamental to that issue. And so when you have these cases, when you have the weaponization of any connection to the PRC to try to gain access to information, you are breaking down the bonds of trust that allow government to work, that allow actions to be taken with some degree of appropriate secrecy, when governments need to act in those ways. And you inhibit the ability of a government to have a private conversation about how to deal with matters.

How does it affect Taiwan? It affects the ability of the government to work with itself. It affects the trust that Taiwan's partners have in dealing with that government. It affects the kinds of decisions about what is acceptable to share, both in terms of information, what weapons are acceptable to sell, and what kind of interoperability or plans for interoperability are acceptable. These are all things that get factored in—or are all things that are affected by the CCP's espionage against Taiwan.

Representative STRONG. Thank you. My time has expired. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you.

Senator KIM.

Senator KIM. Thank you. I just want to say I'm glad to be a part of this Commission and glad to work alongside the two of you and others. So thank you for your leadership. And I look forward to continuing the conversation. Thank you to the three of you for coming out and talking about such an important issue.

Admiral, I'd like to start with you to just kind of talk through—you talked about the PRC's actions in terms of mobilizing that sense of national power—not just military but that also includes so many other tools, whether that be political, information, economic. So I guess I just want to make sure I understand. You know, when it comes to the work that the United States is doing, as well as what Taiwan is doing, is it correct that we need to make sure we're not focusing too narrowly just on the military deterrence side? That's certainly critically important, but so many of the other issues need to be addressed with an equal level of importance. Is that a good assumption to start with?

Admiral STUDEMAN. Senator, that is exactly right. Look, we need to understand the playing field, or the battlefield that we're on. This is about global influence over time, where China is trying to exert itself and create leverage, and essentially begin to expand its influence at the expense of our and our friends' influence, and the rest of the Western rules-based system, to be able to transform it

to meet their preferences. They're not going to try to trash all elements. They can co-opt many of those. But the Chinese are taking over inside international institutions. Obviously, you know about the Belt and Road, extending their influence in a way where we need to compete.

And you can't compete if you don't have healthy, robust instruments of national power that are ready to work together to orchestrate the kinds of things that we're going to need to do to deal with that reality that's happening around the world, not just here at home. And so in my humble opinion, we need to not euthanize major critical elements of our government that support what we're talking about. We also need to understand that we have to be sophisticated in our approach. We actually have to do trust-generating things with our international partners. We need to think about what true smart power really is. Like Joe Nye would say, it's the soft, it's the sharp, and it's the hard. It's not just the hard or the sharp all the time. That would not be smart power.

The Chinese are using smart power cleverly in many places around the world constantly, to gradually, steadily turn the tide against the United States and supplant us there. And we need to be wise to this. And we also need to use our instruments wisely. So I do think some of the changes that are occurring in government are very dangerous. To me it's like Superman choosing to swallow kryptonite at exactly the wrong time.

Senator KIM. Yes. And look, beyond just our own tools—and I say this as someone who used to work at the State Department, and engage in a lot of these different efforts—but would I be correct as well in trying to make sure that we're conceptualizing a strategic advantage of ours being our capacity to be able to build international coalitions? And especially when you go in, and competing, and having the challenges against a competitor which has as large a population and an economy and resources as China, am I correct in thinking that, you know, being able to build international coalitions, that that is not just good to have, nice to have, but is a necessary component if we were to try to truly compete and be able to truly protect people not just in Taiwan but around the world?

Admiral STUDEMAN. I believe that our work with all countries around the world—allies, partners—all of it is going to be very important and that we have to be mindful of their respective interests. We need to do things that build trust, not reduce it. You know, credibility isn't divisible. Either you have it or you don't. And the same may be true of trust. And so instead of breaching it, we need to do more to build it. We're going to have to earn it. We're going to have to earn the moral high ground here in the international system. And I worry about where brand America is heading, given the trends.

Senator KIM. Yes, the word you use there, credibility—I think that's really important. I would also use the word "reliability," in terms of whether or not we are there for our allies and our partners. And that they feel like they can trust us, because certainly that is something that is so critical.

Mr. Mattis, I want to turn to you. I mean, what we see so much in Taiwan, and we've heard it in the briefing as well as more broadly, is that often it's a testing ground for the united front and

for political warfare tactics. So I guess I just want to hear from you a little more. What are the most concerning developments in this space? And what tactics could Beijing use in other democracies?

Mr. MATTIS. I tend to disagree with people who call Taiwan a testing ground. I think of it more as the place where the CCP has the least restrictions and the least sort of ethical restraints on anything that it does, because its political objective of dissolving the ROC, of annexing Taiwan, means that it has no view of restraint. It's not competing for influence in some country with the United States, where it's not about effecting this type of decision or one thing. It is actually about the destruction of Taiwan as a society, as a political entity, and to integrate it.

Senator KIM. I respect your thought there. I was just trying to clarify some of what I'm seeing taking place in Taiwan. I feel like I saw some initial precursors to that in Hong Kong, for instance, and how the PRC repressed voices on that front. And you're seeing it now mobilized and expanded in Taiwan. And I'm just trying to think through—you know, how is that continuing to grow, and what is it that we can do to try to be concerned about that and address it?

Mr. MATTIS. Some of the things that are fundamental to this are sort of a widespread effort to go after people who have any sort of platform and influence within a broader population, because a Taiwanese voice is much better than a Chinese voice to try to put pressure on or to affect the cognition, the psychology of the Taiwanese. The second is the very focused effort of going after local-level politicians, local-level associations, local businesses, because the political structure in Taiwan is far less centralized. The Kuomintang used to be a Leninist party, and it had that kind of structure. And that central part has fallen away. And the DPP grew up out of pro-democracy activists, and so it has a decentralized way of doing things.

And therefore, the ability to focus on local levels in Taiwan and to really try to cultivate the next generation of politicians and push them into office and provide the financial resources through business opportunities, is particularly disconcerting because it's intense, it's difficult to spot, and if you want to start shaping it, you're having to say, This kind of interaction with the PRC is okay, this kind is not. And it gets very uncomfortable for democracies to make these kinds of political judgment calls. And therefore, it also requires you having a political discussion, the ability of a president or legislature to mobilize people around these questions for national security and protection.

The third area that I find particularly disconcerting—I had mentioned this when you stepped away—is the effort to understand the real-time movements of the president of Taiwan and other leaders—this focused effort on the military police command, trying to find bodyguards, trying to find anyone who could be in this position, to demonstrate awareness of where the president is, because if you're thinking about how to paralyze a political system in a moment of crisis, going after the leaders is a key way of doing this.

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you.

Congressman Nunn.

Representative NUNN. Well, thank you to the Commission. Thank you very much to both of our chairs here. I think this is a great opportunity to have not only a bipartisan conversation but a bicameral approach. Admiral, you highlighted the need for not only a whole-of-government, but really a whole-of-nation response to China on this. So I'll offer you one, as a fellow intelligence officer here. In 2020 it started with a pineapple. I was working a counter-influence operation. And we saw in rural Taiwan that a group, unbeknownst to many of us, started going after pineapple farmers. And slowly, by prefecture after prefecture, they were able to identify that the pineapple farmer was going to be a linchpin in the 2020 election. They directly messaged them. And, unbeknownst to us at the time, 98 percent of pineapple exports ended up in mainland China.

The ability to influence a pineapple farmer, and I'm a guy from Iowa who knows the commodities market very well, meant that they were going to be influenced when they went to that ballot box. Down ballot, the Chinese ability to micro-target individuals within the voting population within central Taiwan certainly had an outcome in what both the DPP and the KMT, the mainland China party, saw in their local elections. This was strategic. It was effective. And without a shot fired, they were able to change the course of an election, arguably through legal means.

This is what George Kennan identified as "political warfare." I'll be very specific here: "The employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objective." I want to turn to you, Admiral. You worked in national intelligence in a number of ways, including your time in the INDOPACOM theater here. When we look at China, do you believe China has the ability to effectively deploy, even through its Mandarin-based language learning models—the ability to launch influence operations against actors in Taiwan today?

Admiral STUDEMAN. It's not a question of "could they." They are doing it all the time.

Representative NUNN. I agree. Do you believe they could go the next step and cross that great Pacific, and start doing influence operations in the United States today?

Admiral STUDEMAN. They don't need to cross the Pacific. They're already here. And they're already doing it.

Representative NUNN. I agree. Do you believe that the types of things that we're seeing them orchestrate in Asia today, particularly election manipulation, could be executed here in the United States today?

Admiral STUDEMAN. It's already happened, and it will happen again in the future.

Representative NUNN. This is very concerning. I think this needs to be at the forefront of where we are operating as a Commission. To be able to identify not only what the Chinese are doing to their neighbors but what they're doing right here in the United States. You know, Mr. Mattis, you and I spent some time in counter-intelligence at the Agency together. And I think we've seen firsthand the threat that's posed by this. When I look at the United States today, I believe we need a whole-of-nation approach, as the Admiral highlighted. But what I see coming out of Beijing right

now is a nationalized whole-of-information operation, where they're using everything from industry to export controls and cyber campaigns in this very targeted political warfare.

Are we in a position right now where we can counter this type of operation here in the United States? And do we even have insight into it? It was mentioned earlier, understanding Mandarin, the only way we found out about the pineapple farms was using large language models to break down, after the fact, the messaging coming from mainland China into Taiwan. It's happening, as the Admiral highlighted, right in front of us. I don't even know if we're aware of it, and in a position to be able to counter it. I'd like your thoughts.

Mr. MATTIS. I think this is why I highlighted at the very beginning of my testimony that we may understand that there's a United Front Work Department, usually referencing the one for the Central Committee, but there are provincial United Front Work Departments. There are local United Front Work Departments. There is a whole Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference system that has roughly 715,000 members, which is something that you could roughly describe as like a militia system, if you will, or a reserve system for the united front, that's mobilizing businesspeople, retired officials, actually, one branch of the Kuomintang that split off. And a whole range of other outside actors that are outside of the party.

There's also a United Front Work Department, by the way, in, say, the China Academy of Sciences. It's also in certain companies. It's sometimes even in Western companies that have full-fledged Party committees. And as a result, you see something that is an entire system that is operating. And it's worth noting that the guidance that has been given to the united front by Zhou Enlai, and has continued to be quoted these days, begins with, Understand the situation, have a firm grasp of policy, and arrange personnel, and that that's the prerequisite for acting.

The reason this is effective and why it's so difficult to deal with is that the Party is making very clear what its objectives are. You know, This is what our policies are. And then saying to all of these hundreds of thousands of people, Go do what you can to push that forward. And that's why it's such a difficult challenge, because in a military context the united front system is operating on mission orders, if you will. You know, We've equipped you for brilliance in the basics. We've given you the guidance. Now, go do it. And it becomes a question of how you isolate the Uyghur cause. How do you isolate the Taiwanese? How do you steal technology? How do you help us recruit intelligence sources?

It is a capability, in a sense—or, if you're thinking of ends, ways, and means, united front could probably be described as a way of approaching politics and influence and creating this mobilizational capability that can be there. And that means it can be used for propaganda, but it can also be used for political action. And that's what makes it so difficult to deal with. Because it's not a question of whether it's legal or illegal. The Party doesn't care about that. It cares about its objectives and creating this ability to leverage, to push this forward.

Representative NUNN. I very much agree.

Ms. Wong, in the time that I have remaining, I want you to know we're leading a bipartisan CODEL to Taiwan later this year. The intent here is not only to stand with our allies but also to do some fact finding, some discovery. I think both those in the United States, but also, I would say, in Taiwan, who've been on the front line of this for quite some time, are coming up with some really innovative ways of responding to this type of Chinese pressure campaign, political warfare, to be very specific. Do you have any early indications that we're able to find some kind of defense, some kind of countermeasure here, to be able to put into this space not only to help the United States, but, as was noted, to be able to stand with our allies in pushing back against the false narratives coming out of Beijing intending to manipulate, conscript, and coerce allies in the region into falling into Beijing's sphere further?

Ms. WONG. I absolutely agree that it's important for the U.S. to stand by Taiwan and to coordinate capacities and resources to be able to combat authoritarian influence efforts. I think the United States probably has some learning it could do from Taiwan, which has been dealing with these issues for a long time. And I think it's important for the United States also to sort of continue its global commitment to combating foreign disinformation, to sort of make sure that alternative messaging from the United States and its allies and partners gets out there and that it doesn't leave a gap or a void for the CCP and its narratives to take root, especially in places where there's relatively little knowledge of Taiwan and the complexities of these issues.

Representative NUNN. Thank you.

I'd just like to close by saying, Admiral, you've seen this firsthand. I could not agree with you more. I'd like to see a bipartisan voice at the White House, in an ideal world—I don't know that that's always the case. But certainly a National Security Council that can help orchestrate not only all of our instruments of government power but also all of our instruments of national power. And if my eighteen-year-old daughter can be an influencer and do quite well in her ability to encourage young people in a certain way, we as the United States should be a force for good in the world and shine light on bad actors, while also having the opportunity to project what's great about democracies like Taiwan, like the United States. Thank you very much for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I yield my time.

Chair SULLIVAN. Congressman Nunn, we'll work with you—before you head over to Taiwan—on my Stand with Taiwan Act. It's got a very strong bipartisan group of Senators over here. And it's, I think, part of what you're talking about right now. We want to make sure it's got strong bipartisan support in the House, too. Great.

Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for your testimony.

I'm going to start, Admiral Studeman, with your phrase regarding the silent invasion of the United States. Freedom House has documented over 1,200 incidents of repression by China since 2014. We've had previous testimony of transnational repression here in the United States, ranging from somebody walking up to a Chinese

member of the diaspora and saying, We know who you are, we know where you live ... to direct threats against their family members back in China. Do we have a sense in tracking the increase over the last decade, of where we were a decade ago, in terms of the number of incidents, the presence of China engaging in these types of acts of intimidation, affecting freedom of assembly, affecting freedom of speech here in the United States? How does 2015 compare to 2025, if you will?

Admiral STUDEMAN. I don't have the statistics on that. I'm sure somebody does. Maybe my fellow panelists have some data. But one can essentially say that there is pressure to continue to do more around the world, not just here, as part of the political direction from Beijing to deal with any anti-China voices that exist anywhere. I think if you go back historically, I think I recall in 1984 there was an assassination of a Taiwan person—done by, I think, some criminal gang that was working as a proxy for the PRC. Look, the idea of pressure in all forms, up to killing, including rendering in a variety of different ways, all that stuff has happened on our soil. And we need to understand that that's sort of the brutal fact of our existence—that we're going to have to confront these dangers and figure out a way to protect those who are here that might face those kinds of approaches by the CCP and their proxies.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

And Mr. Mattis, thank you for your work on this Commission and your engagement in this. It has been my impression that we are probably only seeing the tip of the iceberg, that most people who are affected through acts of transnational repression here in the United States don't report it. There's not a comfortable way to do so. And one of the things that I've advocated for is for us to create a better pathway and better information on how folks can report such incidents, so we can better track over time what China is doing. And if we aren't understanding what they're doing, it's hard for us to craft ways to deter it or respond to it. What's your sense of that last decade, in terms of the increase in China's activity here in the United States?

Mr. MATTIS. My sense is not necessarily about the number of incidents, because that's almost impossible to track. It is, let's say, what they are willing to do on U.S. territory, or in foreign countries, that has steadily ramped up. So it might have been—let's call it a semi-polite notice—We know who you are type of thing, ramping up to physical altercations. You know, an example that took place in the U.K. was they went after someone from Hong Kong. They flew in at a private airfield. They intended to fly out with her. And it was disrupted, and they were caught on camera.

But that kind of direct rendering, or that kind of pressure, is something that you can know has happened in the United States. Maybe not in quite that way, but certainly the kind of direct pressure of—"You will go to Beijing and be there in the next 48 hours, or else." So those kinds of things have gone from relatively minor, you know, in a criminal sense you might call it a misdemeanor, up to things that are actual felonies.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Ms. Wong, one thing that caught my attention in your testimony, in a paragraph where you're talking about how transnational re-

pression activities consist of multipronged community and political mobilization. You mentioned the broader and public discourse on Taiwan through the positioning of pro-Beijing individuals as political aides. Are you referring to that happening here in the United States? Or are you referring to that happening in Taiwan?

Ms. WONG. I was referring to that happening in the United States, as we see in the recent arrest of Linda Sun, who is a former aide to the New York governor. You know, she positioned herself as a community liaison but had very close links to united front and the CCP. So they're claiming to speak on behalf of the Asian American and Chinese American community but actually propagating Chinese government viewpoints and positions and by extension, circumscribing the New York governor or others that are politicians whom they were aides to, and shaping their views on what is permissible to say or not to say, on Taiwan, and Xinjiang, and other cases.

Senator MERKLEY. Great. I'd like to have the staff of the Commission follow up with you on the details of that. And your second half of that sentence was "operating as a political machine to get pro-Beijing candidates elected to office." And this is what we're talking about, election influence in the U.S.—we really want to understand the scope of that much more broadly.

The last question I want to pose, because my time is expiring, is—and that's a question I've posed during every one of these gatherings—what is an effective strategy to respond? One thing that I have pressed for is for the FBI to have a hotline with Chinese-speaking individuals and high security, so people feel comfortable reporting incidents of transnational repression when they occur. The FBI has been very reluctant to have any sort of dedicated effort in that regard.

A second is, are there things that should trigger specific responses in terms of, for example, trade sanctions? And the Chairman has mentioned that in the context of military aggression, but are there things, in terms of transnational repression, that should trigger responses? If there's a documented incident of the Chinese government engaging in some of these escalated events that we're starting to hear about, does that increase their tariff on products coming into the U.S.? What other leverage tools are there for us to really dramatize the unacceptability of China interfering in our freedom of speech and our freedom of assembly? Whoever would like to take a stab at that.

Admiral STUDEMAN. If you have a persistent, comprehensive, never-ending threat, then you need to deal with it with persistence, with comprehensive strategies that go up and down the chain. So it's both the depth and the breadth. This, to me, is one of the only ways to approach that kind of wicked problem that's being presented to us. And so we talked about education as a starting point. To me, this is something that has to be part of a continuing conversation with the country. But I do think that there are a variety of—a family of things that we're going to have to do in concert with one another, because I don't think you're going to find a silver bullet on this.

But it is worth debating and worth figuring out, you know, what actually is more effective. And I think we should listen to Taiwan,

which has a lot of experience in these matters, and some of the techniques that they've been using, as well as others who have faced this kind of action from China. So instead of figuring it out on our own, we should do a listening campaign. And I believe we ought to have the kind of dialog that allows us to speak internationally about Chinese political warfare in a more regularized way, with representatives from a variety of different governments. To me, that gets to exposure of what they're doing, and it also gets the best practices that people are using that may be more effective in countering what we're talking about.

Senator MERKLEY. I think you mentioned—I'm over time, but I think you mentioned that Australia has developed some interesting responses. I'd like to learn more about that. Only with the Chair's permission will I invite continued response. I would love to hear what you have to say, depends on——

Mr. MATTIS. Senator Merkley, first, I think we have to recognize that the United States is a federal government of 50 sovereign states that have their own law enforcement. And that you have your own localities that have resources. And that if you want to be effective in responding, it means that you're going to have to devote resources and training to state's attorneys' offices, district attorneys' offices, right? We know that certain kinds of criminal investigations require certain kinds of expertise on the part of both prosecutors and police.

A second is that we have to have the political willingness to arrest people when there are problems. There are all sorts of examples that you can go through where Chinese government officials have been allowed to come to the United States who have committed acts of intimidation or coercion. And they've been allowed to leave completely unscathed. Now, at the very least, we have to be careful with this because we're not going to hostage-take, the way that the PRC does. But I think demonstrating that we are going to follow our own rule of law and we're not going to allow these kinds of exceptions to continue is a starting point for leverage and pressure on the PRC.

I think you were exactly on the right track by suggesting things that are not like for like, because we know that Beijing complains about us linking issues together, like trade and human rights. But we know that they do this all the time. And if we're simply responding symmetrically, we're making it too easy—too predictable. We're putting us into a position where we would be saying, Well, actually, we're just going to take hostages, when in fact there are other things that we should be doing—there are vulnerabilities that the PRC has and we should be putting pressure on those places.

And those issues at state government levels—I think Newsweek identified 24 state government officials in New York. The researcher who did that work is now working for Jamestown. But if you go around the country you can find similar issues in almost every state. And unfortunately, in the state that I used to live in, and that you represent, there have been issues that are there among state government officials, state legislatures, because of the targeting.

This is the point—it's not enough to have a Federal Government response. It is actually something where you have to find ways, as we've done in many other criminal areas—whether it's fraud, whether it's sexual violence—you actually have to have police and prosecutors that understand this to be accessible and to be a part of the communities that can be reported to.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Chair SULLIVAN. Thank you, Senator Merkley.

I'm going to ask another round, if I can ask the witnesses to be succinct. I'm going to go vote here—another round of voting, and then Chairman Smith is going to wrap this up. I'll have to leave to go vote. But I want to get a commitment from the three of you, as the record is going to be open for a couple weeks after this hearing, to maybe get—and I know I was reading, Admiral, your written testimony is great—some really specific examples of Chinese actions on our soil intimidating American citizens, or Taiwanese, or Chinese citizens on our soil. I think Americans really need to know that. If you guys can provide—like, Admiral, the police stations in New York—what was that? That was kind of crazy. I mean, what the hell was that?

Admiral STUDEMAN. Yes, Senator, those were fronts to be able to keep watch on the Chinese diaspora, and be able to—

Chair SULLIVAN. Like, physical buildings of Chinese communist officials in New York keeping track of American citizens?

Admiral STUDEMAN. That's right.

Chair SULLIVAN. You've got to be kidding me.

Admiral STUDEMAN [continuing]. To apply pressure points on Chinese to behave, and those who maybe were considered too oppositional, to be able to deal with those.

Chair SULLIVAN. Well, those kinds of things, if we can get more specifics. If the average American knew about that—again, Democrat, Republican, doesn't matter. You know, we're a free country, and we should not have the gosh darn Chinese Communist Party trying to intimidate Americans on our soil. No way.

Let me give you another example. It's a bill I had with Senator Warren, to give you a sense of the bipartisan nature of this. Last year, when Senator Merkley was talking about effective strategy, our bill said if there's evidence of the Chinese Communist Party trying to manipulate American elections—again, they would never stand for elections; they're going to manipulate our democracy—then our intel agencies—you know a lot about this, Admiral—will do everything we can to get out all the information we can, break down the Chinese firewall, which we probably can do, on how corrupt all the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is. And let the Chinese people know about that.

I mean, I think Xi Jinping's sister is a billionaire. Hmm, how'd that happen? So let the Chinese—you want to mess with our democracy? Here you go. What do you think about that? We need to go on offense here. I mean, these guys are coming after our democracy. And we've got the goods on them. We can let people in China know just how corrupt their leaders are. What do you think about something like that? That was a bill that Senator Warren and I had, very bipartisan. You know, she and I represent different wings of our parties—or we kind of do. But what do you think of

something like that? A little bit of offense here. Why are we the punching bag?

Admiral STUDEMAN. Senator, I agree with your sentiments on all this, and the passion. And I wish more people felt it and were able to be empowered to get after it. We were able to set up, in the intelligence community, a Foreign Malign Influence Center. It began with Russian election interference. It needs to grow and expand.

Chair SULLIVAN. Yes. Same thing. Putin's one of the richest guys in the world. Let the Russian people know that. How'd he get that way? He stole it from his people. You think that would be helpful, though?

Admiral STUDEMAN. I think that the Foreign Malign Influence Center that is witting to all levels of classification and knows what we should know about what's happening should compile it. They should synthesize. They should analyze it. And they should be reporting on it. And not just within classified circles. I believe we need to be better at selective disclosure of classified cases that you're talking about, while still protecting sources and methods, which we can do. We need to get this stuff exposed so that more people are aware.

Chair SULLIVAN. By the way, we made this code. This wouldn't be disinformation. We're just getting out the truth. If all these Chinese Communist Party leaders are all multimillionaires and billionaires, where'd they get that? They stole it from their people. Putin, he's one of the richest guys in the world. How'd he get that? He stole it from his people. That's not a lie. That's not misinformation. That's just getting the facts out. I think we need to do a much better job of going on offense here, particularly when we're being attacked.

Let me ask one final question. And Admiral, I'm going to ask you, because you know a lot about the history. It's just astounding to me how well treated—it's kind of the Hollywood issue. I try to read a lot about Chinese history. And one thing that comes back to me all the time is how Mao Zedong was literally responsible for policies that killed, I don't know, you make the estimate, 50, 60, 70 million people, of his citizens. Killed them. And had some of the most bizarre policies such as the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution; these were just unmitigated disasters.

And yet you have Xi Jinping modeling everything he does on Mao Zedong. That would be like a German chancellor modeling everything they do on Hitler. Why do you think that never comes out? Why do you think our media, our history—what's with this kid glove treatment with Mao Zedong's legacy? I mean, he killed more Chinese than any other foreign power probably ever. And yet he's still lauded, his portrait's up in the middle of Beijing. What do you think we can do with that, if anything?

Admiral STUDEMAN. I agree that we need to highlight Chinese history and to be able to describe exactly what the long arc of the CCP has really been for the Chinese people, and those mistakes that could be made again given that system but now on a global scale.

Chair SULLIVAN. Let me ask one other point that you'll know a lot about. We always talk about Taiwan in terms of China's territorial aggression. But you may have seen this New York Times ar-

ticle—very good—they recently had a very deep dive intel report from the Russian KGB, or whatever they call themselves now. And it was a whole document on how the Russian intel services are worried that China is going to start trying to get back land that Russia took from them in the 19th century. You know, China used to have territorial domination of the Korean Peninsula. Do you think that, as the Chinese Communist Party gets stronger, that they're going to view their territorial ambitions not just with regard to Taiwan, which we know is obvious, but with regard to Russia, where they share a huge border? With regard to Vietnam, with regard to Korea, with regard to the whole nine-dash line and the South China Sea?

Who's safe in Asia if the Communist Party of China looks at its history saying, We owned that once, we owned this area once, we owned part of Korea once, we owned part of Russia once? Where is their limiting principle? Because the Russians clearly—I know we have Xi Jinping and Putin always hanging out together. But the Russian intel services are thinking, We need to start protecting Russian territory because China is coming for us next. You think that helps us, to get that word out that they're so aggressive they're going to be marching on all their neighbors—not just Taiwan—here soon?

Admiral STUDEMAN. I think that China has been expanding its strategic spaces. It considers these to be buffers or areas of influence that they've long held, you know, rights to be able to influence, just like we might have a Monroe Doctrine here in the United States. At the same time, if you take a look 360 degrees along every border area of China, if you go to Ladakh, or Sikkim, or Bhutan, or Nepal, or Arunachal Pradesh, it's not just the South China Sea, it's not just increased pressure in Southeast Asia, or Taiwan, East China Sea. This is a full 360-degree issue—

Chair SULLIVAN. Where they're pushing.

Admiral STUDEMAN [continuing]. Where they are pushing where they can, very opportunistic here, and trying to do so slowly, in a creeping fashion. But this is the nature of the CCP—expand and control to protect, ultimately, their regime and themselves.

Chair SULLIVAN. Great. Thank you very much. And I appreciate, again, the witnesses. Great job, Mr. Chairman. This is great work that we're all going to be doing in a bipartisan, bicameral way. If you have time, can you get us some specifics about acts on American soil, against Americans? I think the American people really would want to know about that. And some of the actions we need to take to say, You're coming to mess with us? All right. We're a big country. We've got our own methods to make this very painful for you. I think we need to do a little bit more on offense. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Co-chair SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership and for an excellent hearing.

Let me just ask a couple final questions before we close. You know, in March 2024, we all recall that Hsiao Bi-khim, who was then vice president-elect, had an incident where in the Czech Republic there was an attempt to foment a car accident, which is something that happens so often here—Wei Jingsheng, so many

others have had it. But in this case it was obviously Taiwan-related, and the Czech intel community mitigated that threat. But my question, first question, is how much coordination do we have with other countries on the threat to the diaspora and to others, especially now, with Taiwan, with our allies?

I remember when Liu Xiaobo got the Nobel Peace Prize. I led the effort in Congress to give three people in China—Chen Guangcheng, Gao Xingjian, Liu Xiaobo—to award them the Peace Prize. We had multiple signers. Liu Xiaobo got it, the first Chinese person ever to get it. They wouldn't allow him to go, as we all know. They kept him in prison. They wouldn't allow his wife to go. He eventually died of cancer when they wouldn't even give him assistance in terms of medical aid. But my big takeaway from talking to lawmakers who were there, and I know a lot of them in Europe, was the worry about retaliation by the Chinese Communist Party for having awarded him that very prestigious award.

I was kind of shocked. We should be lauding him and saying, Here's the model for China. He wanted slow reform. He was part of the Charter 08 effort, as we all remember. Just a tremendous man. And yet there was almost an apologetic view being taken. Well, you know, we've got to contain this, otherwise we'll have an economic downside. And I heard it from a lot of my colleagues because I have chaired the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly here for decades—I'm now the special rep for trafficking.

But I heard it. I had friends there. They told me that. I won't name names, it was off the record, but it was like a consistent concern. In other words, the Chinese Communist Party is doing a good job in intimidating even governments who aren't standing firm against them. So how well do we coordinate with them? Is there a country, or countries that you would put at the top—the U.K. or others—that are doing a good job in standing with Taiwan? I know we are, but I don't think we do enough either, no matter who's in the White House. But we need to do more.

Second, what role, in your view, does higher education play in human rights and democracy in Taiwan here in this country? I had a series of hearings on Confucius Centers. I had the chancellor of NYU come and testify at one of my hearings and took him to task. Very nice guy, very civil. I even invited myself, and he accommodated that, to go to the Beijing campus of NYU to give a human rights speech. And I did it. And he was very good to allow that to happen. But I said, you know, when they buy your entire campus and they kind of pick who comes and gets the imprimatur of a prestigious organization like NYU, how does that affect your teaching? You know, can anyone talk about the Dalai Lama here? Can anybody talk about human rights abuse? Can anybody talk about Taiwan?

So my question is, how well or poorly are our universities doing? And Confucius Centers, in my opinion, were one of the worst things—soft power, Chinese Communist Party. There were so many hearings on it. I couldn't believe it. There were hearings over here on the Senate side as well, which were great. And it was all to say, stop it. You know, they're watching the diaspora. They're delivering a message that is precooked in Beijing as to what they should say. And they're also keeping a sharp eye on the students

that are visiting here. So how are they doing? And on the international side, are we coordinating with these other nations, the State Department? You know, the former chairman here was Marco Rubio. Nobody knows China like he does. He's got a lot on his plate lately—but it would be a great thing for us to better coordinate, if we're not already, with our allies.

Peter.

Mr. MATTIS. The U.S. Government can speak for itself in many respects. What I would highlight are a couple of useful features about this. The first is the legislative discussions, the inter-parliamentary conversations. And it got sort of a kick-up with the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, founded in June 2020. And that's brought together dozens of countries, dozens of legislatures, and an expert network associated with it, to bring information and briefings to, I think it's roughly 40 countries, give or take. And so that's one way in which you have democracies sharing. The summit for IPAC last year was hosted in Taiwan, in Taipei. I believe one of the staff directors was at that event.

And I would point out—you, yourself, chaired a hearing on this with the CECC in December 2017—one of the very, very first to draw attention to these issues. So this parliamentary piece of it is key. And it is really the democratic countries around the world. And it's not just European. It's not just North America. You have them in Asia and Africa, Latin America, where you find people trying to step up and share.

The second is that in the NGO network that was there, of researchers, of analysts—I can tell you from my own experience that 12, 13 years ago, there were about five of us worldwide. That's not what it looks like today. There are dozens. How do we know about the overseas police stations in New York, in Texas, some of the other places where these centers were? Because of a European NGO that chose to research and dig into this. And we're all friends. We all talk. And it's gone from just a handful, you know, a workshop, to you can't fit them all, even in, say, the Cannon building, you know, the Speaker Pelosi Hearing Room.

And if you're going to pick out some specific countries that have really been above and beyond what's there, I think one of the first ones is the Czech Republic, simply because they have an intellectual tradition of understanding communism, and they haven't forgotten. They have an intuitive grasp of what these problems are, and they've sort of naturally built connections with Taiwan that said, This is important; we understand this. I think Lithuania in the Baltics is another one that has recognized the value that's there. Some of the other NATO countries on the eastern flank have found it useful, for example, to talk with the Taiwanese about runway repair, because there's an issue there.

But I don't think you have a really strong tier of a lot of countries that have really pushed really hard. And it goes kind of in line with different governments. Australia has played a critical role in terms of both its government and its civil society in bringing awareness and sharing these issues. But again, I think governments have been a little more inconsistent. But you've seen this body of researchers, this body of journalists that are now prepared

to report on and discuss this in a way that just wasn't possible, even when you held that first hearing in 2017.

Ms. WONG. Just a quick response to your question about the role of higher education. I think in terms of university responses you can separate it between the response of the administration versus responses of faculty. And I know my colleagues in the China field who are aware of these issues of transnational repression and the complexities and the implications of freedom of speech—I think individually faculty have attempted to address these issues and create a safe space for Chinese students on campus, and to sort of ensure that there is still academic freedom around Taiwan, and Xinjiang, and other issues.

I think in many university administrations in the United States and elsewhere, there is a lot of financial concern due to reliance on Chinese students for revenue, or getting donations, and research institutes funded by donors with links to the CCP. And I think that has impaired a more systematic knowledge-sharing coordination to address these issues of academic freedom, freedom of speech, and transnational repression on campuses. So I think there definitely needs to be more done at the administration level to address these issues.

Admiral STUDEMAN. I agree with my fellow panelists. I think they covered both of those topics well.

Co-chair SMITH. Okay. I think we need to do more to—just like we try to hold corporate America to account, and this Commission has done yeoman's work on that, to continue the work with our academics. I'll never forget, in my first term here, 1982, a man broke a story who was going for his doctorate at Stanford. He broke the news about the one-child-per-couple policy and the heavy reliance on forced abortion to achieve it. And a couple years later, I offered amendments on the floor, that passed, to defund those organizations that were enabling that. He lost his Stanford credentials. And, as a matter of fact, the Wall Street Journal did a piece called "Stanford Morality" and got behind this researcher who broke that story. "60 Minutes" did a piece on it. "Nova" did a piece on it. And Stanford didn't see clear. They said, Oh, you're going to hurt our access. So we need to continue, I think, that positive pressure on our higher education. And that was 40-plus years ago, and unfortunately I think it continues to this day.

I thank you very much, all of you, for your testimony, for your leadership. And I ask unanimous consent that the record be kept open for seven business days to allow members to submit additional written questions for the witnesses, and for the witnesses to revise and extend their remarks. No objection, so ordered. I want to thank all of today's witnesses for your time and, above all, for your wisdom. Hearing's adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:17 p.m., the hearing was concluded.]

A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENTS

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FAN YUN

Chair Sullivan, Co-chair Smith, and CECC members, thank you for having me as a witness today. I would also like to thank the U.S. Congress and Administration for your longstanding bipartisan support for Taiwan.

Last fall, our national baseball team won the World Baseball Softball Confederation's Premier 12 Championship. But our players were not allowed to wear jerseys bearing our country's name, nor could they proclaim our country's name in public. After hitting a decisive three-run home run, our team's captain pointed to the blank space on his jersey where "Taiwan" should be, celebrating the name that cannot be named.

This is the reality we live with—constantly being silenced by the PRC. However, enduring such political warfare has also built up our capacity to resist.

As the title of this public hearing suggests, in addition to growing military threats and economic coercion, the PRC's political warfare against Taiwan has also escalated. Their tactics include manipulation of international laws, "united front work" activities, espionage, infiltration, and disinformation campaigns.

In terms of lawfare, the PRC has twisted U.N. Resolution 2758 for political propaganda in the international arena. They not only aim to suppress Taiwan's participation in various international organizations but also seek to legitimize the use of force to annex Taiwan.

In addition, the PRC has intensified its united front and infiltration efforts within Taiwan.

According to our National Security Bureau, the number of espionage indictments in 2024 was four times higher than in 2021—rising from 16 to 64. Targets include the military, the Parliament, both the ruling party and the opposition, and civic groups. The PRC has even recruited gangsters to build an armed support network all over Taiwan.

The PRC has also established united front organizations in Taiwan to invite religious groups, village chiefs, and college students on heavily subsidized trips to China. For college students, there are special programs attracting young Taiwanese to study, work, or start businesses in China. These activities aim to integrate them into China's economy and eventually come to view China's politics and culture in a positive light.

After last year's elections, the two major opposition parties formed a majority voting bloc in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan. After their electoral victory, the caucus leader of the Kuomintang (KMT), the leading opposition party, led 17 of its lawmakers, nearly one-third of the entire caucus, to visit China and meet Chinese officials. Shortly thereafter, the KMT, along with the TPP, rushed to push through a series of unconstitutional bills, prevented the national security legal amendments from proceeding to a first reading, and froze or slashed the national defense budget without proper justification. Many Taiwanese believe these actions show how pro-China forces are exploiting Taiwan's democratic mechanisms to undermine both its sovereignty and democracy.

In terms of disinformation, our National Security Bureau reported that messages with China's influence increased from 1.3 million in 2023 to 2.2 million in 2024, being spread through newspapers and TV stations, as well as social media platforms such as TikTok. According to think tank GTI, some media outlets have received direct instructions from the CCP's Taiwan Affairs Office regarding news coverage and editorial commentary. The PRC also funds Taiwanese influencers to produce content in China that aligns with its political agenda.

What's the goal of the PRC's political warfare? First, it seeks to distort the world's understanding of Taiwan, specifically by framing cross-strait conflicts as a "domestic issue" to isolate Taiwan. Second, the PRC works to erode the Taiwanese people's confidence in the United States. A recent poll found that TikTok users in Taiwan are more likely to view China favorably, and more likely to believe that a pro-USA

government might provoke war. This is a clear sign that the disinformation is influencing TikTok users, most of whom are young people. Third, by spreading false narratives, the PRC aims to make the Taiwanese either lose confidence in their government or disengage from politics. Potentially, these actions can ultimately lead people to lose the motivation and willpower to defend our democracy.

As to “transnational repression,” recently the PRC released an “investigation report,” claiming that Taiwan’s military conducted cyberattacks against China. They publicized the names of 20 Taiwanese military officers and threatened them with arrest warrants and judicial punishment. Last month, the PRC launched a first-ever large-scale disinformation campaign to attack a DPP legislator, Puma Shen, who was advocating for tightened national security legislation.

These transnational attacks against members of the military and the government, including the planned car collision targeting then-VP-elect Hsiao in Czechia, are tactics the PRC is using to intimidate the Taiwanese, making clear the cost they will have to bear if they dare to resist China.

How is Taiwan countering these threats? It takes cooperation between the government and civil society. In addition to raising the national defense budget to a historic high, President Lai adopted a “whole-of-society Defense Resilience Strategy,” aimed at strengthening the civil defense capacity. To counter the united front, he has proposed further national security reforms to enhance our resilience against China’s united front and infiltration tactics.

To tackle disinformation, all government agencies are asked to rapidly respond to misleading information. More importantly, many NGOs have created independent fact-checking websites as well as tools that can be embedded in apps.

For the cognitive warfare aiming to affect the young generation, the Ministry of Education is developing teaching materials about “Understanding China.” It aims to teach students how to critically assess Chinese propaganda.

In a highly polarized politics, the effort of the ruling government alone is insufficient. Luckily, Taiwan has a robust civil society with a strong will to defend democracy.

I had the honor of serving as the Chief Commander of the Wild Lily Student Movement, calling for the democratic election of our parliament. Decades later, as a professor in 2014, I was even prouder to be part of the Sunflower Movement, witnessing the younger generations successfully opposing deeper economic integration with China. Through struggles like these, our society has built a strong democratic tradition.

Even now, as I am speaking, Taiwan is in the middle of an unprecedented mass recall campaign launched by civic volunteer groups. The vote will take place this coming Saturday. Thirty-one of the KMT’s 36 elected district legislators are facing bottom-up recall, because many Taiwanese believe these lawmakers have forgotten that the KMT used to be an anti-Communist party.

As Taiwanese, we know that our freedom did not fall from the sky. Generations of Taiwanese have fought and made sacrifices for our democracy. We are working very hard to prevent a war from happening. However, Taiwan alone will not be enough to deter China’s aggression. As you must all be aware, Taiwan’s security is not only critical to the stability of the region, but also key to the global economy. Standing with Taiwan, we can work together to protect our shared values, prosperity, and the rules-based global order.

Thank you all for your time and support.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL W. STUDEMAN,
REAR ADMIRAL, U.S. NAVY (RET.)

Good morning Chairman Sullivan, Co-chairman Smith, and distinguished members of this Commission. I am Mike Studeman, a retired two-star admiral with 35 years of service as an intelligence officer. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss PRC political warfare against Taiwan, how Taiwan is dealing with it, and what more to do about it.

The views expressed in my testimony are my own and do not represent any organization I am currently or previously affiliated with as a retired officer or as a former active-duty member of the military.

In terms of my background, my last four assignments before I retired in 2023 were Commander of the Office of Naval Intelligence, Director of Intelligence (J2) for the Indo-Pacific Command, Director of Intelligence (J2) for the Southern Command, and Commander of the Joint Intelligence Operations Center at U.S. Cyber Command. I have a Master’s in Asian Affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California and studied Mandarin Chinese at the Defense Language Insti-

tute. I served in a variety of intelligence posts around the world and at sea dealing with a range of global geopolitical issues, but also developed substantial experience in China matters across many jobs over decades going back to the late 1990s. I'm currently a MITRE National Security Fellow and advisory board member of the National Bureau of Asian Research.

Strategic Perspective

I'd first offer that political warfare has deep roots in Chinese history, culture, and mindsets. Political warfare is about expanding one's political power at the expense of an opponent's. In 1948, George Kennan defined political warfare as the "employment of all means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives." Given the efficacy of political warfare over millennia in China, Beijing will never desist from using this expression of power to achieve its ambitions. Many nations engage in mild forms of political warfare all the time, but authoritarian states dominated by a history of communist and Marxist-Leninist ideologies have taken political warfare to their Machiavellian extremes, supercharging their states to perfect the dark arts of manipulation and subversion. By subversion, I mean the DoD definition of "actions designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a governing authority." During the Cold War, America dealt with Soviet political warfare that took the form of "active measures," so this type of shadow fighting short of war is not new to the U.S. A central question is how we can learn from our 20th century experiences to guide our individual and collective responses to the 21st century manifestations of tyranny that are now resurging at scale and scope.

A key macro-strategic point to make from the outset is that CCP political warfare is not just happening over there in Taiwan, but globally, including over here in America. China treats every day as a Super Bowl event as they attempt to win influence across the far reaches of the planet. Unfortunately, the American public continues to suffer from chronic inattention blindness to CCP efforts both outside and inside our lifelines, largely due to the co-option of the U.S. entertainment industry by the CCP and the reticence of multiple administrations in the White House to adequately describe the full extent of Chinese malign action in our homeland and beyond. Even while we might assist partners in pushing back against Chinese influence, we will need to address the reality that the CCP's political warfare activities have already gone a long way to psychologically anesthetize the American public, hush business leaders, intimidate scholars and academia, and create an environment of self-censorship on a wide range of clear and present China dangers.

Overarchingly, we would be well served to view political warfare as an infinite game and wicked problem with no permanent winners or losers, no agreed-upon rules, a fluctuating set of players (many unknown), and no finish line. Political warfare does not eschew targeted violence, and agent provocateurs often look like ordinary, unassuming people who live seemingly innocuous lives among us. Infinite games are struggles for advantage that place a premium on flexibility and resilience by an expansive set of players at all levels who must all become adept at dealing with constant fluctuations, ambiguity, and dynamic contestation across multiple domains of influence. To gain the upper hand against adversarial "red" players, "blue" players of all stripes must acknowledge the brutal facts of their existence (understand the nature of the fight we are in, which is Cold War-like) and be reminded that our most evergreen advantages will stem from projecting a better long-range vision for the future than China, developing trust-centered partnerships, and committing to just causes that inspire others to voluntarily work together to advance the higher purposes of freedom, dignity, truth, peace, equality, justice, and self-determination.

PRC Political Warfare on Taiwan

The CCP seeks to degrade the political order in Taiwan, sow divisions, undermine its democratic institutions, strengthen CCP sympathizers and pro-unification proxies, increase Taiwan's dependence on the PRC, accentuate historical and cultural ties to bind the Taiwanese to the mainland, and ultimately weaken the will and desire of the Taiwan people to forestall any political takeover by Beijing. Taiwan continues to bear the brunt of Beijing's political warfare efforts, which are relentless, pervasive, and all-encompassing.

The CCP has been engaged in a steady and robust campaign over decades to disintegrate resistance to unification using a combination of carrots and sticks, though its efforts in recent years have dramatically expanded as it attempts to arrest what Beijing sees as alarming strategic trends regarding its core sovereignty issue. Those include Taiwan's growing sense of self-identity (not Chinese), strengthening relations with the U.S., and the third straight win for the Democratic Progressive Party,

now represented by President Lai Ching-te, a vocal advocate for asserting that Taiwan is already an independent sovereign nation.

As with many other decisions, Xi Jinping has shown he is the chief engineer of his own crises. Beijing refuses to see that its prolific rhetoric about “reunifying” Taiwan, including Xi’s statements about not leaving the Taiwan problem for future generations and directing the PLA to be ready to take Taiwan by 2027, combined with its actions to rapidly modernize its military and conduct Taiwan invasion exercises and blockade rehearsals, created the catalyzing events that fundamentally changed the status quo over Taiwan. CCP choices drove Taipei to self-strengthen and seek outside help to ward off CCP-initiated threats. Regardless, Beijing is now using even sharper power pressure tactics that continue to increase in frequency, diversity, complexity, and intensity, exacting significant (punitive) costs on Taiwan and destabilizing the Western Pacific.

China’s political stratagems and cognitive warfare against Taiwan, including the use of the Three Warfares (public opinion, media, and legal warfare), are well covered in a variety of scholarly works. I defer to John Dotson’s written testimony for this session to better understand specific methods and tactics the CCP employs. I commend his authorship of the Global Taiwan Institute report titled “The Chinese Communist Party’s Political Warfare Directed Against Taiwan: Overview and Analysis” from May 2024. Jukka Aukia also published a detailed report relevant to this commission from the Hybrid CoE titled “China’s Hybrid Influence in Taiwan: Non-State Actors and Policy Responses” from April 2023. A January 2021 CSIS report called “Protecting Democracy in an Age of Disinformation: Lessons from Taiwan” is also relevant and useful.

To summarize, the CCP’s political warfare efforts are a highly orchestrated, interconnected, and multi-tiered set of activities that include so-called white, gray, and black elements: White, or overt means, involve CCP diplomatic and economic actions, official statements and state-controlled media propaganda, military operations, and trade relations that are used as levers of influence.

Gray, or semi-overt means, involve law enforcement and militia encroachments in the maritime space, the use of foreign media and advanced information technology tools including algorithms and bots to propagate and reinforce disinformation, funding and manipulation of political parties and front groups, discounted junkets for politicians, academics, journalists, and students to visit China (who are then subjected to influence by CCP United Front representatives), temple donations and cultural exchanges, and co-option of social media influencers and entertainment celebrities, to name a few.

Black, or covert means, involve agents emplaced for the purposes of espionage, influence, and/or sabotage, recruitment of former security force personnel, use of ghost fleet vessels to damage Taiwan infrastructure, establishment of sleeper cells and weapons caches, offensive cyber operations, computer network exploitation, and activation of criminal groups such as the Triads in Taiwan for various purposes ranging from harassment to potential assassinations. For Taiwan, there is no ability to distinguish between benign and malign Chinese actions. CCP infiltrations and co-option are legion. Every connection, relationship, arrangement, communication, and interaction has proven to serve as a possible threat vector for CCP influence and interference.

It is also worth pointing out that many Chinese, out of loyalty to the CCP party line of “reunification,” which most now truly believe is a necessary part of China’s so-called “rejuvenation,” contribute in pressuring Taiwan at many levels even without specific instructions from a Chinese government official. Chinese diaspora, whether now living in Taiwan or in other nations, voluntarily contribute commentary in social media, add to a climate of intimidation, and shape anti-Taiwan opinions and choices within their circles of influence.

Taiwan’s Measures to Protect Itself Against Political Warfare

Taiwan has proven remarkably resilient in the face of the CCP’s incessant political warfare onslaught; however, in the face of rampant CCP actions to disrupt, corrupt, and usurp power on Taiwan, Taipei’s leaders knew they needed to strengthen its overall defense and security posture and raise the costs of doing business for those complicit in subversive activities. In March 2025, President Lai announced 17 strategies to address five major threats posed by China: threats to Taiwan’s sovereignty, military infiltration,

obscuring national identity, societal infiltration through cross-strait exchanges, and economic coercion. The president defined his multi-faceted strategy as follows:

1. Responding to Threats to National Sovereignty

1. Promote the *Four Pillars of Peace* action plan to demonstrate Taiwan's resolve against annexation by China.
2. Collaborate with allies to convey Taiwan's opposition to China's efforts to erase its sovereignty internationally.

2. Responding to Military Infiltration and Espionage

1. Restore the military trial system to handle cases involving active-duty personnel suspected of treason or espionage.
2. Establish personnel management acts for military judges and separate organization acts for military courts and prosecutors.
3. Revise regulations for retirement benefits and penalties for expressions of loyalty to China by military personnel.

3. Responding to Threats Against National Identity

1. Enhance scrutiny of Taiwanese citizens applying for identification documents in China, especially military personnel, civil servants, and educators.
2. Implement stricter requirements for Chinese nationals applying for permanent residency in Taiwan, prohibiting dual identity status.
3. Adjust residency systems for individuals from Hong Kong or Macau with additional provisions for long-term residency.

4. Responding to United Front Infiltration Through Cross-Strait Exchanges

1. Raise public awareness about risks associated with travel to China and implement registration systems.
2. Establish a disclosure system for exchanges with China involving public officials and welfare organizations.
3. Restrict approval for Chinese individuals coming to Taiwan based on their united front history and cross-strait conditions.
4. Depoliticize cultural, academic, and educational exchanges while promoting healthy cross-strait interactions.
5. Enhance support for Taiwan's cultural industries to strengthen democratic cultural creation and competitiveness.
6. Provide entertainers with guidelines on conduct in China and address actions that endanger Taiwan's dignity.

5. Responding to Economic Coercion

1. Strengthen measures against cognitive warfare and cybersecurity threats via AI, internet applications, and other tools.
2. Conduct a comprehensive review of administrative ordinances related to national security enforcement.
3. Implement legal frameworks to address gaps in regulations ensuring effective enforcement of national security measures.

Other notable Taiwan measures to protect itself include the updating of Taiwan's National Security Law in 2022, which included more severe penalties for colluding with adversaries and tighter scrutiny on individuals and organizations with ties to China. Criminal penalties have been imposed for economic espionage and trade secret misappropriation in various crucial technology areas.

Political actors and parties are prohibited from receiving mainland funding, and dual nationals who have the right to live and work in the PRC have been banned from running for office. Political parties are now required to issue annual financial statements meeting official standards. A regulatory framework has also been created to oversee private foundations that receive money.

Taiwan is increasingly investigating and prosecuting more espionage-related cases (64 in 2024, up from 16 in 2021) with perpetrators, including retired and active-duty officers, receiving multi-year prison sentences. In 2022 and 2023, Taiwan authorities reportedly broke up 11 spy rings. In a breathtaking case, Taiwan arrested a former three-star Army general for planning to create a "Fifth Column" sabotage unit designed to assist the PLA in militarily seizing Taiwan. In another example, four soldiers who worked in the Presidential palace and who were paid to collect intelligence were also caught and arrested.

Beyond jail time and fines, the 2002 National Security Law amendments added loss of pension penalties to military personnel, civil servants, teachers, and employees of state-owned institutions for illegal activities aimed at assisting the PRC. Amendments to Taiwan's Criminal Code of the Armed Forces are being considered regarding penalties for expressing loyalty to the enemy or involvement in pro-China united front work. Military courts with prosecutors are being revived. The time after leaving the government has also been lengthened before public officials can visit the mainland. Taiwan is stiffening accountability and sending a message about the price of working or profiting as a CCP shill.

To address the growing threat of cyberattacks and infiltration, Taiwan plans to establish a National Cyber Security Command as early as next month (August 2025), which will add an operational arm to map Taiwan cyber vulnerabilities, identify threats, coordinate across government and private industry and build resilience in Taiwan's critical infrastructure and key industries. The new command will work in tandem with the National Institute of Cybersecurity, which was established in 2023 to advance domestic digital resilience. These two organizations look to the Administration for Cyber Security under the Ministry of Digital Affairs (MODA) for Taiwan's national cybersecurity strategy, regulatory framework, and resource allocation. Taiwan is also implementing zero-trust architectures and examining AI safety and quantum technologies, as well as other techniques, to help deal with current and future intellectual property theft, ransomware, deep fakes, and automated cyber assaults. Taiwan is one of the most cyber-afflicted places on Earth with tens of millions of attacks per month originating from PRC state-based and patriotic hackers.

Notably, Taiwan has made significant strides in devising a strategy to counter the worst of the CCP's disinformation efforts. Taiwan has a small number of non-governmental fact-checking organizations that help invalidate fake news, expose forged documents, and discredit the firehose of falsehoods from mainland China. Regulations were established in 2018 and 2019 to punish those disseminating disinformation that is proven malicious, false, and harmful, although attribution in those cases remains difficult. The Ministry of Digital Affairs has helped institute government procedures and software to identify any trending disinformation in social media circles and nip it in the bud by performing instantaneous corrections. Government agencies created Civic Integrity Teams that are authorized to provide rapid, brief clarifications to debunk any social media distortions related to their mission. In general, Taiwan is on higher alert for any PRC attempts to create "infodemics" that could generate "affective polarization," fabrications curated to evoke emotional responses and drive wedges between Taiwan citizens, especially around election periods. Fortunately, Taiwan government credibility was burnished during the COVID years as they consistently provided prompt, reliable, and life-saving guidance to the public.

The Ministry of Justice Investigations Bureau has also established a nascent Cognitive Warfare Research Center designed to unveil and prosecute CCP collaborators, "useful idiots," and those in Taiwan who might cause public panic, maliciously stir up discontent with the government on controversial issues, manipulate the social atmosphere through content farms, defame government officials through deep-fake videos, or mislead voters with fabricated political commentary. The burden of proof and supporting evidence has proven such a high threshold that few prosecutions have been carried through on these issues to date.

On the economic side, although still a vulnerability that the CCP frequently exploits (for example, by calibrating bans on Taiwan agriculture, fruit, and petrochemical products), Taiwan has also been diversifying its supply chains and markets away from China to reduce Beijing's leverage. In 2010, 84 percent of Taiwan's outbound foreign direct investment went to China. In 2024, only 8 percent of Taiwan's FDI went to China. Taiwan's New Southbound Policy, which was initiated in 2016, continues to redirect business into Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Taiwanese businessmen have also reduced their presence in mainland China; less than half reside there compared to 15 years ago (approximately 175,000 remain).

In addition, Taiwan has instituted export control measures to restrict trade with certain approved countries and listed entities, especially related to advanced chips and China. The Foreign Trade Act forms the legal basis for managing the trade of Strategic High-Tech Commodities (SHTC). Exports of SHTCs require special permission. Violations of export controls can lead to criminal or administrative penalties, depending on the destination and severity. Taiwan has also adopted a control measure to strengthen checks on end-uses and end-users of such commodities. Taiwan effectively has a system for two-way screening for both inward and outward investments.

Chinese information and communications technology from the likes of Huawei, Alibaba, and Lenovo have been banned. Penalties for falsifying country-of-origin labels to hide Chinese imports have also become more severe.

Other efforts designed to address PRC malign influence include the February 2025 decision by the Taiwan Ministry of Education to bar two PRC schools affiliated with the United Front Work Department from conducting exchanges in Taiwan. The Ministry also barred any exchanges with the “Seven Sons of National Defense,” PRC universities that traditionally funnel technology and graduates to the PLA. On top of this, the Ministry of Education supports media literacy training for Taiwan youth to help them become more discerning consumers of information.

Commonsense yet long-overdue decisions have also been made. In 2024, the Taiwan Mainland Affairs Council banned Taiwan citizens from working at the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots (ACFTC), which had been composed mainly of Taiwan residents of the PRC whose official aim is Chinese unification.

Perhaps the most significant political effort underway to stop the PRC from using KMT proxies in the Legislative Yuan to undermine the DPP government and the executive branch (for example, by withholding funding for defense for months) is an election recall for a number of members of parliament. Recall results will come in two waves over the next 2 months. The recall process is complicated in Taiwan, but if the DPP can take back six seats in the legislative body, they will regain the majority and thwart persistent KMT spoiler actions designed to weaken the presidency and many of Lai’s policies and spending priorities related to national security. The pro-unification wing of the KMT stands to be exposed, shamed, and penalized for its deep connections with the CCP if many of Lai’s new accountability measures are successfully implemented, which explains some internal political resistance to some of his ideas.

In the summer of 2024, President Lai also established a Whole-of-Society Defense Resilience Committee chaired by the President. The committee involves representatives from government agencies, industry and civil society groups, along with leading experts across multiple sectors to help strengthen resilience under any conditions—peacetime, crisis, or war—in Taiwan. Six major thrusts include: (1) civilian force training and utilization, (2) strategic material preparation and critical supply distribution, (3) energy and critical infrastructure operations and maintenance, (4) social welfare, medical care, and evacuation facility readiness, (5) information, transportation, and financial network protection, and (6) continuity of leadership and ensuring the ability of leaders to strategically communicate in a crisis.

Taiwan is also building up defense capabilities that range from expanding manufacturing for unmanned systems, extending reservist training time, conducting more realistic exercises such as the currently underway Han Kuang 41 annual exercises, evaluating stockpiling options, and strengthening civil defense cooperation in a variety of areas. Taiwan is also evaluating or implementing new concepts related to littoral warfare, integration of unmanned and manned systems to create a more hybrid force, and defense in depth to include deep operations, urban warfare, and whole of society defense. The Minister of National Defense’s strategic priorities include improving asymmetric capabilities, operational resilience, reserve forces, and countering gray zone activities. President Lai has also committed to spending more than 3 percent of Taiwan’s GDP on defense, up from approximately 2.5 percent.

Recommendations on How the U.S. Can Help Taiwan

I would first point out that while the U.S. should consider expanding ways that it supports Taiwan, many of Taiwan’s resiliency efforts that are already in place or in motion contain lessons for the U.S. and other allies and partners in how to confront endemic CCP political warfare and influence activities on their own soil.

An executive list of those areas where further advancements and cooperation might strengthen Taiwan:

- Strategically, help reduce Taiwan’s international isolation, including by using U.S. influence to encourage Taiwan admission to international bodies, programs, and projects that do not require statehood status.
- Further encourage Taiwan to spend more of its GDP on defense.
- Build in more opportunities for Taiwan to expand its Global Cooperation and Training Framework, which was established in 2015 to foster international partnerships on public health, law enforcement, cybersecurity, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, and media literacy. Consider adding Taiwan training for the international community on China’s political warfare doctrine, tools, practices, and lessons in how to counter them.
- Support deeper Taiwan and U.S. cooperation on cyber defense, cybersecurity operator training, development of hunt teams, incident response lessons on foreign

adversary tactics, and sharing of emerging malware/zero-day vulnerabilities and advanced persistent threat techniques. Regularize Taiwan Ministry of Digital Affairs, U.S. Cyber Command, and Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) coordination to increase resilience of Taiwan's critical infrastructure.

- Help Taiwan upgrade its classified clearance system, including reviewing classification categories, special access program procedures, sponsorship, background investigative vetting, adjudication procedures, continuous evaluation standards, and an associated law enforcement regime strict enough to enhance transparency and accountability for protecting sensitive information and dealing with unauthorized disclosures or other breaches of trust.
- Encourage Taiwan to adopt more stringent insider threat technologies across all sectors of society (but especially in government/security organizations and defense industries) using a number of world-class vendors that provide advanced user behavior analytics, user activity monitoring, and data loss prevention software, which can protect privacy while rapidly identifying concerning actions that deserve timely remediation and action.
- Cooperate with Taiwan on ways to improve procedures for selective disclosures of sensitive or classified cases of CCP political warfare activities to further expose PRC malign action and heighten global awareness of the threat.
- Help Taiwan develop a stricter, but fair-minded regulatory and liability framework over media outlets that act as mouthpieces for CCP propaganda and disinformation.
- Ensure that evolving Ukrainian lessons learned from the fight against Russian aggression in Europe promptly flow to Taiwan, facilitated as required by the best partner nations with insight and access to those lessons.
- Continue to help Taiwan develop and mature its Defense Innovation Office and related defense acquisition processes to help them streamline fielding of new defensive capabilities. Share process, authority, funding, and organizational lessons from the U.S. Defense Innovation Unit and other DoD Rapid Capabilities Offices in order to help Taiwan more rapidly adopt, experiment, and field a family of diverse systems needed on the battlefield soonest.
- Restore funding and organizational support for American public diplomacy and strategic messaging efforts in the Department of State and across the government to enable the U.S. information instrument to highlight Chinese and Russian ambitions, strategies, tactics, and actions designed to undermine key pillars of U.S. and Western strength. Reverse cuts and firings to critical organizations like the Agency for Global Media, which must address these issues through essential programs such as the Voice of America and Radio Free Asia and Europe. Reverse reductions in the U.S. Foreign Service that threaten to cede more diplomatic and information space to American adversaries to grow their influence at our expense.
- Issue a congressional mandate to the U.S. Intelligence Community to produce an annual threat assessment on Chinese and Russian political warfare similar to the annual DIA China Military Power report. Such a report should increase societal awareness of extant and developing political warfare stratagems and tactics, and compile best practices to address them, drawing from lessons learned from our European and Indo-Pacific allies, Latin American friends, and other partners such as India and Taiwan.



**“Stand with Taiwan: Countering the PRC’s
Political Warfare and Transnational Repression”**

*Hearing before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China
July 23, 2025*

*Prepared Statement by Peter Mattis
President, The Jamestown Foundation*

Thank you Senator Sullivan and Congressman Smith for holding today’s hearing on the political warfare the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is waging against Taiwan and for giving me the opportunity to testify. Many of the same CCP organizations and methods used to pressure Taiwan and squeeze its international space are the same ones used to monitor Chinese diaspora communities, to interfere in foreign political processes, and to steal technology and recruit expertise.

Awareness has grown of the United Front Work Department of the CCP Central Committee in recent years, but the CCP’s concept of united front work remains poorly understood despite its critical role in shaping the Party’s statecraft. As a concept, united front work is about identifying and rallying allies and neutrals to one’s cause, and then using them to isolate one’s adversaries or even to strike at them. Beijing’s political warfare against Taiwan is united front work playing out on a global scale. Just as the CCP is trying to cultivate local Taiwanese politicians to serve its interests on the island, the Party also is cajoling and cultivating countries to support its “One-China Principle” and unification to isolate Taiwan and its partners in the UN system. This is the same playbook that Beijing has employed to legitimize the CCP’s human rights abuses, such as those against Uyghurs, and to push back against any negative implication that the coercive labor transfer programs, the vast prison system, destruction of cultural icons and architecture, and putting Uyghur children in orphanages or state boarding schools are illegitimate or abusive.

I. The CCP’s Ambition and Commitment to Annex Taiwan

The CCP has a longstanding, stated commitment to unification with Taiwan. The Party’s leaders have stated this commitment to do so repeatedly to the Chinese people, foreign governments, and to international organizations. Beijing holds to a “One-China Principle” that relentlessly pushes foreign parties to accept. That principle, as stated in a white paper, “there is only one China in the world,

Taiwan is a part of China, and the government of the PRC is the sole legal government representing the whole of China.” From Mao Zedong to CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping, the rhetoric on Taiwan consistently states the Party’s goal and reinforces the historical inevitability of Beijing’s annexation. Quotes like the following from Xi routinely feature in government communications: “The motherland must be unified, and it inevitably will be.” “The historic trend of national reunification and national rejuvenation is unstoppable. The complete reunification of the motherland must be achieved and will surely be achieved!” (See Table 1 for a selection of quotes.)

The CCP acts as if it already owns Taiwan and that any rhetorical or material support for Taiwan’s sovereignty or that of the Republic of China is a violation of the sovereignty of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). As Hu Jintao put it when discussing his four-point guidelines for Taiwan policy, “Safeguarding state sovereignty and territorial integrity is where a country’s core interest lies. On no account shall the 1.3 billion Chinese people allow anyone to undermine China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

The long-term consistency of Beijing’s position belies the danger of the current moment. Xi Jinping has diverged from his predecessors by emphasizing that Taiwan’s unification cannot be left for future generations. CCP officials also have taken to discussing the resolution of the Taiwan question in Xi’s “new era” construct. The “new era” refers to the new international situation in which Beijing finds itself as one of the world’s two leading powers and capable of deploying comprehensive national power to pressure Taiwan, its supporters, and others to accede to Beijing’s demands. The use of “new era” also can be read as Xi making Taiwan’s annexation a legacy issue. Finally, the U.S. Government made public that Xi gave orders to the CCP’s armed wing, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), to achieve readiness to fight and win a war subjugating Taiwan by 2027.

Table 1. Select Quotes From PRC Leaders	
Name, Title, Location, Date	Quote
Zhou Enlai (Premier) Report to the National People’s Congress July 30, 1955	“The Chinese people have two possible means to liberate Taiwan, namely by war or by peaceful means.”

Lin Biao 9th Party Congress April 1, 1969	“The hundreds of millions of Chinese people and the Chinese People's Liberation Army, armed with Mao Zedong Thought and tempered through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, are determined and full of confidence in victory. They are resolved to liberate their sacred territory of Taiwan and to resolutely, thoroughly, completely, and entirely wipe out any aggressors who dare to invade!”
Zhou Enlai (Premier and Vice chairman) 10th Party Congress August 24, 1973	“Taiwan must be liberated. Our great motherland must be [re-]unified. This is the common aspiration and sacred duty of all the people of our nation, including our compatriots in Taiwan.”
Hua Guofeng (Chairman and Premier) October 1, 1978	“The Chinese people are determined to liberate Taiwan and accomplish the great task of national [re-]unification.”
Deng Xiaoping (Chairman of the CMC) June 22, 23, 1984	“Achieving national [re-]unification is the aspiration of the Chinese nation. If it cannot be accomplished in 100 years, it will be in 1,000 years.”
Zhang Wannian (Vice-chairman of CMC) Interview with U.S. News & World Report October 21, 1995	“If Taiwan declares independence, the PRC will certainly resort to force.”
Chi Haotian (Defense Minister) 70th Anniversary of the PLA Founding Event August 1, 1997	“The PRC would never renounce the use of force, specifically against the Taiwan independence movement, movement to split the motherland, and intervention by foreign forces.”

Zhu Rongji (Premier) Press Conference after the Ninth People's Congress March 15, 1999	"Our consistent approach to resolving the Taiwan issue is 'peaceful [re-]unification and one country, two systems,' but we will never commit to giving up the use of force."
Jiang Zeming (Chairman) Speech at the Celebration of the 80th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China July 2, 2001	"Taiwan's status as a part of China is not subject to change. The Chinese Communists' position on safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity is firm and unwavering."
Hu Jintao (General Secretary) Report at the 18th National Congress November 8, 2012	"Any separatist attempt for Taiwan independence, which undermines the common interests of the compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Straits, is doomed to fail."
An Fensghan (PRC Taiwan Affair Office Spokesperson) Interview with the Wall Street Journal October 6, 2016	"Our position is steadfast on opposing any 'Taiwan-independence' activities. Any forces and any people should not underestimate the resolution of more than 1.3 billion people on the mainland."
Xi Jinping (CCP General Secretary) 90th Anniversary of the PLA Founding Event August 1, 2017	"We will never allow any people, organization, or political party to split any part of Chinese territory from the country at any time, in any form...No one should expect us to swallow bitter fruit that is harmful to our sovereignty, security, or development interests."
Xi Jinping (CCP General Secretary) 19th Party Congress October 18, 2017	"All activities of splitting the motherland will be resolutely opposed by all the Chinese people. We have firm will, full confidence, and sufficient capability to defeat any form of Taiwan independence secession plot. We will never allow any person, any organization, or any political party to split any part of the Chinese territory from China at any time or in any form."

Xi Jinping (CCP General Secretary) Speech at a Meeting Marking the 110th Anniversary of the Revolution of 1911 October 9, 2021	“The Taiwan question arose out of the weakness and chaos of our nation, and it will be resolved as national rejuvenation becomes a reality. This is determined by the general trend of Chinese history, but more importantly, it is the common will of all Chinese people. As Dr. Sun [Yat-sen] said, ‘The tide of history is mighty. Those who follow it will prosper, while those who go against it will perish.’”
Xi Jinping (CCP General Secretary) 20th Party Congress October 22, 2022	“Resolving the Taiwan question and realizing China’s complete [re-]unification is, for the Party, a historic mission and an unshakable commitment. It is also a shared aspiration of all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation and a natural requirement for realizing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”
Xi Jinping (CCP General Secretary) 20th Party Congress October 22, 2022	“The wheels of history are rolling on toward China’s reunification and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Complete [re-]unification of our country must be realized, and it can, without doubt, be realized!”
Xi Jinping (CCP General Secretary) New Year’s Speech December 31, 2023	“The people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are one family. No one can sever our family bonds, and no one can stop the historical trend of national [re-]unification.”

Many people—including many Taiwanese—misread the above statements or dismiss them as meaningless propaganda rather than genuine signals of intent toward Taiwan. Such dismissals are unwarranted. First, many of these statements are given in speeches and documents intended for CCP audiences. They provide policy guidance and the process through which they are produced serve to mobilize the Party around that guidance. That guidance also has repeatedly included statements that the CCP will not renounce the use of force and that the Party reserves the right to use all necessary measures.

Second, the CCP’s treatment of those who it considers Chinese, especially those who do not accept the Party’s right to rule, has been marked by brutality. The CCP has been responsible for tens of

millions of unnatural deaths with a range from 40 to 80 million, counting those who died of famine during the Great Leap Forward.¹ **The Party's so-called "liberation" of Sichuan, Tibet, and East Turkestan (today's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, XUAR) does not suggest that it holds back or rapidly moves toward reconciliation. The Party killed hundreds of thousands of people in the recently conquered territories, and arguably Sichuan suffered more than the minority areas despite having an ethnic Chinese majority. Mao Zedong also unleashed the Chinese people against the central CCP and state bureaucracy in the Cultural Revolution, killing at least another one to two million people. Despite the CCP's record, General Secretary Xi Jinping still brazenly noted that "Chinese people do not fight Chinese people (中国人不打中国人)" in his speech marking the 40th anniversary of the Letter to Taiwan Compatriots.**² It would be fairer and more historically accurate to suggest that no one knows more about fighting Chinese people than the CCP—and no other political party has proven as willing to do so as the CCP.

Third, the CCP has been willing to pay costs far higher than external observers would consider acceptable or rational. Over the last two decades in the XUAR, the CCP has put into place invasive human and technical surveillance systems; processed millions people in the form of incarceration, re-education, and coerced migration; and started re-engineering local society to be more acceptable to CCP norms. The ostensible causes were a few, relatively small terrorist attacks. Internationally, Western observers tend to believe that Vietnam won the 1979 war with the PRC, because of the high casualties inflicted on the People's Liberation Army. Yet, Hanoi learned the political lessons that Beijing wanted Vietnam to learn, and Deng Xiaoping benefitted domestically and in U.S.-PRC relations.

The CCP's clear intentions and threat to annex Taiwan make CCP political warfare against Taiwan far more serious than those operations conducted in the context of a strategic rivalry, such as the contest between the United States and the Soviet Union. Rather than sparring for strategic advantage, the CCP is trying to disrupt Taiwan's political, economic, and social order, to demoralize Taiwanese society, and to isolate Taiwan. Pushing back on the CCP's political warfare requires a society with a shared understanding of the threat, debating how to respond but not debating whether such a threat exists.

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/07/17/how-many-died-new-evidence-suggests-far-higher-numbers-for-the-victims-of-mao-zedongs-era/01044df5-03dd-49f4-a453-a033c5287bce/>

² http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-02/27/c_1124171945.htm

II. The Range of Political Warfare Operations Against Taiwan

The CCP's political warfare against Taiwan is a key strategy in its goal of annexation, complementing its military aggression. It extends beyond traditional intelligence gathering to undermine Taiwan's societal cohesion, institutional integrity, and will to resist. Key components include united front activities, intelligence operations and cyber operations, each serving to shape perceptions, exploit vulnerabilities, and weaken resistance from within.

United Front: Mao Zedong described the purpose of united front work as mobilizing the Party's friends to strike at the Party's enemies. In Taiwan's case, Wang Huning, the head of CPPCC, described the general activities of united front work as "uniting the broad masses of Taiwan compatriots, firmly supporting pro-reunification forces on the island, resolutely cracking down on 'Taiwan independence' provocations, and shaping the momentum toward the inevitable reunification of the motherland."³

The CCP's united front work in Taiwan is broad and far-reaching. It generally falls into four categories: local-level exchanges, youth exchanges, cultural exchanges, and economic exchanges. The CCP uses every available opportunity, whether it's hosting or participating in events, private meetings, or other interactions, to build up the connection and convey the intended messages to the participants.

The following are some recent examples:

- Local-level exchanges: In 2024, delegations from the local city and county councils, including from Penghu and Kinmen, visited the PRC. The head of TAO asked them to "recognize that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one country" and "commit to promoting cross-Strait economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation, and deepening integrated development across various sectors."⁴ A range of other local exchanges took place in 2024, including delegations led by borough chiefs of Taoyuan,⁵ the head of Miaoli County,⁶ and the deputy head of Nantou County.⁷
- Youth: Last week, the Cross-Strait Youth Development Forum was hosted in Hangzhou. The deputy head from the Taiwan Affairs Office encouraged participants to "contribute their youthful energy to the peaceful and integrated development of cross-Strait relations and the cause of national reunification."⁸ It was reported that 700 individuals from Taiwan participated in the event.⁹ Former Chairman of the Kuomintang (KMT) and Chairwoman of

³ http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/headline/202502/t20250226_12686339.htm

⁴ http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/news/202410/t20241024_12658559.htm; http://www.news.cn/mrdx/2024-08/23/c_1310785007.htm

⁵ http://www.taiwan.cn/local/dfkx/202412/t20241231_12675063.htm

⁶ <https://www.shou.edu.cn/2024/1217/c147a336883/page.htm>

⁷ <https://gd.huaxia.com/c/2024/10/22/1970964.shtml>

⁸ <http://www.news.cn/politics/20250711/c9e5889e77c24a45a9014ae603a41743/c.html>

⁹ <https://www.52hrrt.com/klln/n/w/info/F1752028657318>

the Chinese Cyan Geese Peace Education Foundation Hung Hsiu-chu also attended the event.

- Culture: In June, the second Cross-Strait Chinese Culture Summit was hosted in Beijing. Wang Huning met with the Taiwanese participants, including famous lyricist Vincent Fang, singer Chyi Yu, and writer Yang Du, and stated that “Chinese culture is the root and soul of people on both sides of the Strait... must stand together on the foundation of Chinese culture, ...and firmly take our nation’s future into us Chinese people’s own hands.”¹⁰
- **Economics: In April this year, a delegation of the Third Wednesday Association (中華民國三三企業交流會) whose 79 members include TSMC, Foxconn, and other big companies in Taiwan, visited Guangdong. The governor asked the organization to “uphold the One-China principle and the ‘1992 Consensus,’ firmly oppose ‘Taiwan independence,’ and act as a bridge and link to the fullest extent.” The chairman of the organization gave a positive response by saying that they have “always upheld the stance that ‘both sides of the strait are one family,’” and will “continue to promote cross-Strait economic and trade exchanges and cooperation.”¹¹**
- Politics: The CCP tries to cultivate relationships with all political parties in Taiwan. With the DPP, the ruling party, the engagement is usually more opaque. Recent espionage cases involving DPP members demonstrate that the CCP, although criticizing its pro-independence stance, still has been trying to build relationships with individuals within the party.¹² With the main opposition party, the KMT, along with other smaller fringe parties like the New Party, the People First Party, and the Non-Partisan Solidarity Union, the CCP claims to have established communication and consensus on “support for the ‘1992 Consensus,’ opposition to ‘Taiwan independence’ and foreign interference, promotion of cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation, advancement of integrated development, well-being for people on both sides, and the joint rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”¹³ The Taiwan People’s Party, the relatively new political party established in 2019, was also a target of the CCP.

Jamestown has identified at least 150 Taiwanese organizations connected to the CCP’s united front system, including business associations, religious groups, media, and other types of organizations.

¹⁰ <http://www.xinhuanet.com/mrdx/20250528/a523a2f890f04a9c9c57d1d38d6da6c8/c.html>;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ubphN1D5Fc>

¹¹ https://www.gd.gov.cn/xxts/content/post_4701075.html

¹² https://www.storm.mg/article/5353486?mode=whole&fbclid=IwY2xjawLnoLNleHRuA2FbQIxMABicmlkETFGdDZsVG8wVFdqVXZ5WFU0AR6lUPfl8yU3zXnHX-Bz6RUH1UsdyYaqFTxOo3siubh8iALp8XUNmmBv1kYdQ_aem_u0MW4SFDQlrlLaN5joRuXpw

¹³ http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202401/t20240117_12594364.htm

Intelligence operations: The CCP's intelligence activities in Taiwan are not merely about information collection but also tools aimed at weakening Taiwan's institutions and morale. Taiwan's counterintelligence faces significant pressure, with 64 cases prosecuted in 2024 alone. It's likely that it's just a glimpse of the CCP intelligence iceberg. The CCP increasingly exploits financial vulnerabilities, offering cash bonuses for recruiting sub-sources and targeting operational-level military officers. Among the 64 cases in 2024, 43 cases were related to military personnel.¹⁴ Recruited agents are sometimes asked to swear loyalty oaths or record surrender pledges, reinforcing the psychological dimension of these operations.

The case of Lee Huei-hsin, the deputy leader of the Sun Alliance's Baoyang chapter, reportedly linked to the gangster group "Thento" union, touched on all recent features of the CCP's intelligence operations. She was recruited by the CCP in 2023 to develop organizations in Taiwan. She used her gangster network and a temple in New Taipei City as an espionage hub for the CCP. She specifically targeted financially vulnerable active-duty and retired military personnel.

- Exchange for information: Lee used money to lure military officers to obtain flight path maps, exercise schedules, and other classified military information. The higher the classification level, the more money the officers received. The information was valued between \$30,000 and over \$100,000 NTD, depending on the type of information.
- Incentives for recruiting sub-sources: If they successfully recruited active-duty personnel, they were paid extra.
- Loyalty pledges: If the recruits were active-duty personnel, Lee would ask them to film surrender videos pledging allegiance to the CCP with PRC flags and in military uniform, and shout lines like "Chinese don't fight Chinese—I oppose war!"¹⁵

Cyber operations: The CCP conducts persistent and sophisticated cyber operations against Taiwan, making it the most targeted country in the Asia-Pacific region. PRC-backed hackers use advanced techniques like "living off the land" to evade detection and maintain long-term access to networks. These attacks focus on government systems, diplomatic missions, critical infrastructure, and key industries such as semiconductors. Some operations also involve co-opting university networks and working with private sector proxies. The CCP's effort in cyber operations aims to prepare for potential conflict, disrupt Taiwan's systems, and shape the information environment through coordinated propaganda and disinformation.

¹⁴ <https://ppg.ly.gov.tw/ppg/SittingAttachment/download/2025040112/10834825000010021002.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://tw.news.yahoo.com/%E9%BB%91%E5%B9%AB%E5%85%B1%E8%AB%9C%E5%AE%8C%E4%BA%E5%A4%AA%E9%99%BD%E8%81%AF%E7%9B%9F%E8%AA%98%E8%BB%8D%E5%AE%98%E6%8F%E4%BA%94%E6%98%9F%E6%97%97%E6%8B%8D-%E6%8A%95%E9%99%8D%E7%89%87%E5%A4%A7%E5%A7%8A%E9%A0%AD%E5%88%A4%E5%B9%B4%E6%9C%88%E5%AE%9A%E8%AE%9E-090626876.html>

Recent examples:

- In 2024, Taiwan's National Security Bureau reported a sharp rise in cyberattacks, with daily incidents reaching 2.19 million, doubling from the previous year. These attacks, largely attributed to PRC-linked actors, targeted government agencies, defense, telecom, and transport infrastructure, and often coincided with PLA military exercises and events like Taiwan's Inauguration Day and the PRC's Two Session.¹⁶
- Between March and June 2025, four China-aligned hacker groups carried out coordinated spear-phishing campaigns targeting Taiwan's semiconductor firms, supply chain companies, and investment analysts. These campaigns used malware and phishing pages to harvest login credentials and implant spyware.¹⁷

III. International Dimensions of Political Warfare

Beijing's political warfare against Taiwan also is conducted internationally to constrict Taiwan's space and recognition, to legitimate its current and future actions, and to ensure that the Taiwanese people see a CCP-dominated world and future. The CCP cares little about whether Taiwan's contributions would be generally welcome or beneficial, simply whether Taiwan receives recognition in any meaningful way. One of the best examples of this came during the global COVID-19 pandemic in which Taiwan was repeatedly frozen out of the global health conversation as Taiwanese warnings went unheeded and, in one tragicomical episode, a World Health Organization official pretended to have connectivity issues when asked by a reporter about Taiwan.

Over the last decade, Beijing has steadily ramped up the pressure on Taiwan's international space and standing. The approach has been systematic in trying to get countries to support unification of Taiwan without reference to peaceful means; to switch official recognition from the ROC to PRC, stripping Taiwan of its official diplomatic relations; and to remove Taiwanese involvement from international organizations. All of these efforts are attempts to strip Taiwan of its *de facto* sovereignty and international role.

- Since the fall of 2023, Beijing has pushed countries that already supported the CCP's "One-China Principle" to support unification without the previous caveat of "peaceful reunification." Between bilateral engagements and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the CCP has enlisted approximately 90 countries in signing a statement or issuing their own in support of unification.
- Over the last decade, more than 600 Taiwanese arrested overseas for criminal activities have been deported or extradited to the PRC. These deportations and extraditions have occurred at Beijing's requests and, at times, over Taipei's requests. The denial of Taiwan's responsibility for its citizens fundamentally undermines Taiwan's sovereignty.

¹⁶ <https://ppg.ly.gov.tw/ppg/SittingAttachment/download/2025040112/10834825000010021002.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://tw.news.yahoo.com/%E8%B7%AF%E9%80%8F%E6%9B%9D%E5%A4%9A%E7%B5%84%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B%E9%A7%AD%E5%AE%A2%E9%8E%96%E5%AE%9A%E5%8F%B0%E7%81%A3%E6%93%B4%E5%A4%A7%E8%A6%8F%E6%A8%A1%E5%B0%88%E9%96%80%E6%94%BB%E6%93%8A%E5%8D%8A%E5%B0%8E%E9%AB%94%E7%94%A2%E6%A5%AD-075800591.html>

- After the election of President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016 and continuing to the present day, Beijing aggressively courted countries that recognized Taiwan with bribes and blandishments. The CCP successfully turned 11 countries in this time period, halving the number of countries that recognized Taiwan. Many of these countries were courted through investment and graft that benefited the leaders. Beijing promised investments, business deals, new construction, and more in exchange for switching recognition. Influential individuals around the leaders were cultivated through united front work to facilitate connections to the local political leadership.
- Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Beijing has launched an aggressive campaign around UN Resolution 2758, which handed the Republic of China seat at the United Nations to the People's Republic of China as China's seat. The CCP has misrepresented the resolution as providing a UN imprimatur to Taiwan or the Republic of China's being a part of the People's Republic of China. The apparent goal is to forestall any UN resolutions of support for Taiwan in the event of a war or other crisis by saying that the United Nations already has settled the question of Taiwan's status, its current and future status as a part of the People's Republic of China, and whether Taiwan's future is a domestic or international question. Beijing used its diplomatic engagements to solicit support for its position.

In international organizations, the CCP also has invested time, effort, and personnel to shape how they work. When Beijing is successful, the same internal power that allows the Party to redirect the organization's resources to benefit Beijing also can be used to pressure Taiwan. For example, during the crackdown on and mass imprisonment of Uyghurs in the late 2010s, the World Bank ran a vocational training program, supporting so-called vocational schools that were, in fact, makeshift prisons for incarcerating Uyghurs. (The CECC was the organization that identified this development in World Bank programs.) The CCP's ability to obfuscate the reality of the program inside the World Bank stemmed from its executive director gaining decisive influence over issues of risk and compliance, budget, and human resources. That same power also was used to prevent Taiwanese citizens from becoming full-time staff at the World Bank unless they had applied for and received a PRC identification card for Taiwanese compatriots.

The CCP also has escalated in ways that endanger the safety of Taiwanese citizens traveling or living abroad, especially if they visit countries with extradition agreements. In June 2024, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Justice issued the "Opinion on Punishing the Crimes of Secession and Incitement to Secession by "Taiwan Independence" Diehards According to Law (关于依法惩治“台独”顽固分子分裂国家、煽动分裂国家犯罪的意见)." The

opinion criminalizes activities that can be construed as promoting Taiwanese independence, and mirrors elements of the Hong Kong National Security Law about working foreign or overseas organizations and individuals. The opinion authorizes the authorities to try Taiwanese separatists in absentia and to issue arrest warrants that the Ministry of State Security and Ministry of Public Security then execute. In Europe, at least 14 countries have extradition agreements with the PRC (or Hong Kong) that might be exploited. Moreover, the PRC's willingness to kidnap individuals abroad and to pressure family members to force people to surrender themselves to the Party suggests cross-strait connections are soon to be weaponized on a larger and more personal level.

IV. Implications

All of these CCP efforts inside and outside of Taiwan are aimed at reinforcing a sense of inevitability about the Party's ultimate victory over the ROC, over Taiwan, and over the people of Taiwan. The value for the CCP is creating a false choice for Taiwanese: fight against this historic inevitability and suffer, or accept this inevitability to find peace and prosperity. In the policy documents and speeches referenced in this statement, this point is made repeatedly. As Xi said, marking the 40th anniversary of the so-called "Letter to Taiwanese Compatriots," "The tide of our times — the cross-Straits situation moving toward peace and stability and cross-Straits relations continuing to move forward — is a tide that cannot be stopped by any force or anyone. The historical trend toward a stronger China, national rejuvenation, and reunification cannot be stopped by any force or anyone!"

Forcing countries to explicitly embrace the CCP's "One-China Principle," support efforts to "achieve national reunification," or any of the other indignities with which countries must agree with Beijing is part of creating what Czech dissident Vaclav Havel called the "panorama of everyday life." In his essay *The Power of the Powerless*, Havel wrote about a greengrocer who places a sign "workers of the world unite" in his shop window. Substitute countries or international organizations for greengrocer in Havel's essay and the essence of the CCP's political warfare becomes clear:

"It seems senseless to require the greengrocer to declare his loyalty publicly. But it makes sense nevertheless. People ignore his slogan, but they do so because such slogans are also found in other shop windows, on lampposts, bulletin boards, in apartment windows, and on buildings; they are everywhere, in fact. They form part of the panorama of everyday life. Of course, while they ignore the details, people are very aware of that panorama as a whole. And what else is the greengrocer's slogan but a small component in that huge backdrop to daily life?"

“The greengrocer had to put the slogan in his window, therefore, not in the hope that someone might read it or be persuaded by it, but to contribute, along with thousands of other slogans, to the panorama that everyone is very much aware of. This panorama, of course, has a subliminal meaning as well: it reminds people where they are living and what is expected of them. It tells them what everyone else is doing, and indicates to them what they must do as well, if they don't want to be excluded, to fall into isolation, alienate themselves from society, break the rules of the game, and risk the loss of their peace and tranquility and security.”

The CCP wants Taiwanese and others internationally to accept that PRC annexation of Taiwan or a final defeat of the Republic of China (which has been in continual existence since 1911) is the sole potential outcome. The Party wants everyone to ignore their own knowledge of historical contingency, of human agency and choice, and of the stubborn reality that Taiwan exists independent of the CCP and its totalitarian concept of China.

Countering political and cognitive warfare is a third element of defending Taiwan, both for the Taiwanese and for their partners. These CCP operations also highlight that the threat to Taiwan goes beyond conventional military operations and gray zone operations. Just as in these other areas, the CCP is able to bring to bear more resources and overwhelm Taiwan's ability to monitor and counter all of the different lines of effort.

V. U.S. Options

The United States has many options for how it can support Taiwan in countering the CCP's political warfare. Among them are the following:

- *Accept greater publicity for U.S.-Taiwan cooperation.* The United States cooperates with Taiwan a great deal outside of the public's view. Taiwan is a democracy, and its people need to know what its government is doing to protect them.
- *Support Taiwanese political leaders in frankly discussing the national security threats faced by Taiwan.* The United States has generally been ambivalent about Taiwanese leaders talking in clear and direct political terms about the threats Taiwan faces from the CCP and how to respond to them. Political warfare is a political problem that requires political solutions.
- *Provide more intelligence assistance for Taiwanese authorities to identify and disrupt CCP political warfare operations and collaborators.* The CCP's vast bureaucratic machine creates a kind of resiliency for their operations. Insight into one area or one unit is not the same as insight into another. In all likelihood, U.S., Taiwanese, and other intelligence communities have different accesses into different parts of the CCP intelligence, influence, military, and other security systems.

- *Work with the Taiwanese on a new security clearance system.* To address the espionage threat, Taiwan needs a revamped security clearance system that is grounded in statute and provides the basis to remove untrustworthy individuals from sensitive positions. The current system is too ad hoc to serve as a useful deterrent.
- *Expand law enforcement collaboration to target Taiwanese organized crime and its involvement in narcotics trafficking and money laundering.* Taiwanese organized crime groups—like the Hong Kong triads—is a potential vector for causing chaos in Taiwan, and these groups often have the kind of personal or financial interests in the PRC that Beijing has historically been willing to exploit. The CCP's involvement in fentanyl precursor and other narcotics production as well as global money laundering offers an incentive for organized crime groups to collaborate with Beijing.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AUDRYE WONG

CHINA'S POLITICAL INFLUENCE TACTICS AND
TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION ACTIVITIES AGAINST TAIWAN

Senator Sullivan, Congressman Smith, Honorable Members of the Commission, thank you for the invitation to testify today.

In my remarks today, I'd like to highlight three main points:

- Transnational repression (TNR) against the Taiwanese diaspora and supporters of Taiwan is the tip of the spear of broader PRC political influence efforts in the United States and other free societies. Such activities are driven by the United Front Work Department, a CCP organ that seeks to co-opt allies and silence enemies domestically and abroad. In the context of Taiwan, that means suppressing supporters of Taiwanese democracy and independence, and pushing the CCP's sovereignty claims and narratives over Taiwan.
- TNR and political influence activities consist of multipronged community and political mobilization to (i) engage in direct surveillance and harassment of Taiwan supporters on U.S. soil; (ii) rally portions of the overseas Chinese and Chinese-American communities to engage in public and highly visible displays of support for Beijing's position on Taiwan, including protests against Taiwanese leaders transiting through the United States; and (iii) over the longer term, shift broader political and public discourse on Taiwan through the positioning of pro-Beijing individuals as political aides and by operating as a political machine to get pro-Beijing candidates elected to office.
- Beijing also seeks to co-opt Western voices and form alliances with domestic interest groups, such as far-left anti-imperialist movements in the United States. The Chinese government sees this as further legitimizing its narratives and a strategic way to reframe the Taiwan issue as being about U.S. imperialism versus global peace.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE:
ACTORS AND TACTICS

Influence activities through the United Front involve a mix of official, quasi-official, and grassroots organizations. The Council for Promotion of the Peaceful Reunification of China is a United Front organization with multiple branches in the United States and globally, with the explicit and overarching goal of asserting Beijing's sovereignty claims over Taiwan. They regularly engage in activities such as issuing statements and organizing conferences on the topic.

But TNR and influence activities relating to Taiwan and other issues also involve **co-optation and mobilization of a broader array of overseas Chinese hometown associations and other grassroots organizations**. Chinese writings on the United Front explicitly call for "societal organizations" (*shetuan*) and overseas Chinese community leaders and elites (*jingying*) to play a role in promoting Beijing's interests.¹ These groups are often rallied, often in coordination with the Chinese consulate, for public demonstrations and protests, particularly surrounding events such as a Taiwanese president's transit through the United States or former Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. Reports suggest that the Chinese government pays overseas Chinese to participate in these protests, although protest leaders have vigorously denied this, portraying such activities as a groundswell of patriotic sentiment.

PUBLIC PROTESTS AGAINST TAIWANESE LEADERS AND SUPPORTERS

Pro-Beijing protests around Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen's transit through New York and Los Angeles in late March and early April 2023 provide an illuminating example of United Front dynamics and tactics. Over a hundred overseas Chinese organizations, claiming to speak for the overseas Chinese community, took out advertisements in major Chinese-language media outlets in the United States.

¹Audrye Wong, "How Beijing Thinks About Overseas Chinese and Foreign Influence: Principles and Tactics of United Front Policies," *The Asan Forum*, May 12, 2025, <https://theasanforum.org/how-beijing-thinks-about-overseas-chinese-and-foreign-influence-principles-and-tactics-of-united-front-policies/>.

Through open-source research examining online videos and photos of these events, I identified close to 30 groups involved in on-the-ground demonstrations. One protest leader claimed that 105 community associations were represented in these demonstrations. They would gather outside the hotel where President Tsai was staying, or in Los Angeles outside the Reagan Presidential Library where Tsai met then-Speaker McCarthy, waving Chinese and American flags, shouting slogans such as “Tsai Ing-wen is a traitor,” and holding banners proclaiming Taiwan as part of China.

Similar protests took place during Tsai’s transit through New York in July 2019. Fujianese groups played a major role in these protests, similar to the 2023 protests. There were also reports of physical altercations and attacks on pro-democracy dissidents and pro-Taiwan supporters.²

TACTICAL ALIGNMENTS WITH DOMESTIC GROUPS

Additionally, each of these protests featured American participants from far-left anti-imperialist movements. In New York, a group called the Center for Political Innovation (in an interview with *China Daily*, a PRC state media outlet) decried Tsai for “selling war” and expressed support for “one China.” In Los Angeles, U.S. anti-war and anti-imperialist groups such as CODEPINK—which has close links to a media mogul financing CCP propaganda globally—the ANSWER Coalition, and Pivot to Peace, protested alongside Chinese groups outside the Reagan Library. When former Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in 2022, some of these same left-wing groups also participated in protests alongside United Front-linked groups such as the San Francisco U.S.-China Peoples Friendship Association, the Council for Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China, and the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association.

In general, **such messaging frames U.S. support for Taiwan as part of U.S. imperialism and warmongering, reframes China’s position as one of preserving peace and the status quo, and by extension implicitly recognizes Beijing’s sovereignty claims over Taiwan.** These groups are not likely directly controlled by the CCP, but the Chinese government certainly is happy to capitalize on apparent ideological alliances of convenience and encourage Western voices to spread pro-Beijing narratives. In Beijing’s view, this helps to legitimize its position to a broader audience within the United States and globally.

DIRECT SURVEILLANCE AND HARASSMENT

In another case, a China-born U.S. citizen in Massachusetts was indicted in 2023 for acting as a PRC agent. The U.S. Government alleged that Liang Litang provided Chinese government officials (including those from the Ministry of Public Security and the United Front Work Department) with information on pro-Taiwan organizations and their members, and co-founded the New England Alliance for the Peaceful Unification of China which organized counterprotests against pro-democracy and anti-CCP dissidents, including Hong Kong activists.³ Interestingly, the defendant was also a member of Pivot to Peace and a local union, which framed his arrest as a political targeting of peace activists.⁴ Liang was acquitted by a jury in February 2025. The defense made arguments that Liang’s actions were out of personal conviction and initiative rather than following the Chinese government’s orders. This case illustrates how United Front mobilization also operates in a gray area wherein pro-China individuals can be incentivized or empowered to promote CCP interests even if not directly employed by the Chinese government, which contributes to a broader atmosphere of transnational repression even as the burden of proof for law enforcement becomes trickier.

LONGER-TERM STRATEGY: RESHAPING THE AMERICAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Perhaps even more worryingly, United Front actors are also actively reshaping the political landscape in the United States in favor of pro-Beijing actors while suppressing supporters of Taiwan, with the ultimate goal of changing public discussions and attitudes regarding Taiwan’s political status. My own research and other reporting has examined how **CCP-linked groups and individuals are not only seeking to serve as political aides and power brokers, but also successfully**

² See e.g. <https://www.voachinese.com/a/FIGHT-TSAI-NY-20190713/4998502.html>.

³ <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/massachusetts-man-indicted-acting-illegal-agent-people-s-republic-china>.

⁴ See e.g. <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2023/06/22/chinese-american-worker-and-activist-arrested-for-advocating-for-peace-between-us-and-china/>.

acting as a political machine to get pro-Beijing individuals into elected office.

Patronage politics makes fertile ground for foreign influence. Especially in areas with large ethnic Chinese populations, politicians seeking election are eager to tap Chinatown networks to secure votes. This leads to a reliance on political fixers and community liaisons, who by nature of their positions as community leaders also often have close ties to the Chinese government. In some cases, politicians may know relatively little—or exercise willful ignorance—about the role of the United Front in local politics. They may then be more willing to echo pro-Beijing policy positions because they perceive it as appealing to voters, sometimes without fully realizing the geopolitical implications.

As I have written elsewhere, the Chinese government does not hesitate to **play identity politics and exploit contentious social and political issues**—such as anti-Asian hate, public safety, homeless shelters, or affirmative action and standardized testing—in order to gain currency among overseas Chinese populations and legitimize CCP-linked individuals and organizations as grassroots leaders defending the community's interests and rights.⁵ This goes hand in hand with propaganda messaging of longstanding racial discrimination against ethnic Chinese and Asian Americans (as well as touting the flaws of democracies).

Such mobilization in turn serves as a **foundation for Beijing's political machine to field preferred candidates and rally votes to get them elected.**⁶ As one example, in New York City, individuals and networks connected to the united front system have helped elect at least three local politicians in south Brooklyn in the last three years. In one example, a Republican candidate endorsed by United Front groups won a tight 2024 state senate race against Taiwan-born Democrat incumbent Iwen Chu, who had attended a dinner with Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen during her transit through New York in 2023. United Front-linked groups have also participated in the electoral redistricting process to ensure a mobilization advantage for their favored candidate, even though this put them in opposition to other established Asian American civil society groups.

These political influence tactics, even at state and municipal levels, can have a **powerful trickle-up effect, whereby politicians are increasingly aligned with Beijing's interests and beholden to CCP-linked actors.** This could eventually influence broader policy discourse on issues such as Taiwan, Xinjiang, and human rights in China, in favor of the Chinese government's positions.

SHAPING ACADEMIC NARRATIVES ON TAIWAN

It is also worth noting the channels through which the Chinese government attempts or could attempt to shape academic narratives on Taiwan and other politically sensitive issues. To the extent that scholarly research and writing is seen as objective and fact-based, hidden or overt influence attempts to shift or censor discussions of Taiwan's political status cannot only have a chilling effect on freedom of speech but also affect the education that younger generations are receiving as well as broader public understanding of such issues.

First, stemming directly from **United Front influence activities**, Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSAs) on university campuses have been recently highlighted by Chinese leader Xi Jinping as an important player in promoting Beijing's interests abroad. There have been several reported instances where CSSAs and Chinese students disrupted campus events featuring speakers critical of the CCP, or called out professors for not adhering to Beijing's claims over Taiwan. There are also concerns over the peer surveillance and monitoring of Chinese students (or faculty and staff, especially those who have family in China) and reporting to the Chinese consulate of any anti-regime activities.

A second channel of potential influence over academic narratives is **financial dependence** on PRC sources, which is a global phenomenon. Many universities in the United States and elsewhere have become reliant on Chinese students for tuition revenue. This has led university administrators to become more concerned about hosting events or allowing free speech that could anger the Chinese student body and potentially endanger much-needed revenue. Moreover, research institutes and

⁵ Audrye Wong and Francis de Beixedon, "China is Exploiting America's Social Divisions," *Foreign Policy*, March 6, 2025, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/03/06/china-united-front-asian-americans-new-york/>.

⁶ Audrye Wong and Francis de Beixedon, "Beijing's Political Machine Makes Inroads in New York Politics," *Jamestown China Brief*, May 27, 2025, <https://jamestown.org/program/beijings-political-machine-makes-inroads-in-new-york-politics/>.

programs funded by donors with links to the Chinese government or otherwise sympathetic to CCP causes could spark concerns of academic self-censorship.

TAIWAN AS THE TIP OF THE SPEAR:
BROADER PATTERNS OF AUTHORITARIAN FOREIGN INFLUENCE

The actors and tactics used in these above-mentioned cases are part of a broader pattern of intensifying PRC influence activities. While stamping out Taiwanese “separatism”—as a stated core interest of the Chinese government—certainly remains a foremost goal of United Front work, Beijing is using **similar methods to shape narratives and policies on issues from Hong Kong and Xinjiang to U.S. politics**. Several of the groups and individuals protesting Tsai’s transit through the United States were also involved in the November 2023 demonstrations during Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s visit to San Francisco for the APEC summit, including physical assaults of pro-democracy and anti-CCP activists. The leader of one of these groups, Harry Lu of the American Changle Association, was subsequently arrested for operating an overseas police station in New York. Another individual, John Chan, is seen as a prominent political and community organizer in New York City with close links to several local politicians.

CCP political influence activities include but go beyond transnational repression. They involve broader and longer-term attempts at the co-optation and control of overseas Chinese communities, including to change their beliefs and behavior; and also to shift broader public and political discourse in the United States on issues such as Taiwan.

One policy challenge in dealing with United Front influence activities is that many of the overseas Chinese grassroots groups wear **dual hats by design**—while possibly co-opted as instruments of Beijing’s foreign policy, they provide legitimate public goods and social services to ethnic Chinese communities.⁷ Consolidating their community leadership role in turn serves as the basis for promulgating CCP narratives and interests.

Additionally, there are multiple complex incentives for individuals to participate in pro-Beijing and anti-Taiwan activities. Members of the overseas Chinese community may sometimes be manipulated or used as geopolitical pawns. Attending an anti-Taiwan protest or waving flags to welcome President Xi’s visit to San Francisco does not necessarily mean that person is a CCP acolyte—they may have been paid to come or view it as a social event. Shaking hands with a PRC consul-general may reflect a desire to gain political connections and expand personal business or career opportunities. At the same time, it is hard for overseas Chinese elites to claim complete ignorance of potential CCP leverage given their required familiarity with the political system—there is no free lunch.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

To counter China, we should not become like China. While the CCP may aspire to implement a Marxist-Leninist style “whole-of-society” approach in its foreign influence efforts, the U.S. and other governments should not respond with a “whole-of-society” mindset. Overreaction will only add more fuel to the fire, lend credence to Beijing’s narratives of Western discrimination, and push the overseas Chinese community into CCP arms.

Enhanced law enforcement capacity is a necessary though not sufficient response to combating transnational repression and authoritarian political influence efforts. Knowledge dissemination and systematic training on the different forms and tactics of malign influence as well as how to mitigate potential biases is key to raise awareness and understanding **not just at the federal but also the state and local levels**, for law enforcement officials as well as elected officials.

At the same time, the United States needs to **increase societal and political resilience from within**. A sophisticated and effective U.S. policy response would avoid tarring all ethnic Chinese with the same brush, as often they are caught between a rock and a hard place. We need to address the root causes of how the CCP gains affection and legitimacy among these communities, and bolster America’s own capabilities to combat authoritarian influence and eliminate such vulnerabilities. This serves to combat TNR and foreign influence as part of a broader pattern even before a specific activity rises to the level of a crime to be tackled by law enforcement.

⁷ Audrye Wong, “How Beijing Thinks About Overseas Chinese and Foreign Influence: Principles and Tactics of United Front Policies,” *The Asan Forum*, May 12, 2025, <https://theasanforum.org/how-beijing-thinks-about-overseas-chinese-and-foreign-influence-principles-and-tactics-of-united-front-policies/>.

Reducing Chinese influence on the ground requires **empowering alternative legitimate voices** in the form of grassroots organizations and community resources that are responsive to local needs and interests, so that CCP voices are not able to dominate the societal and political landscape or claim to represent the entire Chinese American—and even Asian American—communities.

Elected officials at the local and national levels should be more proactive in seeking information about the backgrounds of community leaders and organizations and engaging with a broad array of community representatives and viewpoints rather than just taking the easy route and listening to the loudest voice (or the one promising the most votes). U.S. national security is threatened by malign influence, but so are the voices and rights of Chinese Americans and Americans writ large.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN

Today's hearing comes at a pivotal moment. For 75 years, the People's Republic of China has vowed to bring Taiwan under its control. We have our own Taiwan Relations Act. We have our "One China" policy. However, in recent years, that pressure—not just, by the way, with regard to the Taiwanese, but other people, including American citizens—has intensified and been globalized, with Beijing not only targeting Taiwan across the strait, but also projecting intimidation across borders and institutions, using political transnational repression as a tool of coercion over people across the globe.

The title of this hearing rhymes with major legislation of mine, the Stand with Taiwan Act. That bill, which I've introduced in the last two Congresses and will soon be introducing again, has great bipartisan support. Senators Graham, Duckworth and Coons are the top co-sponsors. I encourage strong bipartisan support with my colleagues here. What that would do is, if there is a military invasion of Taiwan by the Communist Party and the PLA of China, trigger punishing comprehensive sanctions on the Chinese economy and particularly leaders of the Chinese Communist Party—punishing economic, trade, financial, energy. We all want deterrence in the Taiwan Strait. I think the threat of these massive sanctions might be critical in terms of deterring a cross-strait invasion of Taiwan by the PLA.

We also need to deal with the here and now of Chinese coercion abroad. Again, this hearing is going to focus on the coercion of Taiwanese citizens. But I want to make sure, and I certainly will be asking questions in my Q & A with the witnesses about repression of others—people from Hong Kong, American citizens, which is really unacceptable when that happens—by the Chinese Communist Party. They're good at coercing their own citizens, but they're not going to, with this Congress, be allowed to coerce Americans or those who are our allies.

These threats are multifaceted—AI-generated disinformation; the extraterritorial application of PRC laws; of course, diplomatic pressure on Taiwan's allies; the public intimidation of democratically elected leaders. By the way, that's something the Chinese Communist Party would never do. They never stand for election themselves. They fear their own people because they know they probably wouldn't get elected if they had to stand for election. So it makes them nervous when there are people who actually stand for election like we do and go before the people.

The PRC is also attempting to rewrite international norms, distorting U.N. General Assembly Resolution 2758, and pressuring countries to embrace Beijing's view on all necessary measures it might use to achieve unification with regard to Taiwan. Most disturbingly, the PRC has labeled Taiwan's vice president, whom I know well and who is a good friend of mine, and other officials as "obstinate Taiwan independence diehards," threatening them with life imprisonment or worse. It has declared that any Taiwanese citizen, including those living abroad, can be punished under PRC law. In a closed-door meeting earlier this year, senior CCP official Wang Huning reportedly called for a global expansion of these intimidation tactics. According to credible reporting, Wang instructed embassies and security services—hopefully they're not doing it here in America, but they probably are—to implement "proactive intimidation" against so-called radical Taiwanese independence advocates worldwide, including in the United States of America.

These were not abstract threats. Last year, Czech intelligence uncovered a planned "kinetic operation" by the PRC to intimidate then Vice President-elect Hsiao on her visit there. Again, she's a friend of mine—a great person. The PRC

is also harassing international media outlets for interviewing Taiwanese leaders. Individuals around the world who criticize Beijing's Taiwan policy have been doxed and placed under surveillance. This is transnational repression. It is a coordinated strategy to isolate Taiwan, dominate the global narrative through fear and coercion, and again, not only against Taiwanese citizens, but against other citizens, including our citizens.

Every day the CCP grows bolder and more aggressive in its threats against Taiwan, the United States, and our allies in the Indo-Pacific. We need to call that out, have open hearings like this, and push back against this transnational repression.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS SMITH

Good morning, and congratulations, Senator Sullivan, on assuming the chair and gavel of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. I look forward to working closely with you on so many critical topics, including on the topic of today's hearing, Countering the PRC's political warfare and transnational repression, directed at democratic Taiwan.

In 1999, two People's Liberation Army colonels, Colonel Qiao and Wang, published a book entitled "Unrestricted Warfare." It is a fascinating book and one which sees everything short of kinetic as a battlefield.

How is it that we have so many fentanyl overdoses in the United States? Read "Unrestricted Warfare" and understand. What is lawfare, and how is open access to our court system weaponized against us? Read "Unrestricted Warfare" and understand. Simply put, it is a primer on what we can call "political warfare," aimed squarely at the United States.

But standing in the way is the *de facto* island nation of Taiwan, the *de jure* Republic of China. I think we sometimes fail to appreciate how much vitriolic attention Taiwan, as a frontline state, absorbs from mainland China that otherwise would be directed at the United States. As the vital center of the First Island Chain, Taiwan is a buffer and our first line of defense against the People's Republic of China, which is bent upon seeking hegemony and dominating the entire world, supplanting the United States as the world's preeminent power.

In many ways, Taiwan is similar to Israel, another frontline state, which absorbs much of the concentrated attention—from terror bombs to propaganda—that otherwise would be directed at the United States by jihadist groups and state sponsors of terrorism such as Iran. In this regard, both Taiwan and Israel are too often overlooked or taken for granted by too many in the United States. We should keep in mind throughout today's hearing that Taiwan's security is America's security, and the political warfare and transnational repression campaigns that are waged against Taiwan in an amplified manner are also being waged here in a less evident way, though it is often very evident among Chinese diaspora communities in the United States who are targeted by the Chinese Communist Party.

It is because of this need to protect American citizens and those that are here lawfully who are targeted by CCP transnational repression—in particular those of ethnic Chinese, Tibetan, or Uyghur descent—that Senate Ranking Member Merkley and I, joined by Ranking Member McGovern on the House side, introduced the Transnational Repression Policy Act last Congress, and why we will be reintroducing it again soon, joined by Chair Sullivan.

But again, it is the example of Taiwan that is instructive. We saw Taiwan's Vice President Bi-khim Hsiao—a friend to many of us here in Washington from her time as Ambassador—being targeted during a trip she made to the Czech Republic in March 2024 with a "demonstrative kinetic action," according to a Czech military intelligence spokesman, said to be a staged vehicle accident planned while she was in her car. We have seen similar methods deployed here in the United States against famed Democracy Wall dissident Wei Jingsheng. Wei was in his car driving home when two cars attempted to force him off the road.

There is also much we can learn from how Taiwan counters CCP political warfare. The CCP bombards Taiwan with propaganda and false narratives, seeking to manipulate the information space, including through the use of "deep fake" video clips created using artificial intelligence.

Rather than silencing "influencers" and others who parrot pro-Beijing messages under the guise of combating "disinformation," groups such as the Taiwan FactCheck Center provide context to rebut such messages. Chat group users of the messaging app Line, which is prevalent in Taiwan, are able to flag statements that appear problematic, and the Taiwan FactCheck Center will provide context so as to allow the user to become a more informed consumer of information.

The Taiwanese experience, wherein democracy rose from an authoritarian and martial law past, has a lot to teach us regarding the importance of freedom and free speech. The key to combating wrong speech is not censorship, but more speech. These are lessons we can learn and take to heart from Asia's most vibrant democracy.

Finally, I would like to note that Taiwan has a story to tell, not only to its own people or to the West, but also to the people of China, bypassing the Chinese Communist Party and overcoming the Great Firewall the CCP has built. Taiwan's President William Lai Ching-te has recently been giving speeches on Ten Topics, ranging from discussion of sovereignty to democracy to constitutionalism and the rule of law. Of course his principal audience is the people of Taiwan. But judging from the way the CCP mouthpiece Global Times has been responding, his message is also penetrating the ears of people in China, who live under Communist oppression.

The Chinese Communist Party, in the wake of the Tiananmen Massacre, made a bargain with the Chinese people: You acknowledge our total political control, and we will make you economically prosperous. For much of the so-called Reform Era, China did grow economically, despite political repression. Xi Jinping, however, doubled down on repression and destroyed the Chinese economy due to his ridiculous economic policies. Thus the Chinese people have neither prosperity nor freedom.

Taiwan's message to China is, you can have both prosperity and freedom. So long as Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party remain in power, however, the Chinese people will enjoy neither, and the people of Taiwan will always be under threat.

I hope for a free Taiwan, forever independent of communist control. I also hope for a free China, independent of communist control. Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

Chair Sullivan, Co-chair Smith, thank you for convening this hearing, the first of the 119th Congress. Senator Sullivan, congratulations on your appointment as chair of this bipartisan Commission. I served as chair in the 116th Congress. I hope you find it as rewarding and productive as I did. At that time my co-chair was Senator Marco Rubio. His deputy staff director was Peter Mattis, who sits at the witness table today. It is good to see you back here, Peter.

Our biggest accomplishment was the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. This has been a landmark bill. It is human rights legislation with teeth. It applies a real enforcement action—an import ban—to a failure to meet a human rights standard—forced labor. This bill happened because of the quality work by the professional staff at this Commission. They performed the research, organized a roundtable and a hearing, and helped draft the legislation. The staff is a valuable resource. I hope you appreciate their work as much as I did.

The Commission's biggest work product is the Annual Report. It assesses the status of human rights and the rule of law in China. It has proved useful not only to policymakers in Congress and the executive branch but to lawyers helping asylum seekers fleeing persecution in China. But I worry about the quality of this report moving forward.

The 2024 Annual Report includes 322 citations to Radio Free Asia, 52 to Voice of America, 58 to the China Labor Bulletin, 40 to Freedom House, and 17 to China Labor Watch. Each of these organizations has reduced or ceased operations, or been forced to close, due to the decisions of the Trump administration, which has illegally withheld funds appropriated by Congress. What will future reports look like without these sources? What insight will we miss? What information will we never see?

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act would not have been possible without the reporting of the Radio Free Asia Uyghur service. It has been our best source of information from inside Xinjiang—basically the only source of information that Uyghurs get from the outside world. Now it is all but gone. What future legislation will the Commission not accomplish because its best sources of information have been eliminated by President Trump?

Today's hearing looks at transnational repression (TNR) through the lens of Taiwan, and how the Chinese government reaches beyond borders to try to silence people in Taiwan and in the diaspora. Transnational repression is a concern for all of us. Federal agencies, including the FBI, have taken important strides to address these abuses.

I am pleased to have joined Co-chair Smith and former Chair Senator Jeff Merkley as sponsors of the Transnational Repression Act to strengthen the whole-of-government effort against TNR. I hope we can reintroduce it soon.

On June 24, I chaired a hearing of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on transnational repression. We received policy recommendations to strengthen interagency and multilateral coordination to combat TNR. We heard from Freedom House, whose demonstrated expertise on TNR did not protect it from having its grant terminated by the State Department. I don't make such criticism to be partisan. I make it as a matter of policy. We are shooting ourselves in the foot. We reduce our ability to understand China. We give gifts to the Chinese government. We vacate spaces their influence fills.

If we really want to help the Taiwanese people resist Beijing's influence, we need to invest in counter-TNR resources, rather than pull back. This requires the courage to stand up and say no to DOGE and to President Trump.

The people of Taiwan are wonderful. Taiwan is not the People's Republic of China. We cannot forget that this Commission's focus is the People's Republic of China. Our mandate is to assess the Chinese government's compliance with international human rights standards. Not American or Chinese standards. Global standards, as established by U.N. instruments and treaties.

The rights that the people of China are entitled to enjoy are universal—not rights as determined by the Chinese government, or by American politicians. Universal rights. The Commission's work must reflect this.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to an informative hearing and to the Commission's work this Congress.

SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

SUBMISSION OF JOHN DOTSON,
DIRECTOR, GLOBAL TAIWAN INSTITUTE

Fundamental Elements of the Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare Directed Against Taiwan

I wish to thank Chairman Sullivan, Co-Chair Smith, and all the members of the Congressional Executive Commission on China—as well as the hardworking staff of the Commission—for the opportunity to submit this written testimony for the hearing *Stand with Taiwan: Countering the PRC's Political Warfare and Transnational Repression*. I hope this written statement will be of some modest assistance to the Commission in performing its vital work.

In terms of my professional background, I am a former U.S. Navy intelligence officer, who served for a combined 20 years in active duty and reserve assignments, including at sea, in Japan, and in the Pentagon. My civilian work experience over the past two decades has been primarily in the government research and think tank sectors, performing research and writing on People's Republic of China (PRC) military developments and political warfare activities. My work in this latter area has led me to the conclusion that political warfare is a fundamental element of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s approach to statecraft, and that understanding these concepts is key to crafting more effective responses to Beijing's subversive and coercive actions—to include those directed towards Taiwan, as well as the political warfare measures directed towards the wider international community.

The comments contained herein are my own, and should not be assumed to reflect the position of any present or past organization with which I may have been affiliated.

The Motivations for the Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare against Taiwan

The ruling authorities of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中国共产党) are committed to bringing about "reunification" (统一) with Taiwan—to entail bringing the island under People's Republic of China (PRC) sovereignty, as well as bringing Taiwan's citizens under full CCP political control. While eventual "reunification" has long been CCP policy, for decades Beijing was prepared to slow-walk this goal, as it was either consumed by internal turmoil, or else focused on domestic economic growth. This has changed dramatically over the past decade, as the Chinese government has stepped up its coercive pressure against Taiwan across multiple dimensions.

The PRC's Asserted Sovereignty Claims Over Taiwan

As the ruling authority of the People's Republic of China (PRC)—in an authoritarian system that permits no political competition—the CCP employs a series of official ideological frameworks that inform and direct its Taiwan policies. The CCP's ideological claims rest upon the denial of any legitimacy to the Republic of China (ROC), and claims of full PRC sovereignty over Taiwan. This position holds that the ROC rightfully assumed control over Taiwan in 1945, but that the ROC then passed completely out of existence in 1949—with the PRC, as successor state, inheriting all sovereignty rights. The PRC position thus waves away the continued existence of Taiwan as a *de facto* sovereign state since 1949, and the fact that the PRC has never administered the island. This position also ignores the complex history of Taiwan: in which it has, at various times, either been without central authority, or else ruled in particular regions by Spanish and Dutch colonizers; by pro-Ming Dynasty Chinese rebels, and then China's imperial Qing Dynasty, along the western coast; and annexed as part of the Japanese Empire (from 1895-1945). Most importantly of all, the PRC position denies any right of self-determination for Taiwan's people to determine their own future.

In the diplomatic arena, central CCP positions include the "One China Principle" (OCP) (一个中国原则), which holds that the PRC is the only "China" in the world, and that Taiwan is an "inalienable" part of China's territory.¹ Beijing repeatedly asserts the false narrative that its "One China Principle" is universally accepted worldwide—and that maintaining diplomatic relations with the PRC is, *ipso facto*, an acceptance of the OCP. In tandem with this, the PRC also consistently promotes a distorted interpretation of United Nations Resolution 2758 (passed in 1971), which the PRC falsely claims conveyed UN recognition of its sovereignty claims over Taiwan.²

In regard to its officially prescribed plans for "reunification" with Taiwan, the PRC nominally adheres to the "One Country, Two Systems" (OCTS) (一国两制) framework first advanced in the late 1970s, which calls for Taiwan to be incorporated into the PRC as a regional government. The original OCTS concept promised considerably autonomy for Taiwan as a self-governing region, which could retain its existing political and economic system separate from Beijing's direct control.³ However, the promises of the "One Country, Two Systems" framework stand hollow in light of the CCP's harsh repression of dissent in Hong Kong from 2019 to the present, as well as its brutal campaign of cultural genocide directed against the PRC's Uighur population.

The PRC's More Aggressive Posture Towards Taiwan Under Xi Jinping

Under the tenure of CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping, the party has steadily ramped up coercive pressure on Taiwan for "reunification," and the CCP's coercive measures and united front work focused on Taiwan have intensified accordingly. Since at least 2017 the PRC has engaged in an increasingly assertive, aggressive, and multi-faceted effort to pursue its goals vis-à-vis Taiwan: shifting, as Beijing's own messaging would express it, from a posture of "changing from preventing independence to pursuing

¹ PRC State Council Information Office, *The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue*, February 21, 2000, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/taiwan/7956.htm>.

² PRC Foreign Ministry, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on the Government of the Republic of Nauru's Announcement to Break Diplomatic Ties with the Taiwan Region and Seek to Reestablish Diplomatic Ties with China," Jan. 15, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202401/20240115_11223838.html.

³ Deng Xiaoping Puts Forward "One Country Two Systems" (邓小平提出 "一国两制"), Central Broadcasting Network, Aug. 17, 2014, https://news.cnr.cn/special/dengxiaoping/latest/201408/20140817_516235884.shtml.

unification” (“防独”转向“促统”).⁴ Furthermore, during Xi Jinping's tenure the PRC has backtracked from past pledges of Taiwan autonomy: of particular note, a major policy speech by Xi in early 2019, and an official white paper issued in 2022, both omitted past pledges to respect Taiwan's self-governance and to refrain from sending troops and administrative personnel to the island.

Per the Party, claiming control over Taiwan is a key element of the “great revival [or ‘rejuvenation’] of the Chinese nation” (中华民族伟大复兴), and this theme has been a staple slogan of CCP propaganda under Xi's tenure. For example, speaking before the 20th Party Congress of the CCP in October 2022, Xi asserted that “Taiwan is China's Taiwan” (台湾是中国的台湾), and declared that:

*Resolving the Taiwan problem, achieving complete unification of the ancestral nation, is the party's unswerving historical mission, it is the common aspiration of all sons and daughters of China, it is an absolute requirement of achieving the great revival of the Chinese people. [We must] insist upon implementing the party's Comprehensive Plan for Resolving the Taiwan Problem in the New Era, firmly grasp the initiative in cross-Strait relations, and resolutely advance the great cause of national unification.*⁵

The CCP's Paranoia About “Western Anti-China Forces” and Taiwan

In the CCP's narrative, unification (and China's “great revival”) has been blocked due to the collusion of “Taiwan independence forces” (“台独”势力) with sinister “Western anti-China forces” (西方反华势力)—which by clear implication, are led by the United States. In a noteworthy recent example of such discourse, on May 12, 2025 the PRC State Council Information Office (the alter ego of the CCP Central Propaganda Department) published *China's National Security in the New Era* (新时代的中国国家安全), a white paper that presented the CCP's official perspectives on the intertwined issues (as seen by the Party) of sovereignty and national security.⁶

Aside from the issue of internal regime security (always the preeminent concern of the Party), the white paper reveals again the regime's paranoid preoccupations with the alleged collusion of “Taiwan independence forces” with foreign forces (understood to mean, primarily, the United States). Section (1)(3) of the white paper states that:

External pressure on national security is increasing. Western anti-China forces seek, by all means, to encircle, pressure, and constrain (围堵, 打压, 遏制) China; [and they] direct Westernization,

⁴ For examples of this discourse, see: “Scholar: The Central Emphasis of the Mainland's Policy Is Changing from ‘Preventing Independence’ to ‘Promoting Unification’ and More Actively Taking Initiative to Achieve the Chinese Dream” (學者：大陸對台政策重點由「防獨」轉為「促統」更積極主動實現中國夢), *Global Times*, Nov. 15, 2017, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1584129856792056664&wfr=spider&for=pc>; and Jin Canrong (金燦榮), “「武統台灣」警告的指向性很清晰” (“The Direction of the Warning of ‘Armed Unification with Taiwan’ Is Very Clear”), *Global Times*, Dec. 13, 2017, <https://opinion.huangjiu.com/article/9CaKmK61PY>.

⁵ “Xi Jinping Emphasizes Persisting In and Perfecting ‘One Country Two Systems’, Advancing Unification of the Motherland” (习近平强调，坚持和完善“一国两制”，推进祖国统一) (excerpt of speech before the 20th CCP Party Congress), CCP Taiwan Work Office, October 16, 2022, http://www.qwytb.gov.cn/ztdjzt/xxxqgc/zvis/202210/t20221016_12478556.htm.

⁶ PRC State Council Information Office, *China's National Security in the New Era* (新时代的中国国家安全), May 2025, http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/zfbps_2279/202505/t20250512_894771.html.

dissolution strategies, infiltration, and sabotage activities (对中国实施西化, 分化战略, 进行渗透, 破坏活动) towards China. [...] Certain countries crudely interfere with China's internal affairs: causing trouble and agitation in the Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, and East China Sea; [and] interfering in Xinjiang, interfering in Tibet, interfering in Hong Kong, etc. again and again. Some foreign forces incessantly scheme to play the "Taiwan card" ("台湾牌"), [and] "Taiwan independence" forces ("台独"势力) obstinately insist on a separatist position, provoking risks.

All of the CCP's policies towards Taiwan—to include its political warfare measures—should be understood in the context of these official narratives, and the Party's overarching political goals. The CCP is intent upon subverting Taiwan government and society, and upon weakening the resistance of the island's citizens to annexation on the terms of the CCP. This is the foundation from which the CCP's political warfare efforts proceed.

What Is Political Warfare?

The blanket term "political warfare," which can cover a broad range of actions across the political, diplomatic, military, intelligence, and economic realms, may often be subject to shifting definitions or the use of parallel terms. Many terms have been employed in public discourse to describe the subversive / coercive efforts of authoritarian states: to include "hybrid warfare," "information warfare," "psychological warfare," and a host of related terms employed without precise definition. The US Government does not appear to hold a publicly-articulated definition of political warfare,⁷ but similar terms are employed in certain contexts. For example, the official US Department of Defense (DoD) dictionary includes the term "subversion," which is defined as "actions designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a governing authority."⁸

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA)—which should be understood as the military component of the CCP, rather than as a depoliticized national military—itself employs the official framework of the "Three Warfares" (三战), consisting of the three component areas of "public opinion warfare" (舆论战), "psychological warfare" (心理战), and "legal warfare" (法律战)—in which manipulation of the adversary's information environment and perceptions, and concerted use of legal interpretations in international fora, are used to advance the CCP's policy goals in both peace and wartime.⁹

⁷ An internal State Department document from 1948 may have provided one of the first and clearest efforts to define "political warfare" in the modern sense. This document stated that: "Political warfare is the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both covert and overt. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures [...] and 'white' propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of 'friendly' foreign elements, 'black' psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states. [...] We have been handicapped by a popular attachment to the concept of a basic difference between peace and war [...] and by a reluctance to recognize the realities of international relations—the perpetual rhythm of struggle, in and out of war." See: State Department Policy Planning Staff, "The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare," policy paper dated April 30, 1948 (originally classified Top Secret, declassified June 2008), <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/28654-document-10-policy-analysis-paper-state-department-policy-planning-staffcouncil>. The authorship of this document is not confirmed, but has been attributed to George Kennan.

⁸ DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (March 2017), p. 225, <https://www.tradoc.army.mil/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AD1029823-DOD-Dictionary-of-Military-and-Associated-Terms-2017.pdf>.

⁹ For more in-depth discussions of this paradigm, see: Larry Wortzel, The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Information Warfare, US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, March 2014, <https://www.istor.org/stable/resrep11757?seq=5>; and

For its part, Taiwan's government employs the term and framework of "cognitive warfare" (認知作戰) to characterize PRC actions. A 2021 ROC Ministry of National Defense (MND, 中華民國國防部) document stated that: "Cognitive warfare is used to sway the subject's will and change its mindset... cognitive warfare is originated from the [disciplines] of intelligence warfare, psychological warfare, and public opinion warfare... [I]t can make use of highly efficient modern computing systems, the internet, and social media, to twist the subject's social ideologies, mentality, and the sense of law-and-order through cyber infiltrations and manipulation of mentality and public opinions... Psychologically, the PRC is trying to cause mental disarray and confusion, in order to weaken our fighting will, [our] determination to defending [sic] ourselves, and seize the dominance of public opinions [sic]."¹⁰

My own proposed term for the complex combination of coercive, subversive, and cooptive measures employed by the CCP in this context is "political warfare." For the purposes of this testimony, I propose the following definition for this term: "Concerted and purposeful—and primarily, though not necessarily, non-violent—actions taken by a political actor to undermine a targeted group's morale, social and political cohesion, and psychological resistance to the imposition of the initiator's desired end state. These actions include, but are not limited to, directed propaganda and disinformation (in both traditional and online media), elite cooptation, political subversion, economic sabotage, and coercive military and economic actions intended for psychological effect."

The Forms of CCP Political Warfare

In past writing, I have asserted that the CCP's political warfare efforts may be classified in a taxonomy of seven broad categories: information manipulation, lawfare, gray zone operations, economic coercion, united front work, espionage, and cyber operations.¹¹ While the PRC's political warfare activities are employed worldwide, Taiwan is the target of the CCP's most focused and intensive political warfare campaign. The major component elements of the CCP's political warfare are as follows:

Information Manipulation:

The manipulation of the target's information environment, with intent to impact the perceptions and attitudes of media audiences. (This set of practices aligns with the CCP's own paradigm of "public opinion warfare" [舆论战].) This involves efforts to assert influence over traditional media organizations (newspapers, television news, etc.), online news, and online social media platforms in order to advance the CCP's preferred narratives.

Elsa Kania, "The PLA's Latest Strategic Thinking on the Three Warfares," China Brief (Vol. 16, No. 13), August 22, 2016, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-plas-latest-strategic-thinking-on-the-three-warfares/>.

¹⁰ ROC Ministry of Defense, ROC National Defense Report 2021 (中華民國 110 年國防報告書), November 2021 (p. 46), <https://www.mnd.gov.tw/NewUpload/%E6%AD%B7%E5%B9%B4%E5%9C%8B%E9%98%B2%E5%A0%B1%E5%91%8A%E6%9B%B8%E7%B6%B2%E9%A0%81%E5%B0%88%E5%8D%80%E6%AD%B7%E5%B9%B4%E5%9C%8B%E9%98%B2%E5%A0%B1%E5%91%8A%E6%9B%B8%E5%B0%88%E5%8D%80.files/%E5%9C%8B%E9%98%B2%E5%A0%B1%E5%91%8A%E6%9B%B8-%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87%E7%89%88.pdf>.

¹¹ John Dotson, *The Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare Directed Against Taiwan: Overview and Analysis* (Global Taiwan Institute, May 2024), https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/OR_CCP-Political-Warfare.pdf.

“Lawfare”:

The process of actively and systematically promoting to international audiences, and in international fora, the PRC's official interpretations of international law and diplomatic practice—positions selectively formulated to pursue PRC state interests—even when those positions contradict longstanding norms or logical coherence. Authoritative PLA commentators have described legal warfare as a “second battlefield” coordinated with military operations” (配合军事行动的“第二战场”), and as a means of “inflicting soft casualties” (“软杀伤”) on the enemy.¹²

Gray Zone Operations:

Gray zone operations take the form of a range of activities—primarily, though not exclusively, military in nature—that encroach upon Taiwan's aerial and maritime periphery, and which are intended to erode Taiwan's sovereignty and the sense of security held by its citizens. Such activities include naval exercises in the waters surrounding Taiwan, military aviation flights that steadily advance closer to Taiwan's airspace, and coast guard “law enforcement” operations that interfere with Taiwan's exercise of sovereignty and effective administration over its outlying islands. As with information manipulation, the paramount objective in such operations is the intended psychological effect on Taiwan's population.

Economic Coercion:

The employment of targeted trade measures—including, but not limited to, measures such as import bans, denial of market access, and politically-oriented trade and investment incentives—to punish groups within Taiwan for developments to which Beijing objects, to isolate Taiwan internationally, and to pressure other countries and international companies to conform to Beijing's preferred policies on Taiwan.

United Front Subversion:

United front work embraces a range of measures—including financial and psychological cooptation, the use of front organizations, and political subversion—that are intended to allow the CCP to coopt and control persons or social groups outside the ranks of the party. In the case of Taiwan, united front measures may be observed in efforts to coopt business and political elites, the funding and manipulation of local organizations such as temple societies, and the support of fringe political parties employed to spread pro-CCP (and anti-American) narratives.

Intelligence Operations:

The PRC's conducts a range of espionage and intelligence operations directed at Taiwan. Intelligence operations seek to acquire for the CCP, often through clandestine methods, inside information on political developments within Taiwan, and/or controlled national security information that could be beneficial in a future conflict; and to degrade the functions of Taiwan's own intelligence and security organizations. Like united front work, but often in a more covert form, intelligence operations seek to subvert Taiwan's society and institutions, and to soften Taiwan's resistance to eventual annexation.

Cyber Operations:

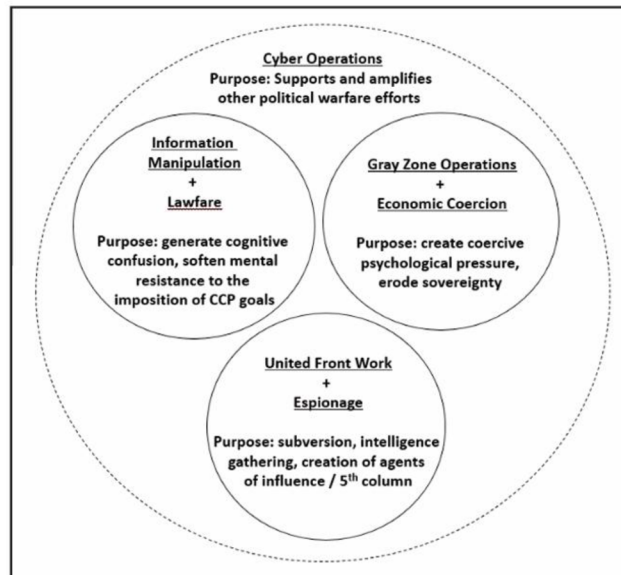
Cyber operations consist of the use of directed online activity—including, but not limited to, clandestine network penetrations and directed online propaganda-cum-disinformation—in order to gather intelligence, identify exploitable infrastructure vulnerabilities, and sow confusion and social divisions in order to

¹² Major General Liu Jiaxin (刘家新), “法律战——现代战争的第二个战场” (“Legal Warfare--Modern Warfare's Second Battlefield”), *Guangming Daily* (光明日报), Nov. 3, 2004, <https://mil.news.sina.com.cn/2004-11-03/0958239693.html>.

undermine Taiwan's society and democratic political system. Cyber operations are best understood not so much as an independent mode of political warfare unto itself, but rather as the operations conducted in one of the most critical domains of political warfare—and which intersect with and amplify efforts in other areas.

In terms of their intended effects, I maintain that six of these elements of political warfare may, in turn, be grouped into three related pairs, as displayed in the following graphic:

Figure 1: The Major Component Elements of Political Warfare



Graphic: The seven categories of CCP political warfare—six of which may be grouped into rough pairs, based on their methods and intended purpose. The seventh category, cyber operations, serves to support and enable efforts in the other six categories. (Source: Created by the author)

Examples of CCP Political Warfare Directed Against Taiwan

While the CCP conducts its political warfare efforts worldwide, Taiwan is the subject of the Party's most focused and intensive efforts in this area. Specific methodologies and examples of the CCP's political warfare efforts in Taiwan are provided below.

Information Manipulation

In recent years, the CCP has achieved considerable success in exerting influence over the coverage and narratives in much of Taiwan's politically polarized media environment. This process has often played itself

out according to a recognizable template: a wealthy Taiwanese businessperson—one with considerable investments or other financial equities in the PRC, and often identifiable linkages with the Chinese government—will purchase a media outlet, shake up the existing staff, and undertake a conversion to a pro-unification, pro-PRC narrative line.¹³

PRC state and state-affiliated actors—as well as local proxies within Taiwan itself—have also engaged in extensive information manipulation in the online domain intended to advance CCP policy goals. Much of this manipulated online content takes the form of misinformation and disinformation¹⁴ material circulated via social media—with Facebook and the messaging apps Telegram, WhatsApp, and LINE representing particularly prominent vectors for the dissemination of such material. In the case of Taiwan, a substantial amount of pro-PRC propaganda and disinformation material—alongside other suspect material promoting financial scams and quack health supplements—originates from Malaysia-based content farms, whose operators work primarily from a profit motive.¹⁵

Much of this material is also generated via what has been termed the “pink model” (粉紅模式) of content distribution: one in which groups either associated with, or sympathetic to, the PRC government (such as government-affiliated cyber militias, or members of Chinese nationalist online discussion groups) post propaganda/disinformation content into the social media news feeds consumed by audiences in Taiwan.¹⁶

Specific Examples of Information Manipulation in Taiwan:

- In summer 2023, the *United Daily News* (UDN, 聯合報)—one of Taiwan's major newspapers, with a firmly “blue” (i.e., pro-Kuomintang Party [KMT, 國民黨]) editorial line—published a pair of articles that purported to reveal the minutes of a secret government body called the “South Seas Working Committee” (南海工作會議). Included in this document was discussion of supposed plans to construct a secret biological warfare laboratory in Taiwan (at American direction, and under American supervision). This was accompanied by a campaign of Facebook posts spreading the story that, in conjunction with the creation of the lab, the government was involved in a plan to collect 150,000 blood samples for the purpose of researching genetic warfare weapons directed at China. Examination of the document showed a number of discrepancies—beginning with the fact that no such government committee is known to exist, and the usage of distinctively PRC

¹³ Jonah Landsman, “Assessing Taiwan’s Media Landscape and PRC Influence, Part One: The Dangers of Deregulation,” Global Taiwan Brief, July 12, 2023, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/07/assessing-taiwans-media-landscape-and-prc-influence-part-one-the-dangers-of-deregulation/>.

¹⁴ These two terms are often used interchangeably, although they mean different things. “Misinformation” is false information spread through ignorance or indifference. By contrast, “disinformation” is false information that the disseminator knows to be false, but actively promotes nonetheless—usually because of a financial or political motive. See: “Misinformation v Disinformation: What’s the Difference?,” BBC (undated), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z3hvhv6>.

¹⁵ Jason Liu, Ko Hao-hsiang, and Hsu Chia-yu, “How a Content Farm in Malaysia Turned Fake News Directed at Taiwan into a Money-maker,” *Taiwan Gazette*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.taiwangazette.org/news/2020/3/10/fake-news-in-taiwan-comes-from-a-trans-national-content-farm-in-malaysia>; and Jason Liu, Ko Hao-hsiang, and Hsu Chia-yu, “Meet Boss Evan – The Man Behind Taiwan’s Zombie Content Farms,” *Taiwan Gazette*, March 16, 2020, <https://www.taiwangazette.org/news/2020/3/12/taiwans-content-mill-mafia-is-accepting-new-recruits-apply-here>. Also author’s discussions with civil society researchers in Taiwan, December 2023.

¹⁶ For discussion of the “pink model” of propaganda distribution, see: Puma Shen (沈伯洋), “中國認知領域作戰模型初探：以 2020 臺灣選舉為例” (“Initial Exploration of the Chinese Cognitive Warfare Model: Taking the 2020 Taiwan Election as an Example”), *Prospect Quarterly* (遠景基金會季刊), Vol.22 No.1 (January 2021), <https://www.pf.org.tw/en/pfen/37-8137.html>.

Mandarin—that revealed the underlying source document to be an evident forgery.¹⁷ Furthermore, elements of the story clearly matched a preceding Russian disinformation story about alleged US-funded biological warfare laboratories in Ukraine.¹⁸

- In the lead-up to Taiwan's January 2024 elections, TikTok videos by pro-PRC actors were employed to stoke fears of a war in the Taiwan Strait, depicted as part of a US-initiated plan to use Taiwan as a pawn to prevent China's national revival.¹⁹ Such messaging itself dovetailed with campaign messages from both the Kuomintang Party and the PRC government that the 2024 elections represented a choice between war (with the Democratic Progressive Party) or peace (with the KMT).²⁰

"Lawfare"

The government of the PRC employs lawfare consistently in international fora to advance its sovereignty claims over Taiwan, and to deny Taiwan any legitimacy as a state. Two prominent examples are:

- UN Resolution 2758: United Nations Resolution 2758 (UNR 2758), adopted in October 1971, removed the "China" United Nations seat from the Republic of China government in Taiwan and transferred it to the People's Republic of China. Although the text of the resolution did not take any position related to the status of Taiwan, the PRC has consistently, and erroneously, invoked UNR 2758 as conveying UN recognition of its sovereignty claims over Taiwan.²¹
- Claiming the Taiwan Strait as territorial waters: Beijing has consistently adopted a series of positions related to territorial sovereignty and international maritime law that are intended to bolster the PRC's expansive territorial claims over both Taiwan and nearly the entirety of the South China Sea. Such positions often stand in clear contravention of both straightforward, plain text

¹⁷ 事實查核 | 媒體披露的「會議紀錄」證明了美國要求台灣發展生化武器嗎? ("Fact-Checking: Do the 'Committee' Records Published by the Media Prove that America is Developing Biological Weapons in Taiwan?"), *Radio Free Asia*, July 20, 2023, <https://www.rfa.org/cantonese/news/factcheck/tw-07202023151014.html>.

¹⁸ For a detailed examination of this disinformation story, see: John Dotson, "Beijing Dusts Off an Old Playbook with Disinformation about Taiwan Biological Warfare Labs," *Global Taiwan Brief*, November 1, 2023, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/11/bei-jing-dusts-off-an-old-playbook-with-disinformation-about-taiwan-biological-warfare-labs/>.

¹⁹ "In Regards to the Film 'How to Start a War in the Taiwan Strait to Constrain China's Rise' Propagated on the Internet, the Foreign Ministry Has the Following Response" (關於網傳「如何誘導台海戰爭遏制中國崛起」的影片事, 外交部回應如下), ROC Foreign Ministry, July 24, 2023, https://www.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=95&sms=73&s=115115.

²⁰ Throughout campaigns for both the 2022 and 2024 elections, prominent KMT figures repeatedly emphasized the slogan "voting for the DPP means that youths go to the battlefield" (票投民進黨年輕人上戰場). (See: "馬英九桃輔選籲下架民進黨疾呼「票投民進黨年輕人上戰場」" ["Ma Ying-jeou Called for the Removal of the DPP During the Election, Shouting that 'Voting for the DPP Means that Young People Go to the Battle field'"], *China Times*, Jan. 1, 2024, <https://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20240101001644-260407?chdtv>.) Media firebrand and KMT vice-presidential candidate Jaw Shau-kong (趙少康) also called the elections a "choice between war and peace." ("KMT's Hou-Jaw Ticket Calls Election a Choice Between War and Peace," Central News Agency (Taiwan), Nov. 26, 2023, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202311260007>.) This was mirrored by statements by PRC government officials—such as Zhang Zhijun, head of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS), who called for Taiwan voters to make the "correct choice," as "The two elections coming up in the Taiwan region are important choices between the prospects for peace and war, prosperity and decline." ("Chinese Official Urges Taiwan's People to Make 'Correct Choice' on Election," Reuters, Jan. 2, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/chinese-official-urges-taiwans-people-make-correct-choice-election-2024-01-03/>.)

²¹ Russell Hsiao, "Resolution 2758 and the Fallacy of Beijing's UN 'One-China Principle,'" *Global Taiwan Brief*, October 20, 2021, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2021/10/resolution-2758-and-the-fallacy-of-beijings-un-one-china-principle/>.

interpretations of international agreements (such as UNCLOS) and longstanding maritime custom. Beijing has continued to maintain such positions and to claim the justification of international law, even when its positions have been explicitly rejected by international tribunals.²² In relation to Taiwan, the PRC has made a set of claims, unsupported by custom or law, which assert that not only is Taiwan PRC territory, but that the entirety of the Taiwan Strait constitutes PRC territorial waters.²³

Gray Zone Operations

Gray zone operations take the form of a range of activities—primarily, though not exclusively, military in nature—that encroach upon Taiwan’s aerial and maritime periphery, and which are intended to erode Taiwan’s sovereignty and the sense of security held by its citizens. A key motivation for these operations is their intended psychological effect. Taiwan’s own MND has described the PRC’s coordinated efforts at information manipulation and coercive military activity as part of a campaign of “civil attack, military intimidation” (文攻武嚇) intended to psychologically target the perspectives and morale of Taiwan’s population.²⁴ These efforts have increased markedly in scale in recent years, to include these examples:

- **PRC Coast Guard patrols around Taiwan’s outlying islands:** On February 14, 2024 an incident occurred to the east of Taiwan’s Kinmen Island, in which an unidentified Chinese small boat capsized while allegedly fleeing from an attempted inspection by the Taiwan Coast Guard, resulting in the deaths of two of the four men aboard. In the wake of the incident, the PRC government accused Taiwan authorities (without evidence) of maliciously causing the accident. The PRC Coast Guard then stepped up its presence and “law enforcement” activities in the area, and engaged in limited harassment of Taiwan vessels and incursions into waters declared restricted by Taiwan’s government. This is an example of how the PRC leverages incidents at sea to create “opportunistic crises”: using the event as a pretext to further escalate “gray zone” operations intended to assert Beijing’s claimed sovereignty over both Taiwan and the waters of the Taiwan Strait.²⁵
- **Strait Thunder-2025A Exercise:** In early April 2025, the PLA conducted the *Strait Thunder-2025A* Exercise, which continued the emphasis in recent PLA exercises on practicing naval blockading maneuvers around Taiwan—while also adding the provocative element of conducting simulated strikes against Taiwan’s energy infrastructure and port facilities. As is frequently the case with such exercises, the CCP sought through propaganda to posture the military maneuvers as a reaction to

²² One clear example of this was the 2016 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (The Hague, Netherlands) that ruled for the Republic of the Philippines (RP) and against the PRC in a case brought by the RP in relation to contested maritime claims in the South China Sea. [See: Permanent Court of Arbitration, *The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of Philippines v. The People's Republic of China)*, decision issued July 12, 2016, <https://pca-cpa.org/en/cases/77/>.] The PRC has simply ignored this ruling, while maintaining its excessive territorial sovereignty claims in the region.

²³ John Dotson, “Beijing Ramps Up Its Rhetoric over Taiwan and Maritime Sovereignty,” *Global Taiwan Brief*, June 29, 2022, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/06/beijing-ramps-up-its-rhetoric-over-taiwan-and-maritime-sovereignty/>.

²⁴ ROC Ministry of National Defense, 2022 Chinese Communist Military Power Report [111 年中共軍力報告 書], September 1, 2022 (pp. 20-21).

²⁵ John Dotson, “Beijing’s Increasing Maritime Gray Zone Operations Around Taiwan’s Outlying Islands,” *China Brief*, March 29, 2024, <https://jamestown.org/program/beijings-increasing-maritime-gray-zone-operations-around-taiwans-outlying-islands/>.

developments within Taiwan—in this case, a policy speech made by Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te in March.²⁶

Economic Coercion

Economic coercion serves as a corollary, in the trade realm, to gray zone operations in the military realm. The PRC has long employed economic pressure against Taiwan itself, in both coercive and cooptive terms. It has also employed a combination of economic and diplomatic pressure to prevent other countries from forming closer relationships with Taiwan. This phenomenon has been observed in the United States in a host of ways in recent years: to include controversies involving professional sports, and self-censorship by Hollywood film studios in the name of maintaining access to the Chinese market.²⁷

Two prominent recent examples of Chinese economic coercion clearly linked to political events are:

- In 2022, the PRC imposed import bans on a range of Taiwanese agricultural goods—including pineapples, sugar apples, and grouper fish—citing as a pretext the presence of pests or chemicals in shipments of these products. As the PRC is Taiwan's primary export market for these goods, the bans had a major impact on producers in these agricultural sectors. The PRC began to selectively lift these restrictions in December 2023—just prior to Taiwan's January 2024 elections—in ways intended to exert political influence. For example, the PRC lifted the ban on grouper fish imports for seven commercial fish farms that registered with the PRC government, and whose owners joined a delegation that visited China.²⁸
- In 2021, the government of Lithuania reached agreement for Taiwan to open the "Taiwanese Representative Office in Lithuania" in the capital city of Vilnius. In response, the PRC recalled its ambassador to Vilnius and demanded that Lithuania withdraw its own ambassador in Beijing. The PRC followed these diplomatic protests with an undeclared but *de facto* economic embargo on Lithuania, to include a ban on products from elsewhere in Europe that included Lithuanian components. The damage from this embargo was limited due to the relatively small size of the PRC-Lithuania trade relationship, but had an impact in certain high-tech sectors such as lasers, while complicating broader EU-China trade.²⁹

²⁶ John Dotson and Jonathan Harman, "The PLA's 'Strait Thunder-2025A' Exercise Presents Further Efforts to Isolate Taiwan," Global Taiwan Brief, April 16, 2025, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2025/04/the-plas-strait-thunder-exercise/>.

²⁷ Isaac Stone Fish, "How China gets American Companies to Parrot Its Propaganda," *Washington Post*, Oct. 11, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/how-china-gets-american-companies-to-parrot-its-propaganda/2019/10/11/5127b8c-eb73-11e9-85c0-85a098e47b37_story.html; and *Made in Hollywood, Censored by Beijing: The U.S. Film Industry and Chinese Government Influence*, PEN America, August 2020, https://pen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Made_in_Hollywood_Censored_by_Beijing_Report_FINAL.pdf.

²⁸ Zoe Weaver-Lee, "Combating Beijing's Multifaceted Economic Coercion Strategy against Taiwan," Global Taiwan Brief, February 8, 2023, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/02/combating-beijings-multifaceted-economic-coercion-strategy-against-taiwan/>; and Liu Tzu-hsuan, "Ministry Urges China to be Consistent," *Taipei Times*, Dec. 23, 2023, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2023/12/23/2003811027>.

²⁹ "Taiwan Opens Office in Lithuania, Brushing Aside China Opposition," Reuters, November 18, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/taiwan-opens-office-lithuania-brushing-aside-china-opposition-2021-11-18/>; and Wendy Cutler and Shay Wester, "Resilience & Resolve: Lessons from Lithuania's Experience with Chinese Economic Coercion," Asia Society, April 17, 2024, <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/resilience-resolve-lessons-lithuanias-experience-chinese-economic-coercion>.

United Front Subversion:

Arguably the most fundamental pillar of the CCP's political warfare directed against Taiwan is united front work (UFW, 统一战线工作 or 统战工作). United front work has a long history in both the international Communist movement more generally, and in the CCP specifically. However, it is a complex phenomenon embracing a range of activities, and it is poorly understood among most foreign observers.³⁰ In past writing, I have chosen to define united front work as: "A range of measures—including but not limited to financial and/or psychological cooptation, the creation and manipulation of front organizations, and political subversion—intended to allow the CCP to coopt and control persons or social groups outside the ranks of the party."³¹

The CCP's united front efforts directed at Taiwan take many forms, including: the cooptation of business figures with financial interests in the PRC; and financial and media support for marginal, pro-annexation political figures and fringe parties, in order to promote a narrative that most of Taiwan's citizens are in favor of annexation. Two particular examples are:

- **Covert financing to local social and religious institutions:** The PRC provides funding (often covertly) to local social and religious institutions in Taiwan in order to gain leverage over the leadership of such organizations. The effort to cultivate temple organizations—especially efforts to leverage the veneration of the sea goddess Matsu, a popular figure of devotion on both sides of the Strait—is a particularly prominent part of such cooptation efforts.³² CCP-influenced organized crime groups are also linked to such efforts, with the Bamboo Union Triad (竹聯幫) and the organized crime-linked China Unification Promotion Party (CUPP, 中華統一促進黨) reportedly exercising heavy influence over more than 30 temple organizations throughout Taiwan.³³
- **The cultivation of local-level political figures:** In the weeks leading up to Taiwan's January 2024 elections, the Chinese government provided over 400 discounted trips to China for local Taiwan officials, with subsidies provided by the CCP Taiwan Affairs Office.³⁴ Such trips, especially before elections, are a common feature of CCP efforts to cultivate local officials at the city, county, and township level.

Intelligence Operations:

³⁰ For an excellent primer on CCP united front work, see: Anne-Marie Brady, "On the Correct Understanding of Terms," China Brief, May 9, 2019, <https://jamestown.org/program/on-the-correct-use-of-terms-for-understanding-united-front-work/>.

³¹ John Dotson, *The Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare Directed Against Taiwan: Overview and Analysis* (Global Taiwan Institute, May 2024), p. 15, https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/OR_CCP-Political-Warfare.pdf.

³² "Mainland Slams DPP Obstruction of Cross-Strait Exchanges," Xinhua, Nov. 29, 2023, <https://english.news.cn/20231129/f3f1d23f2bc84e12abde57d563e550a3/c.html>; and Hsia Hsiao-hwa, Mai Xiaotian and Lee Tsung-han, "China Targets Taiwan's Temples, Matsu Worshippers in Influence Ops," RFA, Jan. 10, 2024, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/taiwan-goddess-01102024103041.html>.

³³ J. Michael Cole, "On the Role of Organized Crime and Related Substate Actors in Chinese Political Warfare Against Taiwan," *Prospect & Exploration*, Vol. 19 No. 6 (June 2021), https://www.mjl.gov.tw/FileUploads/eBooks/6f2646ebb06a4ddb_a2449c950a42533d/Section_file/8a0b255919bc48e1bc3d2a38825c_d3c8.pdf.

³⁴ Yimou Lee, "Exclusive: China lures hundreds of Taiwan politicians with cheap trips before election," Reuters, December 1, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-lures-hundreds-taiwan-politicians-with-cheap-trips-before-election-sources-2023-12-01/>.

Whereas united front activities are sometimes overt in nature, or else thinly-disguised behind front organizations, the PRC also directs a broad range of covert intelligence operations against Taiwan. The three primary agencies involved in these efforts are:

1. The United Front Work Department (UFWD, 统一战线工作部), which collects social and political information, as well as conducting subversive activities;
2. The Ministry of State Security (MSS, 国家安全部), the CCP's leading civilian intelligence service, which combines both external intelligence and domestic security functions for the CCP, and which engages in agent recruitment and other intelligence operations in Taiwan;³⁵
3. Multiple bureaucracies within the People's Liberation Army, to include influence and psychological warfare functions conducted by the Central Military Commission Political Work Department (軍委會政治工作部);³⁶ and military intelligence functions under the newly reorganized PLA Information Support Force (PLAISF, 中国人民解放军信息支援部队).³⁷

Examples of recent PRC intelligence operations include:

- In October 2023, retired ROC Air Force Colonel Liu Sheng-shu (劉聖恕) was convicted of running an espionage ring for the PRC, and given a 20-year prison sentence. Liu was reportedly recruited during a 2013 trip to China, and went on to build up a network of agents in the military services (five other officers from the navy and air force were also sentenced in the case), making payments to his sources through dummy companies. Taiwan authorities reportedly confiscated more than \$500,000 USD in assets they said represented illicit payments for Liu's services.³⁸
- In March 2025, four military personnel—three military police personnel serving as guards at the presidential office building, and a military communications officer—received prison sentences of between 5 to 7 years for passing confidential documents and other military intelligence material to a PRC intelligence officer. The case was particularly shocking, in that it revealed treason on the

³⁵ Peter Mattis, "Counterintelligence Remains Weakness in Taiwan's Defense," *China Brief*, August 17, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/counterintelligence-remains-weakness-in-taiwans-defense/>.

³⁶ The former CMC General Political Department was reorganized as the CMC Political Work Department in PLA organizational reforms carried out in 2015. For references, see: Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao, *The People's Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics*, Project 2049 Institute, October 2013, <https://project2049.net/2013/10/14/the-peoples-liberation-army-general-political-department-political-warfare-with-chinese-characteristics/>; and Phillip C. Saunders and Joel Wuthnow, "China's Goldwater-Nichols? Assessing PLA Organizational Reforms," *Joint Force Quarterly*, July 1, 2016, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/793267/chinas-goldwater-nichols-assessing-pla-organizational-reforms/>.

³⁷ PLA military intelligence, once designated the Second Department of the PLA General Staff Department, became a component of the PLA Strategic Support Force following the 2015 reforms; but the April 2024 reorganization has changed command relationships again, and appears to place at least some of these functions under the newly-designated Information Support Force. Further time and analysis will be needed to see how this reorganization plays itself out. See: Joe McReynolds and John Costello, "Planned Obsolescence: The Strategic Support Force In Memoriam (2015-2024)," *China Brief*, April 26, 2024, <https://jamestown.org/program/planned-obsolescence-the-strategic-support-force-in-memoriam-2015-2024/>; and J. Michael Dahm, "A Disturbance in the Force: The Reorganization of People's Liberation Army Command and Elimination of China's Strategic Support Force," *China Brief*, April 26, 2024, <https://jamestown.org/program/a-disturbance-in-the-force-the-reorganization-of-peoples-liberation-army-command-and-elimination-of-chinas-strategic-support-force/>.

³⁸ "Taiwan Ex-Colonel Gets 20 Years for Spying for China," BBC News, Oct. 26 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-67224725>.

part of personnel responsible for guarding the president and other senior Taiwan government officials.³⁹

Cyber Operations:

Cyber operations are best understood not so much as an independent mode of political warfare unto itself, but rather as the operations conducted in one of the most critical domains of political warfare. Nearly all of the other domains of CCP political warfare directed against Taiwan intersect with the cyber domain: to include the pervasive use of directed online disinformation, cyber espionage directed against Taiwan's government institutions, and economic sabotage directed against economic and infrastructure targets. The CCP's directed network penetration operations, in addition to preparing for a future conflict, serve as a corollary to gray zone operations in physical space: seeking not only to degrade Taiwan's security, but also to create a corrosive psychological effect upon its people.

Multiple PRC agencies—as well as state-affiliated private hackers—are involved in conducting cyber operations against Taiwan, and profiling all such organizations is beyond the scope of this testimony. However, one key institutional actor engaged in cyber operations directed against Taiwan is the PLA's Base 311 (Unit 61716), a facility in Fujian Province that serves as the PLA's "Public Opinion Warfare, Psychological Warfare, and Legal Warfare Base" (舆论战心理战法律战基地). Base 311 operates multiple front organizations focused on media penetration and united front work in Taiwan.⁴⁰

Specific instances of cyber operations are more difficult to identify in comparison with other domains of political warfare, but information on trends is available. In January 2025, Taiwan's civilian intelligence agency—the normally secretive National Security Bureau (NSB, 國家安全局)—took the unusual step of releasing a public report on the trends in PRC-directed hacking activity directed against Taiwan. The NSB reported a daily average of 2.4 million cyber attacks (not specifically defined by type or severity) against Taiwanese networks in 2024 (a two-fold increase from the average of 1.2 million daily attacks in 2023), and stated that "most of the attacks are attributed to the PRC cyber force." The NSB statistics also reported 906 specific cases of cyber attacks against Taiwan government agencies and infrastructure organizations in 2024 (a year-on-year increase of 20% from 2023), with government agencies, the telecommunications sector, physical transportation infrastructure, and defense supply chain companies identified as the primary targets.⁴¹

Conclusion

While the attention of international observers is naturally drawn to military developments involving China, the CCP's ongoing, persistent, and multi-faceted campaign of political warfare directed against Taiwan represents one the most important components of the PRC's overall effort to compel Taiwan's government

³⁹ "Former Taiwan Presidential Office guards sentenced for selling information to China 3 military policemen and 1 information office member sentenced to 5-7 years prison," *Taiwan News*, Mar. 26, 2025, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/6069026>.

⁴⁰ Elsa Kania, "The Role of PLA Base 311 in Political Warfare against Taiwan (Part 3)," *Global Taiwan Brief*, Feb. 15, 2017, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2017/02/the-role-of-pla-base-311-in-political-warfare-against-taiwan-part-3/>.

⁴¹ ROC National Security Bureau, "Analysis on China's Cyberattack Techniques in 2024," January 2025, <https://www.nsb.gov.tw/en/#!/%E5%85%AC%E5%91%8A%E8%B3%87%E8%A8%8A%E6%96%B0%E8%81%9E%E7%A8%BF%E6%9A%A8%E6%96%B0%E8%81%9E%E5%8F%83%E8%80%83%E8%B3%87%E6%96%99/2025-01-05/Analysis%20on%20China's%20Cyberattack%20Techniques%20in%202024>.

and population to accept annexation on the CCP's terms. Just as importantly, it also represents the core effort of the CCP to lay the groundwork for a post-unification settlement that would ensure CCP political control over Taiwan society—in a manner perhaps similar to, but by necessity even more harsh, than the manner in which the PRC authorities have asserted control over the formerly restive territory of Hong Kong.

To understand the nature of the CCP's ambitions for Taiwan—and perhaps by extension, to better understand the efforts by the PRC and other authoritarian regimes to undermine free societies more broadly—it is critical to understand this campaign of calculated political warfare. I commend the Commission for its efforts to bring greater attention to this critical issue.

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Written Testimony

Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Stand with Taiwan: Countering the PRC's Political Warfare and Transnational Repression

Howard Shen

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Washington, DC

July 23, 2025

The views expressed in this testimony are the author's alone and do not represent those of any of the organizations with which the author is, or has been, affiliated.

Howard Shen, Written Testimony

July 23, 2025

*To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.**Thus, the highest art of war is to defeat the enemy's strategy; only after that comes undermining alliances, then attacking armies, and, as a last resort, laying siege to cities.*— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Chairman Sullivan, Co-Chairman Smith, distinguished members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. My purpose today is to bring to your attention the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) primary strategy to subjugate the free society of my country – the Republic of China (Taiwan) – without firing a single shot.

As Sun Tzu observed in *The Art of War*, “To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.” Beijing understands this profoundly. Rather than immediately resorting to military force, Beijing has long employed a multifaceted approach designed to erode Taiwan's strategic confidence and weaken its will to resist.

This is political warfare in its purest form, as defined by George F. Kennan in 1948: “the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives.”

The CCP's own doctrine, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) “Three Warfares” (*sanzhan*, 三戰), mirrors this logic:

- Public Opinion Warfare (*yulunzhan*, 輿論戰): Shapes domestic and international perceptions through propaganda and disinformation;
- Psychological Warfare (*xinlizhan*, 心理戰): Sows fear, confusion, and distrust through intimidation and coercive signaling, including gray-zone military activities;
- Legal Warfare (*faluzhan*, 法律戰) or “lawfare”: Exploits and manipulates legal regimes to advance political goals.

Beyond these, Beijing systematically deploys economic coercion, sophisticated disinformation campaigns, and persistent low-intensity gray-zone operations in and around Taiwan. These are not provocations of opportunity; they are strategic pressures calibrated to exhaust our society psychologically, politically, and economically. The goal is to push Taiwan into self-doubt and political paralysis before (or instead of) any kinetic attack.

Understanding this pervasive political warfare campaign is essential for designing effective, proportionate countermeasures. These countermeasures must strengthen Taiwan's democratic resilience without inadvertently fueling domestic political polarization or undermining the very freedoms we aim to protect. I appreciate the increasing attention this critical challenge has received here in Washington, D.C., and on Capitol Hill, and commend my fellow witnesses and the Commission staff for their tireless efforts.

Beijing's Political Warfare Toolkit

Economic Coercion

Beijing systematically weaponizes trade to exert political pressure on Taiwan. The aim is not to collapse Taiwan's economy overnight, but to target politically salient pain points that gradually erode public confidence. Its goal is to make ordinary citizens associate economic hardship with Taiwan's political choices, fostering disillusionment with democratic governance and normalizing the perception that accommodation leads to economic relief.

Taiwan's agricultural sector has been a primary target. Products heavily reliant on the mainland Chinese market, such as pineapples, wax apples, and grouper fish, have faced abrupt import bans under the specious "quarantine" concerns. These bans disproportionately impact farming communities in southern Taiwan, amplifying domestic frustration. Beijing deliberately weaponizes the desire for stability, making economic normalcy appear conditional on political submission.

Despite diversification efforts, Taiwan's trade structure underscores its continued vulnerability. According to Taiwan's Ministry of Finance, in the first half of 2025:¹

- Exports to mainland China and Hong Kong totaled \$79.2 billion (+12.7 percent YoY), accounting for 27.9 percent of Taiwan's total exports – the lowest share in 24 years but still Taiwan's largest single market alongside the United States.
- Imports from China and Hong Kong reached \$43.2 billion (+13.8 percent YoY), reflecting deep reliance on mainland supply chains.
- ICT and semiconductor-related products made up 70.8 percent of all exports, exposing Taiwan to significant risks if Beijing were to target critical supply chains.

Agricultural diversification has been even slower, with mainland China remaining the largest single buyer of Taiwan's plant products. Meanwhile, traditional industries like fisheries, textiles, petrochemicals, and labor-intensive manufacturing have faced sustained declines. This erosion of the industrial base indirectly undermines food security and manufacturing resilience, as these sectors are tightly linked to critical supply chains, including those for defense. A structurally weakened traditional industry base makes Taiwan more vulnerable to targeted trade disruptions and limits its capacity to absorb or quickly adapt to sudden embargoes or bans.

While short-term emergency measures, such as domestic solidarity campaigns to consume banned goods and international goodwill orders, may cushion immediate shocks, they cannot offset structural dependence. Taiwan must continue to expand trade diversification while maintaining stable economic ties with the mainland where feasible, but such stability must never

come at the cost of political leverage. Until Taiwan broadens its export markets, economic coercion will remain one of Beijing's most effective political warfare tools.

Disinformation and Cognitive Warfare

Beijing's disinformation campaigns are a cornerstone of its political warfare, designed to divide and demoralize. Content farms, LINE chatbots, and social media trolls amplify narratives such as "Taiwan's leaders will flee in wartime" and "Taiwan's military will not last over 72 hours."

The goal is not persuasion but erosion of trust, in government, in Taiwan's democratic processes, and in its partnerships. Even small doubts, when repeated and amplified, can depress voter turnout or deepen affective polarization.

In terms of electoral integrity, the CCP does not need to commit organized electoral fraud or ensure a proxy candidate wins. Beijing's objective is more insidious: to sow just enough doubt that even the most committed democrats question their institutions. If citizens lose confidence in the fairness of the process, cognitive warfare succeeds, not by changing votes, but by instilling an atmosphere of anxiety and chaos that weakens democratic resolve from within.

Neither apathy nor excessive mistrust is the answer. As Plato warned, "The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men." Civic participation is Taiwan's first line of defense against cognitive warfare, but it must be informed and grounded in trust, not driven by fear or conspiratorial suspicion. Beijing's malice thrives at both extremes: discouraging participation or turning politics into a hunt for "traitors." Countering it means not just fact-checking but sustaining public confidence that democratic processes work and that rational, constructive participation matters.

Gray-Zone Military Operations

Beijing's gray-zone operations are a continuous campaign, just short of war, designed to wear down Taiwan's will to resist while avoiding outright conflict. Daily PLA air incursions across the median line, maritime militia swarming near offshore islands, and drone overflights of Kinmen and Matsu have become normalized.

The objective is twofold: desensitizing the public by making PLA activity appear routine and unchangeable, and straining Taiwan's military resources through constant scrambling, which increases operational fatigue and the risk of accidents.

Taiwan is investing heavily in gray-zone defense capabilities. The Legislative Yuan swiftly approved the Ministry of National Defense-requested \$3.91 billion National Defense Resilience Budget, allocating funds for:

- \$1.91 billion for civil-military information and operations resilience, including new satellite and cloud systems to improve cybersecurity and protect undersea cables from sabotage;
- \$1.52 billion for improvement of key protective facilities;
- \$360 million for upgraded command, control, and communications systems; and
- \$15.6 million for integrated civil-military radar and imaging systems to improve monitoring of offshore incursions.

These initiatives directly target Beijing's gray-zone tactics, ensuring Taiwan can withstand cyber intrusions, maritime and aerial harassment, and more by protecting critical infrastructure, improving real-time situational awareness, and integrating civil-military responses.

Espionage and Infiltration: A National Threat

Recent espionage cases in this April have revealed the depth and sophistication of the CCP's infiltration efforts within Taiwan's government and military institutions.

One major case involves Huang Chu-Jung (黃取榮), a former senior ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) staffer, reportedly targeted by CCP Central Military Commission intelligence over a decade ago while studying in Guangzhou. Recruited as an agent, Huang built an organized network upon returning to Taiwan, exploiting his political connections to systematically penetrate sensitive offices.²

Prosecutors exposed a clear chain of recruitment and information flow:³

- Huang first recruited his close associate Chiu Shih-Yuan (邱世元), former deputy director of the ruling party's central party school
- Chiu then helped recruit Wu Shang-Yu (吳尚雨), a key aide to then Vice President Lai Ching-Te. After Lai assumed the presidency, Wu became a presidential adviser and continued passing classified travel schedules and diplomatic information to Chiu, who forwarded them to Huang.
- Chiu also recruited Ho Jen-Chieh (何仁傑), a longtime aide to Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, who provided sensitive foreign ministry intelligence.
- Huang then personally transported the collected information to CCP intelligence officers in the mainland, using a specially designed, CCP-developed encrypted application to communicate with handlers and transmit additional classified materials.

Leaked materials reportedly included then Vice President Lai Ching-Te's full travel schedule and hotel information during his 2023 trip to Paraguay, and Vice President Hsiao Bi-Khim's contact information such as but not limited to personal phone number and contact lists,

posing significant security risks. Prosecutors have announced indictments for Huang and his network under Taiwan's *National Security Act*.

These revelations underscore real-world risks. Vice President Hsiao has already been subjected to harassment and surveillance abroad by pro-CCP groups during overseas visits, including in the Czech Republic in March 2024 as VP-elect. A Czech Military Intelligence spokesman told *Reuters* in June 2025:⁴

This consisted of physically following the Vice President, gathering information on her schedule and attempts to document her meetings with important representatives of the Czech political and public scene... We even recorded an attempt by the Chinese civil secret service to create conditions to perform a demonstrative kinetic action against a protected person, which however did not go beyond the phase of preparation.

While there is no direct evidence linking that incident to the current espionage cases, it illustrates how leaked personal data could be exploited to aid intimidation or physical targeting.

A second case highlights vulnerabilities within the Legislative Yuan. Sheng Chu-Ying (盛礎纓), a long-time legislative assistant who worked for multiple DPP lawmakers and most recently for former Legislative Yuan Speaker You Si-Kun, was accused of being recruited as a CCP agent in 2019. Investigators allege that Sheng provided sensitive legislative information over a six-year period in exchange for cash and cryptocurrency.

The investigation into Ho Jen-Chieh further exposed serious institutional weaknesses. Ho, who arranged travel for senior officials, passed an initial security clearance in 2016 but was never re-evaluated in the subsequent eight years. His 2020 marriage to a military police officer stationed at the Presidential Office, who has since been reassigned, underscores the need for continuous vetting and insider-risk assessments for personnel in sensitive positions.

The military has not been immune. Kung Fan-Chia (孔繁嘉), a former lieutenant colonel and deputy director at the Military News Agency, was convicted of espionage for passing sensitive military information to CCP intelligence units. He was sentenced to just over five years, a sentence one legislator noted was lighter than that for selling a "murder house." Such lenient sentencing for those who betray state secrets not only undermines deterrence but risks eroding public and international confidence in Taiwan's national security system.

These cases demonstrate a simple truth: for the CCP, infiltration targets are chosen based on utility, not political affiliation. As Peter Mattis and Cheryl Yu of the Jamestown Foundation observe: Green (DPP) spies are just as useful as blue (Kuomintang; KMT) spies as long as they serve the same goal of national reunification.⁵

This underscores two critical points.

1. The CCP's political warfare does not distinguish between parties; it targets Taiwan as a whole. Framing the threat in partisan terms only plays into Beijing's hands by distracting from its true objective: to erode trust in all political institutions and delegitimize democracy itself.
2. A hardline stance on cross-Strait policy does not automatically translate into sound national security practices. One can adopt the toughest rhetoric toward Beijing yet still be careless in basic counterintelligence measures, as these recent espionage cases illustrate. True national security depends not on partisan signaling but on professional, institution-wide safeguards that protect Taiwan's democratic system from infiltration.

Whole-of-Society Resilience Means the Whole Society

To strengthen Taiwan's democratic institutions and counter the CCP's political warfare, Taiwan's leaders frequently emphasize "whole-of-society resilience." This means engaging key voices from all walks of life to prepare citizens for various security and disaster risks and foster broad social consensus.⁶ Crucially, whole-of-society resilience must truly mean the whole society.

Beijing's strategy deliberately seeks to polarize Taiwan's democracy – pitting groups against one another, amplifying mistrust, and eroding faith in public institutions. Over-politicizing the CCP threat, labeling domestic political rivals as "pro-Communist" or reducing all policy debate to partisan tests, plays directly into Beijing's hands. It risks exhausting and paralyzing concerned citizens, precisely the psychological effect Beijing intends to create.

As commentator Angelica Oung has argued, Taiwan cannot afford to view every issue through "green goggles"⁷ or any partisan lens. Political leaders and opinion-shapers who truly love Taiwan must approach national security, cross-Strait relations, and economic policy holistically, with the best interests of society as a whole in mind. Beijing's political warfare thrives on division, and any approach that prioritizes partisan gain over societal resilience risks doing its work for it.

Strengthening Taiwan's resilience requires reinforcing public trust across party lines. Civic education, media literacy, and institutional transparency are essential, but so is active and responsible legislative oversight of its national security apparatus. Constructive scrutiny, when carried out professionally and without partisan weaponization, can expose vulnerabilities and strengthen public confidence, showing that democratic accountability and resilience are not mutually exclusive.

Taiwan's democratic pluralism and cross-party cooperation are not weaknesses; they are its greatest strengths against authoritarian political warfare. Whole-of-society resilience truly means the whole society – whether green or blue. Any approach that fractures Taiwan's already fragile social fabric for partisan gain undermines national security far more than it protects it.

Responsible, Disciplined Engagement

While the national interests of the United States and Taiwan overlap in many areas, they are not identical. Instead of assuming external assistance will be automatic or unconditional, it is critically important that Taiwan pursues a balanced strategy: strengthening defense and international partnerships while responsibly exploring avenues, including maintaining disciplined channels of communication, to reduce miscalculation and secure cross-Strait stability.

Some in the United States may view dialogue with deep suspicion, which is understandable for a country that is far stronger, more resilient, and geographically distant from mainland China. Taiwan does not have that luxury.

For Taiwan, responsible engagement is not about naïveté or appeasement; it is about buying time, managing risks, and ensuring that its people can live in security and freedom despite constant pressure as Taiwan strengthens its resilience and defense preparedness. The United States should welcome such efforts, provided such engagements are pursued with eyes wide open and grounded in a full understanding of the depth of the Communists' political warfare operations.

Efforts by Taiwanese political figures to keep channels open should not be discredited offhand, so long as they are consistent with Taiwan's security and democratic values. This is especially true given that maintaining dialogue has long been regarded across Taiwan's political spectrum as a necessary risk-management tool, even if some initiatives have not received a response from Beijing. American, European, and Southeast Asian leaders consistently seek to engage Beijing and keep channels of communication open. Taiwan should not be held to a different standard.

If, however, there are reasons beyond reasonable doubt to believe that anyone has acted as a proxy of the CCP, Taiwanese prosecutors should investigate and prosecute such cases to the full extent of the law, just as they have in the recent espionage cases within the government and military. Anyone who betrays their own country should pay the price. Responsible engagement must be based on transparency and accountability.

This is why strategic discipline from Taiwan's political leaders is essential. Beijing is quick to exploit unforced errors. For instance, former KMT President Ma Ying-jeou's remarks on the eve of the 2024 presidential election, urging Taiwanese to "believe in the goodwill" of Xi Jinping, were ill-timed and risked signaling weakness during a politically sensitive moment. Beijing's state media amplified these comments, wrongfully portraying them as evidence that somehow strong pro-CCP elements still exist in Taiwan, thereby undermining deterrence.

Similarly, KMT Legislator Fu Kun-Chi's cross-Strait trip to Beijing in April 2024 included a high-profile meeting with Wang Huning (王滬寧), the lead implementer of the CCP's

United Front Work. Although Fu framed the visit as focusing on tourism and agricultural trade, including celebrations of partially lifted bans on cross-Strait tourism, his delegation was ill-timed, politically careless and handed Beijing easy propaganda victories, reinforcing false narratives and potentially undercutting Taiwan's deterrence.

These actions were politically shortsighted. These missteps provided easy material for CCP United Front propaganda and undermined American and international confidence in Taiwan's resolve and, over time, weaken public confidence at home. Responsible engagement requires careful messaging, timing, and coordination; anything less risks feeding into Beijing's cognitive warfare and undermining our domestic unity, deterrence posture, and social cohesion.

Policy Recommendations

Taiwan faces a sustained political warfare campaign aimed at undermining its democracy, weakening its deterrence, and eroding its economic stability without firing a shot. While Taiwan has taken important steps, its efforts need sustained and integrated supported from the United States. Standing with Taiwan, the United States should consider:

- Deepen intelligence and counterintelligence cooperation: Recent espionage cases reveal institutional vulnerabilities in Taiwan's security apparatus. Expanded training, technology sharing, and vetting mechanisms can help close these gaps, strengthening deterrence and international confidence.
- Align economic statecraft with security objectives: Washington should work with partners to strengthen Taiwan's trade diversification and reduce structural dependence on any single market, particularly in politically sensitive sectors.
- Bolster gray-zone defense and infrastructure resilience: Washington and Taipei should expand cooperation in cyber defense, radar systems, undersea cable protection, and satellite-based communication to enhance Taiwan's ability to withstand Beijing's daily coercion and wartime sabotage activities.
- Expand Whole-of-Society Cooperation: Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues should be expanded to involve Taiwan's national opposition parties, local governments, civil society, and critical private industry, strengthening Taiwan's whole-of-society resilience to political warfare.
- Combat Cognitive Warfare: Stronger U.S. broadcasting international presence such as Radio Free Asia and Voice of America provides reliable, fact-based information directly to Chinese-speaking audiences.

The surest way to deny Beijing victory is to ensure Taiwan remains united, capable, and confident. With U.S. support aligned across security, economic, and informational domains, Taiwan can continue to strengthen its deterrence and prove that democracies, when prepared and disciplined, are far harder to subdue than any authoritarian power anticipates.

¹ Ministry of Finance, Republic of China (Taiwan), Preliminary Customs Statistics on Import and Export Trade for June 2025 [114 年 6 月海關進出口貿易初步統計], July 8, 2025, [https://service.mof.gov.tw/public/Data/statistic/trade/news/11406/11406_%E4%B8%AD%E6%96%87%E6%96%B0%E8%81%E7%A8%BF%E6%9C%AC%E6%96%87%E5%8F%8A%E9%99%84%E8%A1%A8\).pdf](https://service.mof.gov.tw/public/Data/statistic/trade/news/11406/11406_%E4%B8%AD%E6%96%87%E6%96%B0%E8%81%E7%A8%BF%E6%9C%AC%E6%96%87%E5%8F%8A%E9%99%84%E8%A1%A8).pdf).

² “黃取榮當共諜 22 年 領取報酬逾 600 萬還涉洗錢 [Huang Chu-Jung Acted as a CCP Spy for 22 Years, [Received Over NT\$6 Million, Also Involved in Money Laundering],” *United Daily News* (聯合報), June 11, 2025, <https://udn.com/news/story/124449/8798487>.

³ “共諜 APP 揭密 1 / 賴清德訪友邦陷險境 行程、房號全被中南海掌握 [Spy-Enabled App Reveals All: Lai Ching-Te's Itinerary, Room Number Fully Controlled by Zhongnanhai],” *Mirror Media* (鏡傳媒), May 31, 2025, <https://www.mirrormedia.mg/story/20250531inv003>.

⁴ Jan Pejsek, quoted in “Czechs Say China Followed, Planned Intimidation of Taiwan Vice President,” *Reuters*, June 28, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/czechs-say-china-followed-planned-intimidation-taiwan-vice-president-2025-06-27/>.

⁵ Peter Mattis and Cheryl Yu, “The Real Enemy of Blue, Green, and White Is Not Each Other, but the CCP [觀點投書：藍綠白的敵人不是彼此，是中共],” *Storm Media* (風傳媒), April 11, 2025, <https://www.storm.mg/article/5353486>.

⁶ “Whole-of-Society Resilience Committee [全社會韌性委員會],” Presidential Office, Republic of China (Taiwan) (中華民國總統府), <https://www.president.gov.tw/Page/728>; “與谷立言同台 朱立倫：提高國防預算是全世界共同要求 [Sharing Stage with Raymond Greene, Eric Chu: Increasing Defense Budget Is a Global Consensus],” *United Daily News* (聯合報), May 24, 2025, <https://udn.com/news/story/6656/8761825>.

⁷ Angelica Oung, “It’s Time to Take Off the Green Goggles,” *Taipology*, May 24, 2024, <https://taipology.substack.com/p/its-time-to-take-off-the-green-goggles>.



**United States House of Representatives
Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

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*Witness Biographies***Fan Yun, Member of the Legislative Yuan of Taiwan**

Fan Yun is a member of the Legislative Yuan of the Republic of China (Taiwan) for the Democratic Progressive Party. She was first elected in 2020. Previously, she was an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, National Taiwan University, where she completed an MA, and served as Ambassador-at-Large of Taiwan. She holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Yale University. Her research interests include social movements, civil society, and gender politics. Among other things, Fan participated in the Wild Lily Student Movement for democracy in 1990 and in the 2014 Sunflower Movement protesting a trade pact with the PRC. She is an advisor for Democracy Without Borders and a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China.

Rear Admiral Mike Studeman, USN (Ret.), Former Commander of the Office of Naval Intelligence

Mike Studeman, former Commander of the Office of Naval Intelligence and a retired Rear Admiral, is one of our nation's leading national security professionals, with extensive global experience in intelligence, foreign policy, and defense matters. He is an internationally recognized expert on Asian affairs with deep expertise on China. Mike is a MITRE National Security Fellow and is on the Board of Advisors of the National Bureau of Asian Research. Mike led intelligence operations at every level from the tactical to the strategic, and in Navy, joint, national, and interagency assignments. He supported combat operations ranging from Desert Storm to the Balkans to Afghanistan. He also contributed to a range of counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, and counter-proliferation operations. Mike also helped formulate strategies and execute operations to deal with challenges from Iran, North Korea, Russia, and China.

Mike's joint assignments as a flag officer include National Intelligence Manager—Maritime for the Director of National Intelligence, Director of the National Maritime Intelligence Integration Office, 3 years as the Director of Intelligence (J2) for the Nation's largest Combatant Command, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and Director of Intelligence (J2) for the U.S. Southern Command in Miami, Florida.

Mike was appointed by President Bush as a White House Fellow in 2005. He went on to become the only officer ever to serve as Special Assistant to the Chief of Naval Operations, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, and the U.S. Fleet Forces Commander. He also held major command posts as a Captain, including commanding the Joint Intelligence Operations Center for U.S. Cyber Command and Commander of the Hopper Global Communications Center.

Mike's alma mater is the College of William and Mary. He is an Honors Graduate in Mandarin Chinese, the Defense Language Institute; a Distinguished Graduate of the National War College; and a Distinguished Graduate in Asian Affairs, Naval Postgraduate School. In 2024 he published a leadership book called "Might of the Chain: Forging Leaders of Iron Integrity."

Peter Mattis, President, The Jamestown Foundation

Peter Mattis is President of The Jamestown Foundation. He previously served as Senator Marco Rubio's staff director of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China from 2019 to 2021, where he was part of the legislative team that passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, Tibetan Policy and Support Act, and the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. Mr. Mattis has been analyzing the Chinese Communist Party's political warfare and intelligence activities for nearly two decades and is co-author of "Chinese Communist Espionage: An Intelligence Primer." He began his career as a counterintelligence analyst at the CIA and most recently served as a senior fellow with the U.S. House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party.

Audrye Wong, Jeane Kirkpatrick Fellow, American Enterprise Institute and Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Relations, University of Southern California

Audrye Wong is a Jeane Kirkpatrick Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and assistant professor of political science and international relations at the University of Southern California. Her research covers China's economic statecraft, including a forthcoming book from Oxford University Press, as well as China's foreign influence activities and propaganda campaigns. Her work has been supported by the Smith Richardson Foundation and the U.S. Department of Defense, among others. Audrye received a Ph.D. in Security Studies from Princeton University's School of

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