

# Chinese Communist Party Covert Operations Against Taiwan



Peter Mattis and Cheryl Yu

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## About the Global Taiwan Institute

GTI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit policy incubator dedicated to insightful, cutting-edge, and inclusive research on policy issues regarding Taiwan and the world. Our mission is to enhance the relationship between Taiwan and other countries, especially the United States, through policy research and programs that promote better public understanding about Taiwan and its people.

### The GTI “Counter Ideological Work and Political Warfare” Research Series

This report is the fourth of a planned five-part series of GTI policy background reports on the means and methods employed in Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ideological work and political warfare directed against Taiwan—efforts that are intended to undermine Taiwan’s democratic system, its social cohesion, and its ability to resist coercive efforts for “reunification” on the CCP’s terms. The first two reports were released in 2024; the remaining research reports will be forthcoming in spring 2025. The topics to be addressed are:

- [\*The Chinese Communist Party’s Political Warfare Directed Against Taiwan: Overview and Analysis\*](#), by John Dotson (May 2024)
- [\*The Chinese Communist Party’s Ideological Frameworks for Taiwan Policy\*](#), by John Dotson (August 2024)
- [\*The Chinese Communist Party’s Gray Zone Tactics Against Taiwan\*](#), by Derek Grossman (March 2025)
  - *Chinese Communist Party Covert Operations Against Taiwan*, by Peter Mattis and Cheryl Yu (current report, March 2025)
    - “Lawfare” and economic coercion directed against Taiwan, by Russell Hsiao and Benjamin Sando (forthcoming)

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*Cover image: ROC Army Colonel Hsiang Te-en (right), posing with a “Surrender Commitment” document in which he vowed to “support the peaceful reunification of the two sides of the Strait and to be loyal to the motherland. In the event of a war between the two sides of the Strait, I will do my best to serve the motherland in my job and complete the glorious peaceful reunification” (circa January 2020). Image source: “Kinmen Locals Shocked by Claims Army Colonel Swore to Surrender to China,” Radio Free Asia, Nov. 23, 2022, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/kinmen-espionage-11232022011600.html>.*

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## Executive Summary

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) conducts extensive covert operations against Taiwan as part of a comprehensive political warfare strategy aimed at annexation. These operations extend beyond traditional intelligence gathering to undermine Taiwan's societal cohesion, institutional integrity, and will to resist. The CCP's operations fall into three main categories:

**Intelligence Operations:** Taiwan faces persistent espionage threats, with 84 cases investigated in a recent year leading to 39 prosecutions. Current trends include increased financial incentives for recruitment of sub-sources, targeting military personnel at operational levels rather than just senior leadership, requiring loyalty oaths and surrender pledges from recruited agents, and direct attempts to influence Taiwan's political discourse and media.

**Cyberspace Operations:** Taiwan experiences the highest rate of cyber intrusions in the Asia-Pacific region. PRC-backed hackers demonstrate advanced capabilities, including sophisticated "living off the land" techniques that make detection difficult, targeted operations against government networks, diplomatic posts, and critical infrastructure, intellectual property theft from key industries (particularly semiconductors), and potential collaboration with Russian cyber actors to amplify attacks.

**United Front Work:** The CCP conducts extensive influence operations aimed at promoting unification through local-level exchanges targeting community leaders and grassroots organizations; youth exchanges through summer camps, education programs, and cultural activities; cultural exchanges leveraging shared religious, festival, and artistic connections; economic integration to create dependencies and leverage; and

cultivation of political figures across all Taiwanese political parties. The Jamestown Foundation has identified over 150 organizations in Taiwan with connections to the united front system.

Taiwan's response capabilities are challenged by the scale and sophistication of these threats. Policy recommendations include implementing transparency requirements such as foreign agent registration; strengthening penalties for espionage and unregistered foreign influence; supporting independent journalism to investigate political warfare; enhancing cybersecurity certification and government security protocols; and increasing oversight of interactions between Taiwanese officials and PRC entities.

As the CCP continues to prioritize "national unification," these covert operations represent an existential threat to Taiwan's democratic institutions and sovereignty that requires a coordinated response from the government and civil society.

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## Introduction

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中國共產黨) has repeatedly and consistently placed “national unification” (*guojia tongyi*) as one of its primary goals.<sup>1</sup> The party has tied unification and the annexation of Taiwan to removing the so-called legacy of national humiliation at the hands of the Western powers and Japan in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Unification has meant more than simply returning political control to Beijing of those claimed territories. Long after Beijing assumed control over Hong Kong in 1997, for example, united front publications referred to the need to reassert the party’s control and to apply the “One Country, Two Systems” (OCTS, 一國兩制) framework.<sup>2</sup> The CCP needed to ensure that it was present in the key institutions of power and civil society as well as among the political and business elite. As with the immediate period after the Chinese Revolution, the party’s control led to an accelerating effort to inject the CCP across Chinese society.

The CCP’s intelligence and influence operations against Taiwan should be understood more as the party’s effort to assert control over the island nation than as traditional intelligence operations to inform policymakers.

The CCP’s intelligence and influence operations against Taiwan should be understood more as the party’s effort to assert control over the island nation than as traditional intelligence operations to inform policymakers. Beijing undoubtedly needs information about the Taiwanese government and society, especially as the political vitality of the Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨) wanes and the social distance between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan continues to grow. Intelligence, however, is not the main purpose. Since its establishment in 1921, the CCP has used covert operations to shape, disrupt, and win over its adversaries. Today’s technology may offer new vectors and a wider scope for operations, but the purpose remains the same: to assert the party’s power and, in the words of Mao Zedong (毛澤東), to break and shatter the enemy.<sup>3</sup>

Taiwan faces a relentless set of overt and covert political warfare activities intended to break its will to resist.<sup>4</sup> Unchecked, these operations threaten to destroy the island from within: when discovered, betrayal and vulnerability reverberate through institutions and society. Espionage in Taiwan’s military may provide useful information about plans and readiness to Beijing; however, it also undermines cohesion and trust within the ranks. Ongoing computer network exploitation and attacks, as well as online disinformation, cast doubt on

1 “Xi Jinping Emphasizes Persisting In and Perfecting ‘One Country Two Systems’, Advancing Unification of the Motherland” (習近平強調，堅持和完善“一國兩制”，推進祖國統一) (excerpt of speech before the 20<sup>th</sup> CCP Party Congress), CCP Taiwan Work Office, October 16, 2022, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/zt/djzt/xxxcgc/zyjs/202210/t20221016\\_12478556.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/zt/djzt/xxxcgc/zyjs/202210/t20221016_12478556.htm).

2 For example, “United Front Basic Knowledge Question and Answer — ‘Hong Kong and Macao Overseas Warfare Work’” (统一战线基础知识问答——‘港澳台海外统战工作’), Tsinghua University Party Committee United Front Work Department, December 15, 2010, <https://www.tyxx.tsinghua.edu.cn/info/1026/1278.htm>; “‘One Country, Two Systems’ is the Best System for Maintaining Long-term Prosperity and Stability in Hong Kong (‘一国两制’是保持香港长期繁荣稳定的最佳制度), *CPC News*, January 4, 2018, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0104/c416126-29745989.html>; 统一战线知识手册/庄聪生主编•—北京：华文出版社，2006.12 (2009年4月第2版) 96–113.

3 Marxist Internet Archive, “Introducing the Communist,” 2004, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_20.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_20.htm).

4 For an overview of these activities, see: 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](https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/OR_CCP-Political-Warfare.pdf).

the island's resilience and on the Taiwanese government's ability to protect its own society. Open contacts between the CCP's united front system and Taiwan's politicians across the political spectrum give rise to questions about whether these political figures can deal in good faith.

As the old counterintelligence adage goes, there is no good time to catch a spy. If an agent is allowed to operate too long, then why was the spy not found sooner? If the spy is caught quickly, then why did personnel vetting fail and how was the spy recruited in the first place?

This report analyzes three aspects of the CCP's operations against Taiwan: traditional intelligence operations prosecuted as espionage in Taiwan; the CCP's operations in cyberspace; and the party's united front work against Taiwan. The first is the area of the greatest consistency. The CCP's civilian and military intelligence services continue to identify and recruit individuals, particularly in military positions. The intensity of the spy contest simply reflects the intensity of the CCP's intent more than it reflects any change in the atmospherics of cross-Straits relations. CCP-affiliated actors in cyberspace demonstrate a breadth of activity, including intelligence collection, disinformation, and destructive attacks. If Beijing's activities elsewhere are a meaningful indicator, then Taiwanese officials should assume that CCP hackers are trying or have succeeded in getting inside networks for critical infrastructure. Such access could be used to damage or disable equipment during a crisis, or be conducted concurrently with military action. Finally, regarding united front operations, the CCP has an active outreach program to build connections at all levels and across all political parties.

The CCP's ultimate goal of annexation and its political warfare logic should be kept at the forefront of understanding Beijing's covert statecraft. Each of these elements individually challenge Taiwan in different ways. However, the political warfare logic behind them—and the broader set of diplomatic, military, and law enforcement actions directed against Taiwan—suffus-

es these operations with a destructive intent that makes them that much more important to counter.

## Intelligence Operations Against Taiwan

### *Current Cases Might just be the Tip of the Iceberg*

Taiwanese authorities routinely catch and prosecute persons engaging in espionage on behalf of the PRC. These spies range from Taiwanese flag rank military officers to junior policy staffers. Retired Taiwanese officials also have been prominent targets, particularly those that involved themselves in “people-to-people exchanges” (民間交流) run on the PRC side by the united front policy system.<sup>5</sup> Each new year seems to bring a new level of intensity. As Taiwan’s National Security Bureau (國家安全局) Director Tsai Ming-yen (蔡明彥) told the Legislative Yuan last summer, “The number of cases [we are investigating] has increased significantly compared with previous years... The Chinese Communist Party’s infiltration activities are increasingly rampant in Taiwan, posing a severe challenge to national security work.” Tsai noted that in the previous year, Taiwanese authorities had investigated 84 cases, leading to 39 prosecutions.<sup>6</sup>

Drawing conclusions from these cases about the severity of the CCP threat or the effectiveness of Taiwanese counterintelligence is an analytically fraught exercise. Although it is tempting to see these cases as Taiwan’s national security agencies succeeding in their mission of protecting the integrity of Taiwanese institutions, it is more likely that these prosecutions provide merely a glimpse of the CCP intelligence iceberg. The 45 investigations that did not lead to prosecutions, for example, are not necessarily signs of innocence. The bar for espionage prosecutions in democracies is relatively high, and investigators may not have been able to find what they needed for a prosecution. From the outside, it is impossible to know with a high degree of certainty

whether these 45 accused were innocent or not.

In a variety of contexts and over many years, Taiwanese officials have expressed concerns that the CCP’s intelligence operations are challenging Taiwan’s counterintelligence capabilities.<sup>7</sup> If Beijing maintains a similar operational tempo against Taiwan as the United States, then the 84 investigations suggest Taiwanese authorities probably are being overwhelmed. Several years ago, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray noted that the FBI was opening a new counterintelligence case on the PRC every ten hours and that nearly half of the FBI’s 5,000 active investigations involved the PRC.<sup>8</sup> Proportionally, Taiwan would have more than 150 cases that need investigation. If the Taiwanese needed to open an investigation every 10-12 hours, then conceivably more than 700 cases should be opened annually. In 2017, one anonymous Taiwanese national security official estimated that 5,000 Taiwanese were working for the PRC.<sup>9</sup>

The majority of arrested Taiwanese spies—often as high as 80 percent in any given year—have been current and former military personnel. This has been a consistent feature of the publicly available data over the last two decades, noted by analysts and media alike.<sup>10</sup> The data’s strong bias suggests

5 For a discussion of these exchanges and their role in united front work, see: John Dotson, “The 13th Straits Forum and Beijing’s United Front ‘People-to-People Exchanges,’” *Global Taiwan Brief*, January 26, 2022, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/01/the-13th-straits-forum-and-beijings-united-front-people-to-people-exchanges/>.

6 Hsia Hsiao-hwa and Ray Chung, “Taiwan spy chief warns of sharp rise in Chinese infiltration,” *Radio Free Asia*, July 5, 2024, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/taiwan-spying-07052024135320.html>.

7 Author’s interviews in Taipei, August 2017, July 2024.

8 Christopher Wray, “The Threat Posed by the Chinese Government and the Chinese Communist Party to the Economic and National Security of the United States,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, July 7, 2020, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/the-threat-posed-by-the-chinese-government-and-the-chinese-communist-party-to-the-economic-and-national-security-of-the-united-states>.

9 Chung Li-hua and Jonathan Chin, “5,000 Chinese spies in Taiwan: source,” *Taipei Times*, March 13, 2017, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2017/03/13/2003666661>.

10 Ibid.; Peter Mattis, “China’s Espionage Against Taiwan (Part I): Analysis of Recent Operations,” *China Brief*, November 7, 2014, <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-espionage-against-taiwan-part-i-analysis-of-recent-operations/>; Peter Mattis and Zoe Moore, “The Cross-Strait Intelligence Contest Continues Without Quarter,”



one of two possibilities must be true. The first is that PRC intelligence services are mostly focused on the Taiwanese military—i.e., the data is a true reflection of the CCP’s agents inside Taiwan. The second is that security procedures and regulations in civilian government do not provide an effective bulwark against espionage. Civilian officials may not receive clear security guidance or know where and how to report intelligence approaches. Nor is there necessarily a clear expectation that civilian officials should have a security awareness comparable to that required by military organizations, even as the threat seems to have gotten worse.

## *Recent Trends in Espionage Cases*

The CCP’s use of money as an incentive seems to have grown, in terms both of amounts paid out and the ways in which financial vulnerabilities are exploited. Espionage cases in the 2000s and early 2010s showed payments for information, with the publicly available details suggesting that these were regular payments or direct exchanges for information. For example, Lo Hsien-che (羅賢哲) and Lo Chi-cheng (羅奇正), two prominent spies from this period, received large cash payments from CCP intelligence in exchange for sensitive national defense information.

In more recent cases, Taiwanese agents were given cash incentives for recruiting additional sub-sources, receiving reporting bonuses, and were actively targeting other Taiwanese who demonstrated financial difficulties. For example, military veteran Lu Chi-hsien (魯紀賢), who was convicted in 2023 of spying for the PRC, targeted sub-sources through pawnshops, moneylenders, and loan-sharks close to military facilities.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Sergeant Chen



*Image: An undated file photo showing former ROC Air Force Major General Lo Hsien-che (right) visiting a military installation. Lo was arrested in 2011 for spying for the PRC.<sup>12</sup>*

Min-cheng (陳敏政) and businessman Hu Chi-yao (胡繼堯) deliberately targeted intermediaries and new agents who had financial difficulties to recruit into their espionage ring on Beijing’s behalf.<sup>13</sup> CCP intelligence paid Taiwan Air Force Colonel Liu Sheng-shu (劉聖恕) bonuses for each new sub-source, depending on their access and the quality of their information. As a result, Liu recruited at least five other active duty military officers into his spy ring.<sup>14</sup>

The Taiwanese military espionage cases also show a troubling trend in who is working for the CCP. Taiwanese investigators seem to be identifying more active duty officers at the operational levels than in

*China Brief*, November 10, 2023, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-cross-strait-intelligence-contest-continues-without-quarter/>.

11 Chang Wen-chuan and Jason Pan, “Five detained over China spy network,” *Taipei Times*, July 21, 2023, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2023/07/21/2003803505>.

12 Image source: “Taiwan geht hart gegen Spionage vor,” *China.org.cn*, February 11, 2011, [http://german.china.org.cn/china/2011-02/11/content\\_21899117.htm](http://german.china.org.cn/china/2011-02/11/content_21899117.htm).

13 “2 charged with accepting money from Chinese state security services,” *Central News Agency*, August 18, 2023, <https://focustaiwan.tw/society/202308180019>.

14 Staff writer with CNA, “Kaohsiung court indicts seven on espionage charges,” *Taipei Times*, April 23, 2023, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2023/04/23/2003798462>; Duncan DeAeth, “6 Taiwanese military officers busted for joining China spy ring,” *Taiwan News*, January 6, 2023, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/4772659>.

the past. Some of the biggest espionage cases ten and fifteen years ago involved individuals like Brigadier General Lo Hsien-che, Major General Hsu Nai-chuan (許乃權), Vice Admiral Ko Cheng-sheng (柯政盛), and Lieutenant General Chen Chu-fan (陳築藩). Although it is possible to view this as the CCP recruiting lesser sources, an alternative view of the CCP's recruitment of captains, majors, and colonels would be that these are the officers who make Taiwan's military work on a day-to-day basis.

Another new feature of Taiwan's espionage cases highlights one of the political warfare aspects of the CCP's intelligence operations: loyalty oaths. In espionage cases investigated in 2023, two Taiwanese military officers were paid to record videos in which they stated that they would be willing to surrender to the PLA.<sup>15</sup> Another Taiwanese officer, Army Colonel Hsiang Te-en (向德恩), reportedly posed for a photo with a note supporting Taiwan's annexation. The note reportedly read "I, Hsiang Te-en, hereby pledge to support cross-strait peaceful unification... I will do my best at my current post to fulfil the glorious task of pushing for peaceful unification for the motherland."<sup>16</sup> Recording these statements hearkens back to the revolutionary era, when the PLA's political work focused on disintegrating (瓦解) Kuomintang units and inciting them to switch sides.

Since at least 2016, CCP intelligence has been trying to directly shape Taiwan's political discussion. In in-

terviews in 2017, Taiwanese national security officials observed that Beijing was trying to recruit journalists, political pundits, professors, and others with a public platform as agents of influence.<sup>17</sup> Previously, a number of the efforts to shape Taiwan's political scene reflected classic united front tactics of shaping the context around Taiwanese individuals, such as those conducted through "people-to-people exchanges" (民間交流) (see further discussion in the united front section below).<sup>18</sup> Taiwanese authorities mounted an investigation into news reports that the CCP's Taiwan Affairs Office (國臺辦) had reached out to several Taiwanese TV sta-

tions with pitches for new political talk shows in exchange for favorable commercial terms inside the PRC.<sup>19</sup> One station reportedly agreed to terms and allowed a *Xinhua* journalist to exercise editorial control over the station's content.<sup>20</sup>

Overall, Taiwan faces a massive intelligence threat from the PRC, which is able to commit more financial, personnel, and other material

resources to penetrating Taiwan than the island country can deploy to counter it. The PRC continues to modernize both the Ministry of State Security (國家安全部) and the PLA's intelligence components, add-

In interviews in 2017, Taiwanese national security officials observed that Beijing was trying to recruit journalists, political pundits, professors, and others with a public platform as agents of influence.

15 Chien Li-chung and Jason Pan, "Ten officers charged with espionage," *Taipei Times*, November 28, 2023, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2023/11/28/2003809813>.

16 Helen Davidson and Chi-hui Lin, "A race against time": Taiwan strives to root out China's spies," *The Guardian*, February 1, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/02/taiwan-china-spies-beijing-espionage>.

17 Author's interviews in Taipei, August 2017. For more, see: [https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/us-taiwan-defense\\_relations\\_roundtable\\_may2018.pdf](https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/us-taiwan-defense_relations_roundtable_may2018.pdf).

18 See for example: John Dotson, "Retired Taiwan Officer Exchanges Offer Insight into a Modern 'United Front,'" *China Brief*, October 14, 2011, <https://jamestown.org/program/retired-taiwan-officer-exchanges-offer-insight-into-a-modern-united-front/>.

19 Chun Yin (淳音), "新華社駐台記者涉監視政論節目 陸委會調查: 涉事記者與電視台否認," *Radio Free Asia*, July 10, 2024, <https://www.rfa.org/cantonese/news/htm/tw-programme-07102024011550.html?encoding=simplified>.

20 Huang Chun-mei and Ray Chung, "Taiwan probes reports of direct Chinese influence at TV station," *Radio Free Asia*, June 26, 2024, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/taiwan-xinhua-media-zhao-bo-06262024104846.html>.

ing quality to a threat once characterized by scope, scale, and potential impact.<sup>21</sup> Taiwan clearly has problems with vetting and counterintelligence, but the known cases do not reflect an untenable situation. Still, the cases reinforce Beijing's political warfare objective of undermining Taiwan's security and sovereignty—especially in the eyes of Taiwan's partners. The direct damage done might vary in each of these cases, but each one represents a loss of trust and a loss of integrity.

The direct damage done might vary in each of these cases, but each one represents a loss of trust and a loss of integrity.

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21 Edward Schwarck, "The Power Vertical: Centralization in the PRC's State Security System," *China Brief*, November 15, 2024, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-power-vertical-centralization-in-the-prcs-state-security-system/>; 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 25, 2024, <https://jamestown.org/program/a-disturbance-in-the-force-the-reorganization-of-peoples-liberation-army-command-and-elimination-of-chinas-strategic-support-force/>

## CCP Operations in Cyberspace

The PRC uses the full spectrum of malign activity in cyberspace against Taiwan. Beijing leverages networked connectivity to collect intelligence, distort the information environment, and prepare for war. Taiwan's network infrastructure operates under constant threat—and in recent years, has faced the highest rate of cyber intrusions and attacks of any state in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>22</sup>

When it comes to cyberspace operations, PRC actors are among the most advanced in the world, and Beijing-backed groups have demonstrated remarkable sophistication in their attacks. One such example is “Flax Typhoon” (亞麻颱風)—also referred to as “RedJuliett” (紅朱麗葉) or “Ethereal Panda” (超凡熊貓)—which likely operates out of Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian Province. These hackers rely very little on malware: instead, they exploit tools within the operating system or normally benign applications to quietly maintain access to targeted networks. The way in which these actors can “live off the land” inside a compromised system or network requires removing the compromised accounts and isolating those systems from the rest of the network, lest the attackers simply rebuild their access.<sup>23</sup> Through this technique, this group has compromised more than 1.2 million consumer devices around the world (including 126,000 actively infected in the United States in 2024) and linked them into a botnet for the purposes of transmitting malware, conducting cyberattacks, and obfuscating other Flax Typhoon operations.<sup>24</sup>

22 Huang Chun Mei, “美起诉中国黑客 处于被网攻最前线的台湾如何应对?” *Radio Free Asia*, March 27, 2024, <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/gangtai/hcm1-03272024081555.html>; Joyu Wang, “China Employs Hackers and Celebrities to Undermine Taiwan,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/asia/china-employs-hackers-and-celebrities-to-undermine-taiwan-435a3fd5>.

23 Microsoft, “Flax Typhoon: Using Legitimate Software to Quietly Access Taiwanese Organizations,” August 24, 2023, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/security/blog/2023/08/24/flax-typhoon-using-legitimate-software-to-quietly-access-taiwanese-organizations>.

24 US Department of Justice, “Signed Search and Seizure Warrant for Disclosure,” September 9, 2024, [https://www.justice.gov/d9/2024-09/redacted\\_24-mj-1484\\_signed\\_](https://www.justice.gov/d9/2024-09/redacted_24-mj-1484_signed_)

Aligned with traditional intelligence priorities on Taiwan, Beijing's hackers prioritize collecting political, diplomatic, military, economic, and social information. The cyber security firm Recorded Future has revealed a recent example of cyber espionage that also involved Flax Typhoon.<sup>25</sup> From late 2023 to April 2024, the group used leased servers and compromised network infrastructure at a Taiwanese university to target Taiwanese government networks, overseas diplomatic posts, universities and think tanks, and electronics companies.<sup>26</sup> Another group known as Storm-0558—which has minor overlaps with PRC-backed groups like Violet Typhoon or APT-31—has a history of targeting US and European individuals connected to Taiwan. Congressman Don Bacon, a member of the House Taiwan Caucus, was one of the victims in its attack in 2023 when the group compromised Microsoft Exchange Online after it acquired a Microsoft Services Account cryptographic key.<sup>27</sup>

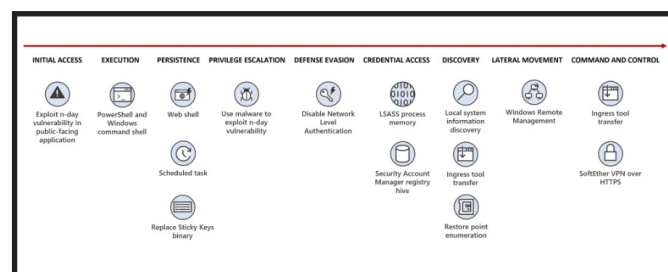


Image: The Flax Typhoon systems penetration methodology, as analyzed by Microsoft.<sup>28</sup>

search\_and\_seizure\_warrant\_for\_disclosure.pdf.

25 Insikt Group, “Chinese State-Sponsored RedJuliett Intensifies Taiwanese Cyber Espionage via Network Perimeter Exploitation,” June 24, 2024, <https://www.recordedfuture.com/research/redjuliett-intensifies-taiwanese-cyber-espionage-via-network-perimeter>.

26 Ibid.

27 US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), “Review of the Summer 2023 Microsoft Exchange Online Intrusion,” March 20, 2024, [https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/CSRB\\_Review\\_of\\_the\\_Summer\\_2023\\_MEO\\_Intrusion\\_Final\\_508c.pdf](https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/CSRB_Review_of_the_Summer_2023_MEO_Intrusion_Final_508c.pdf).

28 Image source: “Flax Typhoon Using Legitimate Software to Quietly Access Taiwanese Organizations,” Microsoft Threat Intelligence, August 24, 2023, <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/security/blog/2023/08/24/flax-typhoon-using-legitimate-software-to-quietly-access-taiwanese-organizations/>.



Beyond the collection of personal data, PRC hackers have also attempted to steal intellectual property from Taiwanese companies, including leaders in the semiconductor industry. In one effort uncovered in 2020, PRC actors gained access to corporate networks to steal chip designs and associated coding from companies headquartered in the Hsinchu Industrial Park. These hackers exploited errors in the companies' virtual private networks and launched their attacks from command-and-control servers based on Google or Microsoft cloud services. Once they gained access to networks, they focused on acquiring legitimate credentials and avoided the telltale signs of malware.<sup>29</sup> While stolen chip designs and firmware could then be used to improve PRC supply chain attacks, these thefts were also intended to help PRC competitors challenge the dominance of Taiwanese semiconductor manufacturing companies.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of the responsible actors, a range of PRC actors are involved in computer network exploitation and computer network attacks against Taiwan. Although the intelligence and security services—including the Ministry of State Security, Ministry of Public Security, and the PLA's technical intelli-

Beyond the collection of personal data, PRC hackers have also attempted to steal intellectual property from Taiwanese companies, including leaders in the semiconductor industry.

gence units—almost certainly play an important role, Beijing also incentivizes the private sector to participate. Flax Typhoon, for example, revolves around the company Integrity Technology Group. Criminal indictments, leaked documents, and cybersecurity researchers have identified other companies of varying sizes—like iSoon (Anxun, 上海安洵資訊公司), Chengdu 404 (成都404), China Telecom (中國電信), Qihoo360 (奇虎 360), and Venustech (啟明星辰)<sup>31</sup>—that all have been implicated in PRC hacking in one way or another.

In addition to the PRC's cyberattacks, Russia now appears to be playing some role against Taiwan. Over the last 15 years, Beijing and Moscow have gotten steadily closer, leading to parallel operations, sharing information on the vulnerabilities of their targets, and perhaps even preparing for coordinated or joint action. For example, one Russian group is known to have launched disruptive denial of service attacks targeted Taiwanese financial institutions, including the Taiwan Stock Exchange and the Directorate General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics (行政院主計總處).<sup>32</sup> Although we have limited visibility into this aspect of the relationship between the PRC and Russia, Beijing and Moscow have cooperated on disseminating propaganda and disinformation,<sup>33</sup> running counterin-

29 Andy Greenburg, "Chinese Hackers Have Pillaged Taiwan's Semiconductor Industry," *Wired*, August 7, 2020, <https://www.wired.com/story/chinese-hackers-taiwan-semiconductor-industry-skeleton-key/>.

30 Arjun Kharpal, "ASML says ex-China employee misappropriated data relating to its critical chip technology," *CNBC*, February 15, 2023, <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/02/15/critical-chip-firm-asml-says-former-china-employee-misappropriated-data.html>; *Reuters*, "Chinese spies target Dutch industries to strengthen military, intelligence agency says," April 18, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinese-spies-target-dutch-industries-strengthen-military-intelligence-agency-2024-04-18/>.

31 Dake Kang, Zen Soo, "Behind the doors of a Chinese hacking company, a sordid culture fueled by influence, alcohol and sex," *Associated Press*, March 8, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/chinese-hacking-leak-documents-surveillance-spying-6276e8662ddf6f2c1afbae994d8b3aa2>; Observer Research Foundation, "China's Growing Cyber Warfare Capabilities," June 20, 2011, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/chinas-growing-cyber-warfare-capabilities>.

32 "Taiwan's government condemns cyberattacks on TWSE, DGBAS, financial firms," *Central News Agency*, September 13, 2024, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202409130016>.

33 David Bandurski, "China and Russia Are Joining Forces to Spread Disinformation," *Brookings Institution*, March 11, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/china-and-russia-are-joining-forces-to-spread-disinformation/>.



telligence operations against the United States,<sup>34</sup> and conducting joint military exercises in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, this is an area that warrants further attention: even as the Russia-Ukraine War degrades Russia's society and economy,<sup>36</sup> operations in cyberspace are a Russian specialty that does not rely on the industrial base. Moscow could readily support PRC political and information warfare—including computer network attacks in times of conflict—without running any substantial risks.

Taiwan cannot rest easy, because of the persistence, quality, and the quantity of PRC actors. Limited reporting on PRC cyberspace operations in Taiwan suggests that Taiwan needs to substantially strengthen its cybersecurity posture, especially related to critical infrastructure. As in other aspects of the CCP's political warfare, Taiwan is a central target, and one in which Beijing does not have any particular inhibitions. The pre-positioning of destructive malware and developing real-time access to critical systems, like lawful intercept elsewhere, suggest that PRC actors are either already embedded within Taiwan's critical systems or actively seeking to penetrate them.

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34 Jeff Seldin, "Russia and China Leading Wave of 'Unprecedented' Intelligence Threats to U.S.," *Voice of America*, August 1, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/russia-china-leading-wave-of-unprecedented-intelligence-threats-to-us-/7726548.html>.

35 William Yang, "Russia, China kick off joint military exercises, challenging US-led coalition," *Voice of America*, September 10, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-russia-exercises-aim-to-challenge-us-led-indo-pacific-coalition-analysts-say/7778700.html>.

36 Mary Glantz, "Ukraine War Takes Toll on Russia's Military and Global Standing," US Institute of Peace, March 11, 2024, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/ukraine-war-takes-toll-russia>.

## United Front Work

United front work is particularly important to consider when it comes to the party's approach towards Taiwan. As Xi Jinping (習近平) stated at the Central United Front Work Conference (中央統戰工作會議) in 2022, in order to “advance the complete reunification of the motherland,” the CCP must “implement the Party's overall strategy for resolving the Taiwan issue in the new era, expand and strengthen pro-reunification forces in Taiwan, and oppose ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist activities.”<sup>37</sup> At the CCP's February 2024 Taiwan Work Conference (對台工作會議), Wang Huning (王滬寧) explained the main activities based on Xi's directions, which are to:

*“[E]xpand cross-strait exchanges and cooperation in various fields [...] deepen cross-strait integrated development [...] promote the joint promotion of Chinese culture across the strait to foster a deeper emotional connection between people on both sides [...] [and] resolutely combat ‘Taiwan independence’ separatism and curb external forces’ interference by firmly supporting pro-reunification patriotic forces within the island and broadly uniting the Taiwanese compatriots.”*<sup>38</sup>

The PRC's united front work targeting Taiwan is a coordinated, system-wide effort involving multiple Party and state entities. The Taiwan Affairs Office, at the central and local level, serves as the primary body responsible for executing influence operations and united front work targeting Taiwan. However, because the PRC's goals related to Taiwan overlap with all other areas of the government, Taiwan-related united front work involves coordination across multiple departments under the oversight of the Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs (中央對台工作領導小組). The All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots (全國台聯) and the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League (台灣民

主自治同盟), both part of the united front system, also play a role in advancing Taiwan affairs work.<sup>39</sup>

The party's influence operations in Taiwan are broad and far-reaching, to include outreach in sports, religion, education, culture, agriculture, industry, investment, relations with ethnic minorities, and more. At the Straits Forum (海峽論壇), an important platform for promoting extensive interactions between various sectors across the strait and advancing cross-strait people-to-people exchanges and cooperation, these activity areas are generally divided into the categories of local-level exchanges, youth exchanges, cultural exchanges, and economic exchanges.<sup>40</sup> The Jamestown Foundation has identified over 150 organizations in Taiwan with connections to events of this kind. Although these exchanges appear in various forms, they usually involve individuals and organizations visiting the PRC and making connections, directly or indirectly, with officials from the Taiwan Affairs Offices, creating opportunities for influence, co-optation, and the cultivation of long-term relationships that can serve the CCP's political objectives.

## Local-level Exchanges

The CCP believes that local-level exchanges are the foundation of cross-strait exchange.<sup>41</sup> According to the CCP, local-level exchanges preserve and strengthen the common foundation between the people on both sides, fostering a more stable and solid foundation for the future development of cross-strait relations. Local-level exchanges consist

37 Xi Jinping, “习近平：完整、准确、全面贯彻落实关于做好新时代党的统一战线工作的重要思想,” Taiwan Work Office of the CPC Central Committee/Taiwan Affairs Office State Council, January 15, 2024, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/to-pone/202401/t20240115\\_12593852.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/to-pone/202401/t20240115_12593852.htm).

38 “2024年对台工作会议在京召开 王沪宁出席并讲话,” *Xinhua*, February 23, 2024, <http://www.news.cn/20240223/ab2051edfaac4e00954fc7a1b78f6cf0/c.html>.

39 Cheryl Yu, “Viral Documentary Exposes CCP's United Front Operations in Taiwan,” *China Brief*, January 13, 2025, <https://jamestown.org/program/viral-documentary-exposes-ccps-united-front-operations-in-taiwan/>.

40 People's Daily, “第十六届海峡论坛在福建举行——扩大两岸民间交流 深化两岸融合发展,” June 17, 2024, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2024-06/17/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20240617\\_3-04.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2024-06/17/nw.D110000renmrb_20240617_3-04.htm).

41 Zeng Xiaoxu (曾晓璐), “保持战略定力 推进两岸关系和平发展和祖国统一,” September 18, 2021, [http://www.zhongguotongcuhui.org.cn/tylt/202101/202109/t20210918\\_12379390.html](http://www.zhongguotongcuhui.org.cn/tylt/202101/202109/t20210918_12379390.html).

of sending PRC officials to Taiwan to speak with local communities and inviting Taiwanese organizations to the PRC.<sup>42</sup> For example, in December 2016, the deputy secretary of the Yangzhou Municipal Committee led a delegation, which included officials from the local Taiwan Affairs Office, to Taiwan in order to promote local-level exchanges and cooperation. The delegation met with communities in Ruifang, Wanli, and Xizhi of New Taipei City and held discussions with district chiefs, borough chiefs, and representatives of grassroots social organizations. Conversely, some Taiwanese organizations that have visited the PRC as part of local-level exchanges are the Taiwan Association of Village and Borough Chiefs (台灣村里長聯合總會) and the Taiwan Greater Kaohsiung Borough Chiefs Chairpersons Association (台灣大高雄里長主席聯誼總會). In 2023, the Taiwan Affairs Office said that thousands of local-level representatives from Taiwan, such as village and borough chiefs visited the PRC through these local-level exchanges.<sup>43</sup>

## Youth Exchanges

General Secretary Xi stated during his April 2024 meeting with former Taiwan President and KMT chair Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) that the “youth are the hope of the nation and the future of the people. Only when the youth on both sides of the Taiwan Strait thrive will the future of cross-strait relations be bright.”<sup>44</sup> Youth exchanges represent a key element of the CCP’s united front outreach to Taiwan, with forms of youth exchange ranging from hosting summer camps and tourist groups, to promoting exchanges between universities, and offering opportunities to study, intern,

work, and even start a business in the PRC.<sup>45</sup>

One Taiwanese organization, the Chinese Planner Association (中華企劃人協會), has been collaborating with the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots for thirty years in organizing the “Cross-Strait Peace Angels Exchange and Visits (海峽兩岸和平小天使互訪交流)” event. This event, which aims to connect elementary and junior high school students and improve the understanding and friendship of youth on both sides, has exceeded 2,400 youth participants.<sup>46</sup> Another similar event is the Cross-Strait Youth Forum (海峽青年論壇), co-hosted by the All-China Youth Federation (中華全國青年聯合會), the Department of KMT Nationwide Youth Work (中國國民黨青工總會),<sup>47</sup> and Chinese Youth International (台灣中華青年交流協會).<sup>48</sup> Additionally, former KMT Chair Hung Hsiu-chu’s (洪秀柱) Chinese Cyan Geese Peace Education Foundation (中華青雁和平教育基金會) and former Taiwan President and KMT Chair Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) foundation have also hosted similar youth exchange events.<sup>49</sup>

42 Taiwan Affairs Office of the People’s Government of Jiangsu Province, “丁纯率团赴台考察 扩大深化扬台交流合作,” December 19, 2016, [http://www.jsstb.gov.cn/special/jidi/st/201701/t20170116\\_11679550.htm](http://www.jsstb.gov.cn/special/jidi/st/201701/t20170116_11679550.htm).

43 Xi Jinping, “习近平：完整、准确、全面贯彻落实关于做好新时代党的统一战线工作的重要思想,” Taiwan Work Office of the CPC Central Committee/Taiwan Affairs Office State Council, January 15, 2024, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202401/t20240117\\_12594372.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202401/t20240117_12594372.htm).

44 Chu Ying (楚英), “凝聚两岸同胞共同振兴中华民族的强大力量,” [itaiwannews.cn](http://itaiwannews.cn), <https://www.itaiwannews.cn/20240413/20f1f99d-35e9-7893-7da4-6c7b7b7cac17.html>.

45 John Dotson, “The CCP’s 14<sup>th</sup> Straits Forum and United Front Outreach to ‘Taiwan Youth,’” *Global Taiwan Brief*, July 27, 2022, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/07/the-ccps-14th-straits-forum-and-united-front-outreach-to-taiwan-youth/>.

46 “海峡两岸和平小天使互访交流30周年座谈会在京举行,” *Xinhua*, January 11, 2023, [http://www.news.cn/tw/2023-01/11/c\\_1129272044.htm](http://www.news.cn/tw/2023-01/11/c_1129272044.htm).

47 The translation from: Facebook, “中國國民黨 全國青年工作總會,” April 19, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=128531673532318&set=a.128531670198985>.

48 The National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, “第二十二屆海峽青年論壇在厦舉行,” June 19, 2024, <http://www.cppcc.gov.cn/zxww/2024/06/19/ARTI1718763112952145.shtml>.

49 John Dotson, “Ma Ying-jeou’s Trip to China Further Illustrates the CCP’s United Front Cultivation of Taiwan Youth,” *Global Taiwan Brief*, April 17, 2024, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2024/04/ma-ying-jeous-trip-to-china-further-illustrates-the-ccps-united-front-cultivation-of-taiwan-youth/>; “Mainland’s Taiwan Affairs Official Meets Former KMT Chairperson,” *CGTN*, July 8, 2024, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2024-07-08/Mainland-s-Taiwan-affairs-official-meets-former-KMT-chairperson-1v4mF7ORdAY/p.html>.





*Image: Participants in an October 2024 trip to Hefei (Anhui Province, China) organized by the Chinese Cyan Geese Peace Education Foundation—an NGO associated with former KMT Chairwoman Hung Hsiu-chu, who is known for her outspoken pro-unification views and regular meetings with PRC officials.<sup>50</sup>*

## Cultural Exchanges

According to Xi Jinping, cultural exchanges are for “enhancing the understanding and feelings of Taiwanese compatriots toward the nation and the country.”<sup>51</sup> Cultural events in areas like shared religion, festivals, arts, and literature, are an easy way to bring together larger groups of participants and build relationships. For instance, the Fujian-Taiwan Buddhist Cultural Exchange Week brought together over 23 Taiwanese Buddhist associations, all of which have a large number of followers in Taiwan.<sup>52</sup> The Taiwan Youth Chaoshan Cultural

Experience Camp and Shantou-Taiwan Characteristic Industry Folk Culture Exchange Event (臺灣青年潮汕文化體驗營暨汕台特色產業民俗文化交流活動) is another example of cultural event hosted by the local Taiwan Affairs Office and the UFWD that acts as a conduit for influence operations, with the Chinese Youth Development Union (中華青年發展聯合會) and China Jin Ming Du Three Mountain Kings Association (中國巾明獨三山國王協會) both leading delegations to attend the event.<sup>53</sup> The China Jin Ming Du Three Mountain Kings Association represents 145 Three Mountain Kings temples in Taiwan, giving it broad grassroots reach and influence across local religious networks.

Furthermore, the Chinese History Promotion Association (臺灣中華歷史傳播協會), chaired by the vice president of Shih Hsin University, Fedrick Kung-Chin Lee (李功勤), led 22 Taiwanese university students to a poetry exchange event at the hometown of Su Shi (蘇軾), the well-known Chinese poet from the Song dynasty.<sup>54</sup> While some skeptics might counter that these cross-Strait exchanges could be merely interested in promoting Chinese culture and history, the fact that United Front Work Department (UFWD, 中共中央統一戰線工作部) and Taiwan Affairs Office officials were present across all of these events signals that these activities are not merely about culture, but are part of a broader influence strategy aimed at cultivating pro-Beijing sentiment, building personal ties with key individuals, and laying the groundwork for future political and social leverage.

<sup>50</sup> Image source: “臺灣中華青雁和平教育基金會到合肥參訪”(“Taiwan’s Chinese Cyan Goose Peace Education Foundation Visits Hefei”), Zhongguo Taiwan Wang, October 8, 2024, [http://big5.taiwan.cn/local/dfkx/202410/t20241008\\_12654779.htm](http://big5.taiwan.cn/local/dfkx/202410/t20241008_12654779.htm).

<sup>51</sup> Taiwan Work Office of the Communist Party of China Fujian Provincial Committee/Office of Taiwan Affairs, Fujian Provincial People’s Government, “文化交流：两岸心灵沟通的桥梁,” April 8, 2019, [http://www.fjtb.gov.cn/news/201904/t20190408\\_12154843.htm](http://www.fjtb.gov.cn/news/201904/t20190408_12154843.htm).

<sup>52</sup> Yandang Mountain Niegren Temple, “第五届海峡论坛·闽台佛教教育交流研讨会在厦门隆重开幕,” December 31, 2013, <http://www.btinfowww.ydsnrs.cn/index.php/article/jiaonax->

<inwen/800.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Chenghaigov.cn, “2023台湾青年潮汕文化体验营暨汕台特色产业民俗文化交流活动启动仪式在澄海举行,” [http://www.chenghai.gov.cn/ch/zwgk/tpxw/content/post\\_2233519.html](http://www.chenghai.gov.cn/ch/zwgk/tpxw/content/post_2233519.html).

<sup>54</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China/Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, “2024川台大学生东坡故里诗词会交流活动在眉山举办,” July 26, 2024, [https://web.archive.org/web/20240915163911/http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/jljw/202407/t20240726\\_12638300.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20240915163911/http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/jljw/202407/t20240726_12638300.htm).

## *Economic Exchanges*

Promoting economic exchanges and cooperation is another method that the PRC has used to deepen integration and development across the Strait. For example, Xi Jinping has indicated that the Cross-Strait CEO Summit (兩岸企業家峰會) is an important platform for the PRC's economic exchange efforts.<sup>55</sup> The Summit, which was supervised by the Taiwan Affairs Office and headed by officials with a united front background such as Lin Jun (林軍),<sup>56</sup> also has a sister organization in Taiwan with the same name, which is headed and advised by former Taiwanese officials and industry leaders.<sup>57</sup> In April this year, its Taiwan-side Chairman Liu Chao-Hsuan (劉兆玄)—who was also the head of the Executive Yuan under Ma—met with Song Tao (宋濤), the head of the Taiwan Affairs Office. During the meeting, Liu said the Taiwan side of the Summit will “actively promote the integrated development of cross-strait industrial chains and supply chains and promote cross-strait economic cooperation.”<sup>58</sup> Other Taiwanese business organizations that also have connections with the united front system include 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<sup>59</sup>—and the Chinese National Federation of Industries (中華

民國全國工業總會), which has 155 member associations in the manufacturing industry.<sup>60</sup>

## *Cultivation of Political Figures*

In addition to building relationships through people-to-people exchanges, the party has also put a lot of effort into targeting political parties in Taiwan—including the three main parties that currently hold seats in the Legislative Yuan. Although the KMT is generally considered more “pro-China” and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is considered as more “pro-independence,” the CCP understands that there are factions within those parties that it considers either friendlier or more hostile. As Wang Yifu (汪毅夫), the former head of the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots and the current head of the National Society of Taiwan Studies, stated, “the hardline faction of the KMT, which stubbornly maintains an anti-communist stance, and the reactionary faction of the DPP, which rigidly insists on ‘Taiwan independence,’ are both key adversarial forces responsible for creating the Taiwan issue.”<sup>61</sup> With this perspective in mind, the CCP aims to cultivate pro-reunification “patriotic” forces within all parties.

Although traditionally regarded as the anti-communist party, the KMT has become the major party in Taiwan whose words and actions align most closely with the CCP. For instance, the KMT positioned itself as the party that can keep peace with the CCP by “seeking common ground and respecting differences” and “promoting cross-Strait economic and trade liberalization and civil society exchanges,” which happen to fit perfectly with the CCP's united front tactics towards Taiwan.<sup>62</sup>

55 The State Council of the People's Republic of China, “习近平向2023两岸企业家峰会10周年年会致贺信,” November 14, 2023, [https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202311/content\\_6915125.htm](https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202311/content_6915125.htm).

56 Cross-Strait CEO Summit, “峰会章程,” December 18, 2018, [http://www.laqyjfh.com/2024/gyfh/202401/t20240124\\_12595613.htm](http://www.laqyjfh.com/2024/gyfh/202401/t20240124_12595613.htm); Cross-Strait CEO Summit, “秘书长:林军,” December 18, 2018, [http://www.laqyjfh.com/laqyjfh2018/gyfh/ldjs/201812/t20181218\\_12123358.htm](http://www.laqyjfh.com/laqyjfh2018/gyfh/ldjs/201812/t20181218_12123358.htm).

57 Cross-Strait CEO Summit, “關於峰會,” <http://xn--http-fb7a/www.ceosummit.org.tw/about/?G=chairman>.

58 Taiwan Affairs Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China/Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, “两岸企业家峰会在江苏举行工作会晤,” April 22, 2024, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/news/202404/t20240422\\_12615185.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/news/202404/t20240422_12615185.htm).

59 The Third Wednesday Society, “正式會員,” <https://www.sansanfe.org.tw/%E6%9C%83%E5%93%A1%E4%B%8B%E7%B4%B9-2/>; <https://archive.ph/MxfX5>.

60 Chinese National Federation of Industries, “會員代表大會,” <http://www.cnfi.org.tw/front/bin/ptlist.phtml?Category=100013>.

61 CRNTT.com, “汪毅夫：台湾问题与研究台湾问题的立场,” <https://bj.crntt.com/doc/1062/4/8/5/106248590.html?coluid=245&kindid=14258&docid=106248590&mdate=1215001315>.

62 Kuomintang Official Website, “中國國民黨政策網



Senior leaders of the KMT frequently visit the PRC, and those visits usually include meetings with united front officials, including top united front officials like Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC, 中國人民政治協商會議) Chairman Wang Huning. Besides the visit of KMT caucus leader Fu Kun-chi (傅崐萁) to the PRC in April 2024, KMT vice chairman Andrew Hsia (夏立言) also met with Wang in February 2023 before he became CPPCC chairman.<sup>63</sup> This pattern of engagement dates back to 2005, when then KMT vice chairman Chiang Pin-kung (江丙坤) met with then CPPCC chairman Jia Qinglin (賈慶林) in March, and then Chairman Lien Chan (連戰) signed the "Common Aspirations and Prospects of Cross-Strait Peace and Development (兩岸和平發展共同願景)" with the CCP in April.<sup>64</sup> Later, other KMT leaders, such as Lien, Wu Po-hsiung (吳伯雄), and Hung Hsiu-chu, also held meetings with CPPCC chairmen.

While these are just a few examples of the KMT's engagement with the top united front officials, the KMT has also engaged with the Taiwan Affairs Office and the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots at all levels.<sup>65</sup> In addition, KMT-affiliated individuals, including

領護臺灣: 保民主 拚未來 重返執政," October 30, 2021, [https://www.kmt.org.tw/p/blog-page\\_3.html](https://www.kmt.org.tw/p/blog-page_3.html).

63 Huang Chunmei (黃春梅), "[独家] 国民党高层近身观察王沪宁: 武统台湾无急迫性," *Radio Free Asia*, March 24, 2023, <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/gangtai/hcm-03242023132705.html>.

64 Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan, "贾庆林会见中国国民党副主席江丙坤," [http://jp.china-embassy.gov.cn/chn/ztnew/twwtnew/200504/t20050401\\_9460248.htm](http://jp.china-embassy.gov.cn/chn/ztnew/twwtnew/200504/t20050401_9460248.htm); Xinhua, "[百个瞬间说百年] 2005 推动两岸关系和平发展," December 13, 2021, [http://www.news.cn/politics/2021-12/13/c\\_1211475996.htm](http://www.news.cn/politics/2021-12/13/c_1211475996.htm).

65 For example: Taiwan Affairs Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China/Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, "刘结一会见中国国民党台商党代表联谊会参访团," April 25, 2018, [http://www.gwytyb.gov.cn/xwdt/zwyw/201804/t20180425\\_11948558.htm](http://www.gwytyb.gov.cn/xwdt/zwyw/201804/t20180425_11948558.htm); Quanzhou Taiwan Business Investment Zone, "第十六届海峡论坛“泉台筑梦 智造未来”两岸融合发展系列活动首届两岸中小企业暨两岸征信论坛在泉州台商投资区举办," June 17, 2024, [http://www.qzts.gov.cn/zwgk/xwdt/tstzqdt/202406/t20240617\\_3047661.htm](http://www.qzts.gov.cn/zwgk/xwdt/tstzqdt/202406/t20240617_3047661.htm); Taiwan Compatriots Home Network, "台湾青年联合会理事长何



*Image: KMT Vice-Chairman Andrew Hsia (left) meeting with CCP Taiwan Affairs Office Director Song Tao (right) in Shanghai in February 2024.<sup>66</sup>*

those with leadership positions, often lead or participate in delegations to the PRC for events that involve officials from the united front system.<sup>67</sup>

The DPP, which currently holds executive power and positions itself as the more China-skeptical party, is still a target of the PRC's influence operations and united front work. Relationship building activities among the DPP are usually more opaque, and focused more on individuals. Additionally, the level of engagement between the DPP and the CCP is made even more difficult to gauge because the CCP would not want to highlight any connections to the DPP, given the DPP's general image of being pro-independence; and the DPP, in turn, is also reluctant to emphasize any connection with the CCP, as it could undermine its domestic support and pro-independence stance. For example, in April 2015, then-Director of the DPP's China Affairs Department Chao Tien-lin (趙天麟) visited the PRC. Both the Taiwan Affairs Office spokesper-

溢诚博士一行来赣参访," June 5, 2018, [http://www.tailian.org.cn/dftl/201806/t20180605\\_11962256.htm](http://www.tailian.org.cn/dftl/201806/t20180605_11962256.htm).

66 Image source: Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=andrew+hsia+song+tao&title=Special:MediaSearch&go=Go&-type=image>.

67 Office of Global Engagement, Northeast Center for Chinese International Education, "台湾文化教育界人士参访团交流座谈会在吉林大学举行," June 16, 2019, <http://oic.jlu.edu.cn/info/1333/8011.htm>.

son and Chao said Chao went as a board member of the Straits Exchange Foundation (海基會), so it had nothing to do with engagement between the CCP and the DPP.<sup>68</sup> Chen Chu (陳菊), the current president of the Control Yuan, represents another interesting case of the relationship between the DPP and the CCP. During Chen's time as the mayor of Kaohsiung, she visited the PRC in 2009 to promote the World Games. In that same year, she invited the Dalai Lama and Rebiya Kadeer to visit Taiwan, angering the PRC. However, in August 2013, Chen visited the PRC again and met with Zhang Zhijun, the then-minister of the Taiwan Affairs Office, to promote the Asia Pacific Cities Summit. When Zhang visited Taiwan in June 2014, Chen was the only person Zhang met with from the DPP side, suggesting that Chen may be viewed by Beijing as a bridge for dialogue between the DPP and the CCP.

The Taiwan People's Party (TPP, 民眾黨) is a relatively new political party that was established in August 2019 by Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), the former Taipei City mayor who is currently detained for multiple corruption cases.<sup>69</sup> Although the party is recently-established, it won five seats in the 2020 Legislative Yuan elections and eight seats in the 2024 elections (based on party percentage voting), proving that the party has a decent number of supporters in Taiwan. In 2023 and 2024, the PRC-organized Straits Forum invited TPP representatives to attend; a TPP spokesperson later challenged this, stating that the TPP did not receive an official invitation and that TPP attendees were participating in their own personal capacity.<sup>70</sup>

68 People's Daily Online, "民进党"中国事务部"主任访陆 国台办：非民共交流," April 8, 2015, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/0408/c70731-26813867.html>; Chiu Tien-lin, "以海基會董事身分參訪中國 趙天麟：多交流是好事," Legislative Yuan, Republic of China (Taiwan), <https://www.ly.gov.tw/Pages/Detail.aspx?nodeid=5003&pid=31823>.

69 Huang Yu-chiao and Jiang Zhu, "柯文哲涉京華城等3案遭起訴 案情始末與北檢認定有罪關鍵一次看," Public Vision News Network, <https://news.pts.org.tw/article/730692>.

70 Huaxia, "国台办2023年6月14日新闻发布会文字实录," June 15, 2023, <https://www.huaxia.com/c/2023/06/15/1710657.shtml>.

The CCP's efforts to build a relationship with the TPP started when Ko was the mayor of Taipei, as seen in the 2015 Shanghai-Taipei City Forum. At this forum, Ko met with the mayor of Shanghai and stated that "both sides of the strait are one family (兩岸一家親)," using a phrase that has also been used by Xi Jinping as part of his approach to Taiwan.<sup>71</sup> Throughout the years, Ko has received praise from the Taiwan Affairs Office for giving speeches that align with the CCP's talking points.<sup>72</sup> Most recently, in September 2024, the Taiwan Affairs Office supported Ko's condemnation of the Lai government for persecuting individuals who "do not agree with Taiwan independence."<sup>73</sup>

In addition to outreach directed towards the three main parties, the CCP has also worked to build relationships with some smaller fringe parties in Taiwan: such as the New Party (新黨), the People First Party (親民黨), and Non-Partisan Solidarity Union (無黨團結聯盟). All three parties have been invited to and attended the Straits Forum, where they were encouraged to promote CCP narratives on Taiwan.<sup>74</sup>

[com/c/2023/06/15/1710657.shtml](https://www.huaxia.com/c/2023/06/15/1710657.shtml).

71 Chen Minfeng, "楊雄當面向柯文哲提九二共識," RFI, August 18, 2015, <https://www.rfi.fr/tw/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B/20150818-%E6%A5%8A%E9%9B%84%E7%95%B6%E9%9D%A2%E5%90%91%E6%9F%AF%E6%96%87%E5%93%B2%E6%8F%90%E4%B9%9D%E4%BA%8C%E5%85%B1%E8%AD%98>.

72 Taiwan Affairs Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China/Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, "国台办：对柯文哲市长就两岸关系作出积极表态表示赞赏," June 12, 2019, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201906/t20190612\\_12173358.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201906/t20190612_12173358.htm); <https://archive.ph/wip/pXdnM>; Fa Guang (法广), "北京赞赏柯文," RFI, March 31, 2015, <https://www.rfi.fr/cn/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD/20150331-%E5%8C%97%E4%BA%AC%E8%B5%9E%E8%B5%8F%E6%9F%AF%E6%96%87%E5%93%B2>.

73 Taiwan Affairs Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China/Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, "国务院台办新闻发布会辑录 (2024-09-11)," September 11, 2024, [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/speech/202409/t20240911\\_12649284.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/speech/202409/t20240911_12649284.htm).

74 People's Daily Online, "宋濤會見無黨團結聯盟、親民黨代表和台灣愛國統一團體負責人、代表人士," June 19,

The CCP's united front work in Taiwan is extensive, targeting all political parties, local communities, youth, businesses, and civil society. However, it is important to note that not all individuals or groups involved in cross-Straits exchanges are necessarily part of the united front. Given the complicated political landscape and historical context of Taiwan, it is possible that some individuals have similar attitudes or perspectives with those who are part of the united front, even without the CCP's influence. The extent to which the CCP's influence operations efforts are received or internalized by Taiwanese individuals and organizations remains difficult to measure, demonstrating the need for continued vigilance.

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2023, <http://politics.people.com.cn/BIG5/n1/2023/0619/c1001-40017244.html>; Jen Shu-yun and Yeh Ji-xuan Kuo, “海峽論壇廈門登場 國民、新、民眾三黨派員與會,” June 16, 2023, <https://news.pts.org.tw/article/641867>.

## Policy Pathways

No other democracy faces the same scale of foreign threat to its integrity and independence as Taiwan. The malign intentions and influence operations directed by the CCP, and the threat it poses and harm it causes to Taiwan's democratic society, is real. However, the extent to which this is understood by Taiwanese individuals and organizations is unclear. Like most democracies, Taiwan's legal framework for dealing with this challenge is a patchwork of countermeasures that emerged during Taiwan's transition to democracy. Under martial law, the specific legal justification for responding to CCP operations mattered less than the belief on the part of the Kuomintang's leadership and security services in a person's wrongdoing. The activists who drove democratization thereafter were trying to institutionalize democratic governance and encourage a cultural shift rather than trying to envision a new national security framework. As a result, Taiwan's framework for dealing with influence operations is a mix of measures that are too severe or too lenient.

Some of Taiwan's regulations are relatively strong, such as those related to foreign campaign donations and PRC corporate ownership. However, other areas are uneven. For example, sentences for espionage are unpredictable: with the dismantling of the military penal system, convicted military officers no longer have their visits monitored to ensure they do not continue to pose a counterintelligence threat. Legislators, elected officials, and lower level military personnel, current or former, are not monitored for their interactions with the PRC and regulations are not enforced.

Countering CCP political warfare will require a flexible and multi-pronged approach, because there is no silver bullet. Moreover, the party is anything if not adaptive. Any list of recommendations will have shortcomings, and cannot foresee all of the potential tools that the CCP may bring to bear in its political warfare efforts. Therefore, a set of general principles follow below, which address some of the major considerations that should be used as a starting point for policy deliberation:

- *Transparency:* Sunlight is the best disinfectant. Out in the open, people have to make choices about whether to continue on in their conflicts of interests or compromised relationships. This applies equally to government and law enforcement responses to political interference. Administrative responses done quietly are not as effective as public prosecutions and explanations, which help create risk and inject new information into the public sphere for discussion.
- *Conversation and debate:* The legislature and the court system draw the line between what is legal and illegal. National government resources always will focus predominantly on potentially illegal activities. In a democracy, we would not want it any other way. What is unacceptable or improper, however, is not necessarily what is illegal. Civil society must be able to discuss in reasonable terms what is taking place.
- *Consequences create risk:* Until the Chinese Communist Party faces consequences for its actions, it will have no incentive to restrain its espionage and united front activities. Without successfully taking cases to and winning at trial, without administrative penalties, Taiwan citizens who actively assist the Chinese Communist Party at the expense of their own society will have no reason to scrutinize their actions or to desist. Risk is required to deter behavior that undermines democracy.
- *Maintain the integrity of rules and processes:* When relationships with Chinese Communist Party organizations go awry or become exploitative, most cases—excepting those involving recruited or compromised agents—involve foreign partners who do not monitor and enforce their own guidelines and procedures. Many organizations have rules to protect against conflicts of interest, corruption, and misuse of funds. To protect against CCP compromise, organizations that seek to do business, promote exchanges, collaborate on research, or otherwise have institutional relationships need to establish and stick to rules and procedures. Exceptions and exemptions need to be addressed in the open with clear explanation; otherwise, it is too easy to slip toward compromise and exploitation.



Among the specific measures that should be considered follow below:

- *Foreign agent registration requirements:* Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States all have a legal structure that conditionally requires publicly accessible registration when acting on behalf of a foreign principal. The most important element of these schemes for enhancing transparency is to draw a line between actors who will take responsibility for their foreign connections and those who are trying to hide their activities. These are not perfect laws, but they provide a first cut between what is acceptable and what is not. Those that register can have their activities discussed and their connections evaluated. Those that do not have already decided that they would prefer the risk of criminal prosecution or administrative action to public disclosure.
- *Criminalizing unregistered agents of a foreign power:* Democracies have difficulty addressing espionage, because fairness in a criminal trial frequently demands the disclosure of classified information. While some of that information already may have been betrayed, other relevant information may still have been protected. Classified evidence procedures can be cumbersome and costly. In the United States, many spies are prosecuted for being an unregistered agent of a foreign power. The burden of proof on the government is not that the person damaged national security with their disclosures, but simply showing that a foreign power directed their actions. It is a lesser crime, but still substantial in its penalties. This is distinct from but related to the need for transparency schemes, which may not have serious criminal consequences for their violation.
- *Strengthening security vetting through the national security clearance system:* Taiwan's current security clearance system is a patchwork of agency rules and a national law governing the handling of classified materials. A security clearance system with rigorous post-employment vetting allows government employees to be held to a higher standard of behavior, including with criminal consequences in egregious cases of leaks. It serves the same role as a foreign agent registration system, in that both identify acceptable behavior and enable the government to prioritize actions. Finally, a clearance system would help build trust between the national and local levels as well as between the executive and legislative branches. Sensitive national security-related work would be easier to conduct across these divides when there is a shared confidence in the integrity of everyone present in the room.
- *Strengthen the penalties for espionage with additional criminal enhancements:* As noted above, the criminal penalties for espionage vary widely. Standardizing the sentencing requirements may provide an additional deterrent for potential spies. Additional sentencing enhancements could be legislated for offenses that have wider political consequences or threaten the wider integrity of the Taiwanese government. For example, government officials convicted of national security-related offenses who recruit other officials or military officers into spy rings or connect them with PRC intelligence and united front organs could receive heavier sentences. Similar sentencing enhancements for spying could be used when the individual is also involved in spreading CCP narratives, participating in united front events inside the PRC, or other such activities with wider political ramifications.
- *Support journalist training and fellowship programs:* Political warfare stories are complicated stories, and civil society is sometimes better positioned to investigate what is taking place. Journalists not only provide the traditional oversight role of the fourth estate, but can also frame and discover issues unseen by the government. A journalist support fund administered outside government—either initially supported by the government, media outlets, or private donors—could be used to support short workshops, short-term reportorial fellowship programs,



and small grant-making to finance related investigative work. This would bolster civil society and support more independent work by creating incentives to build the baseline knowledge necessary to investigate these stories. Taiwan needs this support both at home and abroad, so that the country's allies and partners better understand the CCP threat.

- *Create cybersecurity certification programs that are required for the protection of critical infrastructure:* The Ministry of Digital Affairs could create a certification program for companies, charities, and other civil society and social organizations to incentivize good cybersecurity practices. If such a program is not already in place for critical infrastructure, then such a program of training and certification should be immediately instituted.
- *Create clear security regulations for all government employees—not just for national security professionals—and security offices to provide those employees with an effective reporting mechanism for security threats.* Security offices across government would provide a central departmental focal point for reporting espionage approaches or other strange incidents that might be the mark of hostile intelligence actors. Government officials need to be sensitized to risk and encouraged to report anomalous incidents. Such security offices need not have investigatory powers that would hearken back to the abuses under martial law, but should be used to gather voluntarily submitted information, promote security awareness, and support national security investigators.
- *Strengthen oversight and transparency of interactions with the PRC, including visits to the PRC, by current and former elected officials, legislators, and appointees.* Comprehensive regulations should be established, including mandatory public disclosure of detailed itineraries 30 days before departure and strict prohibition of closed-door meetings with all official meetings

requiring diplomatic staff presence, journalist access, and detailed documentation.

- *Apply a stricter definition and standard for what constitute national security threats.* For example, the standard of “cooperative behavior” mentioned in the “Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area” is relatively loose. Currently, one would only violate the regulation if an agreement were signed and if the action has “actual effect” on public power. Cases for prosecution also need concrete and immediate danger posed on national security in order for it to be charged. However, united front operations are a long-term relationship building activities that may not have effect until necessary. Legal standards should account for the cumulative and latent risks posed by such influence efforts, even in the absence of immediate or tangible harm.