Beginning in 1973, however, focus shifted. The PRC systematically exploited the 28 February 1947 massacre in Taiwan by holding anniversary ceremonies and study sessions to “win over the hearts” of the Taiwanese people. The first meeting hosted approximately 138 participants, nearly one-half of whom were Taiwanese, including KMT party officials, former military officers, government diplomats and administrators, academics, women, and young people. Propaganda themes for the annual meetings included routine calls for Taiwan’s “liberation” and its unification with “the motherland,” as well as both coercive threats and offers for “peace talks.” Oddly enough, the hosts also asserted that Mao inspired the 28 February massacre. By taking credit for the incident, the CCP contrived “to establish the legitimacy and continuity of its leadership between the incident and any future political change on Taiwan.”

The Cultural Revolution brought a decade of civil war, chaos, and ruin to mainland China. After its end, the PRC’s political warfare infrastructure was reconstituted in the late 1970s, with resultant renewed operations against Taiwan. Up to that point, Beijing’s Taiwan policy staff work had been dominated by the PRC’s Central Investigation Department, which was focused on intelligence and political warfare operations and which was eventually incorporated into the Ministry of State Security (MSS). This was not necessarily a new PRC model, since during the height of the Chinese Civil War the united front, state security, and liaison work systems worked closely together as underground work entities.

The end of the Cultural Revolution also allowed the CCP to vastly expand its united front mission. United front work was originally focused internally on domestic objectives regarding the various factions and ethnicities in China, especially during the disastrous Great Leap Forward and the bloody Cultural Revolution. But beginning in 1979, Deng Xiaoping broadened the focus of united front work to include Chinese living outside of the PRC. Overseas Chinese were enticed to invest in the PRC to support Deng’s “Four Modernizations” of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology in mainland China. The diaspora was also encouraged to support PRC policies and actions within the countries where they resided. This led to a vast increase in funding for the UFWD as well as the PRC’s economic revival.

While the deaths of Chiang Kai-shek in April 1975 and Mao Zedong in September 1976 did little to change the nature of the politi-
cal warfare competition between the PRC and ROC, the beginning of the Democracy Wall Movement in mainland China in 1978 and economic reforms in the country gave small hope that perhaps the PRC would become less totalitarian. “Cross-strait relations began to liberalize in the 1980s, and the CCP officially shuttered its overt propaganda program in 1991,” reports Hsiao. “On the surface, the war without gunfire that had lasted for over 40 years appeared to be over—[but] this could not be farther from the truth. Rather, propaganda and disinformation found new outlets in the mass media and new media.”


On 1 January 1979, the United States formally recognized the PRC and severed official relations with the ROC, which included terminating the 1955 Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty. In April, the U.S. Congress, expressing little confidence in the stated security assurances toward Taiwan that were coming from President James E. “Jimmy” Carter Jr.’s administration, passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which provided “substantive continuity in the vital security sphere” on “unofficial terms,” along with continuity in “commercial, cultural, and other relations.”

Meanwhile, Deng Xiaoping announced plans for a Third United Front between the CCP and KMT in December 1979, offering the UFWD a significant role in cross-strait policy. Deng also “outlined a preliminary concept for promoting a ‘China model’ in place of the international communist movement.” That same year, the PRC invaded Vietnam.

One example of a PRC political warfare initiative during this period was the proposal to lure Taiwan into the PRC with the “One Country, Two Systems” idea. Stokes and Hsiao write that in September 1981, PRC officials “outlined a nine-point proposal that called for unification talks between the CCP and KMT on an equal footing, initiation of cross-Strait trade and other functional exchanges, and consultative positions for representatives from Taiwan.” In addition to “subordinating Taiwan as a local area under central CCP authority,” the proposal also targeted U.S. support for Taiwan. The ROC ultimately rejected the “One Country, Two Systems” concept,

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72. Hsiao, “CCP Propaganda against Taiwan Enters the Social Age.”
73. Goldstein, *China and Taiwan*, 56–58.
74. Stokes and Hsiao, *The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department*, 10.
calling instead for unification “under a democratic, free, and non-
communist system.”

In the end, Hong Kong became the proving ground for the “One 
Country, Two Systems” idea and remained a key sphere for PRC 
political warfare. While CCP united front work and intelligence 
operations had been conducted in Hong Kong for decades, politi-
cal warfare activities increased dramatically after the signing of the 
Sino-British Declaration on Hong Kong in December 1984. In time, 
Hong Kong’s experience would make it quite clear that the ROC was 
wise to reject the PRC’s “One Country, Two Systems” formula in 1981.

According to Hong Kong independence activist Yau Wai-ching, “Chi-
na has eroded and nearly destroyed democracy in Hong Kong since 
taking control of the city from Britain in 1997. Beijing has cunningly 
manipulated a well-developed political and constitutional frame-
work to undo, step by step, Hong Kong’s autonomy. Concepts such as 
civil liberties and the separation of powers...are being abandoned. 
Fairness and justice, the heart of democracy, are withering.”

Hong Kong also played a central role in political warfare com-
petition and in establishing political dialogue during that era. It was 
in Hong Kong that the CCP established a new tool for “expanding 
military liaison work out to elites within the broader international 
community” via the China Association for International Friendly 
Contact (CAIFC). Using the CAIFC and its various united front 
orGANizations, the CCP has co-opted many ROC military officers 
through programs in the PRC, such as the “Linking Fates” Cultural 
Festival of Cross-Strait Generals, that bring together ROC retired 
military officers and senior PRC officials and retired PLA officers. 
While in the PRC, many ROC attendees are approached with busi-
ness and financial offers in exchange for their cooperation in sup-
port of PRC political warfare objectives.

In 1984, the CCP formed the Carrier Enterprise Corporation in 
Hong Kong. Initially established as a trading company, the corpo-
ration soon expanded into real estate, construction, manufacturing, 
mining, investment—and political warfare operations. According to 
Stokes and Hsiao, as many as 20 Carrier subsidiaries in Hong Kong 
have directed political warfare activities against Taiwan. Next, the 
CCP established the Alumni Association of the Huangpu (Wham-

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75 Stokes and Hsiao, *The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department*, 10–11.
76 Stokes and Hsiao, *The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department*, 11.
78 Stokes and Hsiao, *The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department*, 11.
79 Russell Hsiao, “Political Warfare Alert: Fifth ‘Linking Fates’ Cultural Festival of Cross-Strait Generals,” Global 
Taiwan Institute, Global Taiwan Brief 2, no. 2, 11 January 2017.
Military Academy, a UFWD group tasked with promoting cross-strait unification under the “One Country, Two Systems” concept.80

During this time, the PRC also made it a priority to establish a special cross-strait channel of communication to engage ROC leaders in political dialogue. The defection of a China Airlines (Taiwan) pilot who flew to Guangzhou in 1986 made this possible. For the first time since the Chinese Civil War, CCP and KMT authorities carried out direct talks to negotiate the pilot’s return to Taiwan. By November 1987, the ROC under President Chiang Ching-kuo lifted its ban on Taiwanese visits to mainland China, marking a significant PRC political warfare success.81

Within the ROC political warfare establishment, Chiang Ching-kuo is viewed with great respect, since he founded the ROC military’s Fu Hsing Kang College, also known as the Political Warfare Cadres Academy and now a part of Taiwan’s National Defense University. As Chiang steered Taiwan from authoritarian rule to democracy, he maintained his strong belief in the necessity of fighting the political war against Beijing. His ideological defense of the ROC was invaluable, but one unfortunate offshoot of his support is that the title and function of the ROC’s political warfare profession did not evolve as Taiwan assumed the other trappings of a full democracy. This failure, as well as recognition of abuses during KMT rule and the White Terror, would ultimately undermine Taiwan’s ability to counter PRC political warfare as a democracy. Over time, Taiwan’s political warfare experts, viewed increasingly as anachronistic holdovers of Leninist ideology and authoritarian rule, gradually lost the respect and trust of Taiwan’s elected leadership and people.82

Following Chiang’s death in January 1988, the CCP worked to establish communications with his successor, Lee Teng-hui. This was accomplished by a neo-Confucian scholar who worked closely with the UFWD’s KMT Revolutionary Committee and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. With the founding of the ROC’s National Unification Council in 1990, Lee allowed ROC officials to meet with a former PLA General Political Department director and other PRC representatives in Hong Kong in December of that year, and talks regarding confidence-building measures had begun by 1993. As a testament to the scope of this kind of liaison work, Stokes and Hsiao state that “twenty-six meetings between the secret emissaries took place between 1990 and 1995.”83

The transition of CCP leadership from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang

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80 Stokes and Hsiao, *The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department*, 11–12.
81 Stokes and Hsiao, *The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department*, 12.
82 Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.
Zemin resulted in power shifts within the party’s official “Taiwan policy community,” including a purge of senior PLA military officers and the advent of scandals involving political warfare officials working with the PRC’s Ministry of Public Security, the PLA’s Intelligence Department, and state-owned enterprises. Reforms and retribution followed. It also coincided with the bloody CCP response to the Democracy Wall Movement in the PRC, which ultimately ended with the literal crushing with tanks and machine-gunning of protestors in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. PRC political warfare operations to cover up or distract from the Tiananmen Square massacre continue in Taiwan through this day and, up to the 2019 PRC crackdown on Hong Kong, proved effective on many university campuses.

In 1991, the ROC officially ended its National Mobilization for the Suppression of Communist Rebellion that was initiated in 1949, and by 1995 President Lee had instituted other democratic reforms that empowered the people of Taiwan, including ending the decades-long cover-up of the 28 February 1947 massacre. All would impact PRC political warfare strategies and operations. As recently as 2017, for example, the CCP tried to co-opt the 70th anniversary of the 28 February incident, as well as the 30th anniversary of the lifting of martial law in Taiwan, by hosting a commemorative event organized by its front organization, the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League.

Lee’s policies and reforms during that time were “cautious but also provocative.” He countered PRC propaganda that Taiwan was a province of China by characterizing the claim as a “weird fantasy” and insisting that the ROC and PRC “should coexist as two legal entities in the international arena.” Further, increasing transparency about the White Terror in Taiwan and the country’s continued movement toward democracy and freedom were also useful in countering PRC influence.

In 1992, representatives of the PRC and ROC met in Hong Kong to determine the nature of future talks, especially whether they “were of a domestic or an international nature.” The outcome of these talks, now referred to as the 1992 Consensus, is disputed by both sides to this day, as it essentially reflected very different perspectives on what One China means. Nevertheless, the PRC continues to use the 1992 Consensus today to pressure Taiwan’s Tsai Ing-wen administration, and all other nations and international institutions, to accept its interpretation of One China. In recent years,

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84 Stokes and Hsiao, The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department, 13.
85 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 73–74.
86 Hsiao, “Political Warfare Alert: CCP-TDSGL Appropriates Taiwan’s 2-28 Incident.”
87 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 82–83.
President Tsai’s unwillingness to accede to the PRC’s version of the 1992 Consensus and One China has led to the PRC’s enhanced use of diplomacy, economic warfare, military threats, and political warfare as primary attack vehicles.

During a 1995 speech at Cornell University, where he had earned his doctorate, President Lee highlighted Taiwan’s successful democratization and focused on “Taiwanization,” which emphasized the history, literature, and culture of Taiwan rather than China. Beijing was very displeased. As the PRC’s attitude toward Lee hardened in the run-up to Taiwan’s 1996 election, its propaganda organs accused him of advocating for Taiwan’s independence and “acting at the United States’ direction” to disrupt cross-strait relations.88

In July 1995, the PRC demonstrated its hard power in an attempt to influence Taiwanese public opinion by conducting a series of missile tests in the waters surrounding Taiwan and military maneuvers off the coast of Fujian. The following year, to deter the Taiwanese people from voting for Lee in Taiwan’s 1996 presidential election, the PRC conducted another show of force just days before the 26 March voting date by launching missiles over the island, conducting massive live-fire and amphibious assault exercises, and disrupting trade and shipping lines around Taiwan. The U.S. response was to dispatch two aircraft carrier battle groups to the area, prompting the PRC to announce the suspension of its missile “tests.”89

The PRC political warfare effort in 1996 backfired miserably. Lee became the first democratically elected president of the ROC by a wide margin, and 75 percent of the total vote went to candidates opposing Taiwan’s unification with the PRC.90 However, the PRC’s political warfare operations did boost the popularity of a new political party called the New Party, which would later be tainted by allegations of conducting espionage operations against Taiwan for the PRC.91

Cross-strait relations stalemated during the late 1990s, and “unofficial” talks between Taipei and Beijing stalled as well. Accordingly, the PRC sought to influence Taiwan “by cultivating people-to-people contacts with business figures, local official, and more unification-oriented politicians.” Lee’s 1998 interview with the German radio station Deutsche Welle, in which he denied the PRC’s sovereignty over Taiwan, sparked a furious propaganda assault from Beijing and the cancellation of a high-level visit by the head of the Association for

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88 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 86, 93.
89 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 88–89.
90 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 88–89.
Relations Across the Taiwan Straits. The PRC cancelled further unofficial talks until Taipei accepted Beijing’s version of One China.92

By the time of Taiwan’s second direct presidential election in 2000, the PRC was engaged in ever-increasing and more subtle united front operations. In 2001, it directed the establishment of the China Association for Promotion of Chinese Culture as a principle PLA platform for cross-strait political warfare operations.

The Ascent of the DPP: The Chen Shui-bian Administration

On 18 March 2000, Chen Shui-bian was elected as president of the ROC, leading his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to victory over two strong KMT contenders. For the PRC, the DPP was a nightmare, since it supported Taiwan’s independence from China and held grievances against the mainland KMT government that had repressed the people of Taiwan for so long. Consequently, before the election, the PRC employed a wide range of political warfare and other influence operations to intimidate Taiwan’s voters from supporting Chen, as well as to influence Chen’s behavior if elected. The PRC State Council, for example, issued a white paper in February 2000 saying that force might be used against Taiwan if its leaders refuse “the peaceful settlement of cross-strait reunification through negotiations.”93

Although a supporter of Taiwanese independence, Chen stated publicly that as long as the PRC had no intention of using military force against Taiwan, he would not declare independence or change the ROC’s national symbols. Chen faced immense challenges, such as intense political conflicts with the KMT-dominated legislature, the DPP’s lack of governing experience, and scandals that plagued his presidency as he sought to reestablish U.S. trust and reassure Beijing that he would approach cross-strait issues constructively. Ultimately, the PRC rebuffed Chen’s early efforts at reassurance, relations between the PRC and ROC moved from stalemate to confrontation, and Chen ultimately overplayed his hand with the United States in a way that greatly diminished American confidence and support.

The PRC changed its political warfare strategy from issuing threats to influence Taiwan’s public opinion to employing classic united front tactics designed to splinter Taiwan’s unity. Specifically, PRC vice premier Qian Qichen suggested that the PRC should “work together with Taiwan compatriots . . . that agree on one China . . . and

92 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 92, 95–96.
93 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 99–96.
unite with all the forces that can be united . . . to struggle against sepa-
ratism.” The PRC’s primary target was Taiwan’s business commu-
nity, which sought more direct routes and methods for doing business
with mainland China, and it attempted to influence Taiwan’s busi-
ness organizations to accept and promote PRC political positions.94

By 2003, Chen’s relations with U.S. president George W. Bush
had soured for several reasons. Bush had been highly supportive of
Taiwan upon taking office in 2001, vowing to “do whatever it took” to
help Taiwan defend itself in the event of a PRC attack and provid-
ing it with its largest arms sale in a decade. But the 11 September
2001 terrorist attacks against the United States focused American
attention on the Middle East, and Chen’s increasing public state-
ments hinting at Taiwan independence, which would likely cause
a cross-strait conflict, caused that period of warmth to “melt away.”
Ultimately, Chen played directly into the hands of the PRC by alien-
ating his strongest international ally, the United States, as well as the
people of Taiwan.95

At the same time, Chen made great efforts to emphasize Tai-
wanese identity through a “de-Sinicization” campaign, which disas-
sociated Taiwan from China. For example, Chen ensured that the
subjects of Taiwanese history and culture became central to the
country’s secondary education curriculum, while Chinese history
became part of general world history. He also deleted China from
the names of state-run corporations and postage stamps. Chen’s ef-
forts seemed aimed at developing a new constitution that would lead
to an independent Taiwan and securing membership in the UN un-
der the name of Taiwan rather than the ROC.

Consequently, the PRC vastly enhanced its political warfare op-
erations against Taiwan. By 2005, Beijing had accelerated its united
front and “people to people” diplomacy, establishing regular con-
tacts with the KMT and Taiwan’s People First Party. These high-level
party connections later paved the way for vastly improved relations
between Taiwan and the PRC, as well as between the CCP and KMT,
after the KMT crushed the DPP in Taiwan’s 2008 presidential and
legislative elections.96

Leading to that devastating defeat, Beijing worked closely with
Washington to “contain Taiwan” and Chen’s efforts to change the sta-
tus quo, which the Bush administration feared meant independence
and, consequently, war. In 2005, the PRC passed the “Anti-Secession
Law,” which called for a broad range of exchanges with Taiwan and

94 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 105–6.
95 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 107–9.
96 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 110–13.
“peaceful reunification through consultations and negotiations on an equal footing” and set broad conditions under which the use of force against Taiwan would be justified. The PRC also increased a pattern of military intimidation to influence Taiwan’s elections and the independence referendum that year, which led many in the U.S. government to believe that the PRC was ready to go to war against Taiwan.97

The Ma Era: Rapprochement and Infiltration
Between 2008 and 2016, interactions between Taiwan and the PRC increased quickly and extensively as ROC president Ma Ying-jeou pursued a policy of rapprochement with Beijing. “With rapidly expanding cross-strait travel, academic exchanges and investment,” writes J. Michael Cole at the Global Taiwan Institute, “the opportunities for China to engage in political warfare increased exponentially.”98

The PRC viewed Ma’s election as a “historic opportunity” in its efforts to absorb Taiwan into the PRC. Ma endorsed the so-called 1992 Consensus and publicly announced that the PRC and ROC agreed to “separate interpretations” of the One China policy, with Taipei affirming that “China” was the ROC. There is, however, no record that any such agreement between the PRC and ROC was ever made. Ma also sought “meaningful participation” in international organizations, but not membership in the UN. Consequently, Ma was able to reduce tensions and restart stalled cross-strait communications.99

Regarding Taiwan’s engagement in international organizations and diplomatic access, Ma achieved some success. He claimed credit for Taiwan’s participation in the World Health Assembly under the designation of “Chinese Taipei,” its assent to the World Trade Organization’s Agreement on Government Procurement, and its involvement with the UN’s International Civil Aviation Organization. He also obtained for Taiwan “visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 158 countries and regions, compared with 54 before he took office.” In pursuing a policy of “flexible diplomacy,” Ma is perceived as having done well.100

However, as a result of Ma’s attempts at cross-strait rapprochement, the PRC was able to increase its political influence in Taiwan,

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97 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 113–17.
99 Goldstein, China and Taiwan, 120; and Kerry K. Gershaneck, interviews with a senior U.S. Department of State official, various locations, 2018–20.
100 H. H. Lu and Evelyn Kao, "President Ma Counters Criticism of His Flexible Diplomacy," Central News Agency (Taipei), 29 December 2015.
inflicting serious damage to the ROC’s security and national unity and garnering increasing resentment and criticism throughout the country. As PRC media outlets praised Ma and his cross-strait initiatives, Beijing continued to conduct a wide range of political warfare operations and cyberattacks against Taiwan, and PRC intelligence actions expanded significantly.\(^{101}\)

Academic exchanges between Taiwan and the PRC sent a large number of highly educated but underemployed and unemployed Taiwanese, including many with PhDs, to mainland China in search of jobs. With little knowledge of how to identify or resist PRC intelligence enticements, they became easy prey to Confucius Institutes, the MSS, PLA agencies, and other organizations that offered funding for “research” and “consultant” services. These academics were often tasked with reporting on Taiwan’s economy, politics, societal problems, security, and other issues of great interest to the PRC political warfare community, which vastly increased Beijing’s ability to divide and demoralize the people of Taiwan.\(^ {102}\)

Ma’s reign has been characterized as a “dark decade” during Taiwan’s intelligence war with the PRC by Jamestown Foundation fellow Peter Mattis, who reports that Taiwan’s “intelligence and counterintelligence failures” during the Ma administration damaged its “reputation and sowed doubt about its integrity.”\(^ {103}\) In addition to inroads to Taiwanese academics and students, the PRC’s political warfare and intelligence operatives also obtained far greater access to retired government officials, particularly military officers and ministerial-level administrators in charge of national defense, economic stability, foreign affairs, and other vital state functions. Many were co-opted with offers of free trips to the mainland and high-paying positions as advisors or directors on the boards of PRC state-owned enterprises.\(^ {104}\)

“Ma opened the door to China’s infiltration [in Taiwan], and this led to a large backlash against him yielding too much,” said one ROC official, who asked for anonymity. Indeed, Ma’s administration faced increasing criticism and protests for its pro-PRC policies, and it soon became mired in bitter domestic policy divisions in the same manner in which Chen Shui-bian’s administration faltered.\(^ {105}\)

A high-level cross-strait visit to Taiwan in 2008 was perceived by many Taiwanese as a push for unification with the PRC and led to violent protests. Molotov cocktails were thrown in the streets, and

\(^{101}\) Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.

\(^{102}\) Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.

\(^{103}\) Nadia Tsao et al., “Ma Years ‘Dark Decade’ in Intelligence War: Analyst,” Taipei Times (Taiwan), 2 October 2018.

\(^{104}\) Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.

\(^{105}\) Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.
more than 140 police officers were reportedly injured. College students and professors launched a peaceful sit-in, known as the Wild Strawberry Movement, demanding a more reasonable assembly law and a stop to police violence. In 2014, the Sunflower Student Movement, initiated by a coalition of students and civic groups, widely protested Ma’s cross-straits trade policies, in part by occupying the legislature.

In November 2015, Ma met with Xi Jinping in Singapore, the first such meeting between the presidents of the PRC and ROC in 66 years. The meeting was perceived as “unequal,” and Ma was accused of sacrificing Taiwan’s democratic values and attempting to “re-Sinify” the nation. By the end of his administration, many people in Taiwan believed that Ma had gone too far in the direction of PRC-ROC unification at the expense of Taiwan’s sovereignty and interests. The DPP, dedicated to establishing a more “Taiwanese” national identity, won the 2016 presidential election by a landslide. Two years later, Ma was found guilty of leaking classified information and thereby violating the ROC’s Communications Protection and Surveillance Act, further tarnishing his legacy.

President Tsai and the “Cold Peace”
Following DPP candidate Tsai Ing-wen’s election as president of the ROC on 16 January 2016 and her inauguration on 20 May, a “Cold Peace” has defined cross-strait relations. The DPP platform ultimately seeks a sovereign and independent Taiwan, and it accepts neither the PRC’s One China principle nor the so-called 1992 Consensus.

As explained by Dr. David D. F. Huang, then at Academia Sinica, the “essential parameters of ‘cold peace’ are a set of policies carried out by both China and Taiwan.” Beijing has indicated that “unless [Tsai] accepted the [PRC’s] precondition of the ‘1992 Consensus,’ there would be no official or semi-official communications between China and Taiwan, no international space for Taiwan, and no more ‘economic handouts’ to Taiwan.” Tsai, meanwhile, is reluctant to consent to the 1992 Consensus, since she “was elected president with an ambiguous pledge to maintain the status quo across the Taiwan Strait.”
To counter PRC propaganda, Huang continues, Tsai stated that her government would “respect the ‘historical fact’ of the 1992 meetings and all developments thus following; would abide by the ROC constitution, and implement existing cross-Strait law and agreements as the previous administration had; and would construct a ‘consistent, predictable, and non-provocative’ framework of interactions with mainland China.” She also stated that there will be “no change of good will toward China, no change of her previous promises, no succumbing to China’s pressure, and no return to old ways of cross-Strait confrontation.”\(^\text{112}\) The CCP is not satisfied with these assurances.

As a result, cross-strait relations between the PRC and Taiwan have developed into deadlock. Public-sector communication channels are cut off and private-sector exchanges reduced, while official channels between the PRC State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office and Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council and between Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation and the PRC’s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits have also been disconnected. The PRC’s ensuing strategy has been to increase diplomatic, economic, and military pressures on Tsai’s government through a wide range of united front and other political warfare activities. The CCP’s objectives is to effect regime change in Taiwan or prompt Tsai to mistakenly provoke China.\(^\text{113}\)

\(^\text{112}\) Huang, “‘Cold Peace’ and the Nash Equilibrium in Cross-Strait Relations (Part 1).”

\(^\text{113}\) David W. F. Huang, “‘Cold Peace’ and the Nash Equilibrium in Cross-Strait Relations (Part 2),” Global Taiwan Institute, Global Taiwan Brief 2, no. 2, 11 January 2017.

**2018 Midterm Election Interference**

Taiwan’s midterm elections in November 2018 resulted in resounding defeat at the local level for the DPP and unexpected victory for the KMT, which won mayoralties in Taiwan’s three most populous cities. Tsai resigned as leader of the DPP, though she remained Taiwan’s president.

While the political issues that drove the election were varied and complex, the PRC’s “massive and successful interference in Taiwan’s elections” certainly helped impact the outcome, writes Josh Rogin at *The Washington Post*. Beijing “carried out a massive propaganda and social media campaign that spread false news designed to undermine Tsai’s government,” in which “the island’s 23 million citizens were bombarded with anti-Tsai and anti-DPP content through...”
Facebook, Twitter and online chat groups, promoted by China’s ‘50-cent army’ of paid social media trolls.”

There are ongoing investigations, under the direction of the ROC National Security Bureau and military intelligence, into allegations of PRC social media engineering and illegal funding of Taiwanese candidates opposing Tsai and the DPP. However, ROC officials acknowledged during several discussions after the election that money laundering and social media engineering are difficult to prove and the investigations themselves are very time consuming.

Another problem acknowledged by DPP officials is that the Tsai government failed to educate the people of Taiwan about PRC political warfare early enough in the administration. “It was only in September [2018] that the DPP began to buy ads regarding ‘fake news’ and China’s influence operations,” said one knowledgeable official. By then, the allegations looked to some like an election ploy, and many Taiwanese were skeptical. Others who were buying ads and protesting against the administration’s policies took the “fake news” ads to be attacks on their loyalty and integrity.

Rogin notes that after the elections, PRC propaganda organs and Beijing’s sympathizers “pointed to Tsai’s losses as evidence that her tough stance vis-à-vis China was unpopular and wrongheaded.” Those propaganda platforms also depicted the election results as justification for Xi Jinping’s strategy of isolating Taiwan and undercutting its international standing since the DPP election victory in 2016.

More ominously, on 1 January 2019, in Xi’s first speech ever devoted exclusively to the topic of Taiwan, his tone was threatening. One day after Tsai urged the PRC to settle the Taiwan issue peacefully, Xi declared, “The country is growing strong, the nation is rejuvenating and unification between the two sides of the strait is the great trend of history. . . . We make no promise to abandon the use of force, and retain the option of taking all necessary measures.”

2020 Election Interference

Leading up Taiwan’s 11 January 2020 national elections, the PRC was emboldened by what it perceived as its midterm election success.

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115 Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.
116 Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.
117 Rogin, “China’s Interference in the 2018 Elections Succeeded—in Taiwan.”
119 Buckley and Horton, “Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan that Unification Is the Goal and Force Is an Option.”
Beijing had high hopes for the election of its favored candidate, the KMT’s Han Kuo-yu, mayor of Kaohsiung. It was a false hope.

According to a report by the Global Taiwan Institute in October 2019, the PRC used standard military intimidation, along with other tools for election interference in Taiwan that “are more insidious and less understood here in the United States” in the run-up to the 2020 elections. These tools included the employment of criminal gangs, the exploitation of new and traditional media, and United Front-like penetration networks in “grassroots wards, schools, farmers associations, religious organizations, family clans, and even indigenous tribes.”

Nevertheless, in Taiwan’s 15th presidential and 10th legislative elections, President Tsai and her running mate William Lai won the presidential race by a landslide. They secured a record-breaking 8,170,186 votes, or 57.13 percent, while the KMT, led by Han and Simon Chang, received 38.61 percent of the vote with almost 3 million fewer votes. The people of Taiwan, the only liberal democracy in the Chinese-speaking world, endorsed Tsai’s presidency for another four years after her humiliating 2018 local election defeat. Almost as important, Tsai’s party retained majority control of the Legislative Yuan.

Han’s ascent to the campaign for the presidency was a story of seeming PRC political warfare success. He was “a backbench lawmaker, an unemployed husband and the general manager of an agricultural marketing company” with a “shady private life.” Yet, in 2018, he benefitted from an “overwhelming media campaign apparently orchestrated by Chinese agencies and paid for by Taiwan’s China-friendly tycoons” to be elected mayor of Taiwan’s second largest city, Kaohsiung, which has historically been a DPP stronghold. To support his mayoral campaign, radio and social media were extensively employed. For months, two local media stations controlled by pro-PRC business factions “bombarded the public with a ceaseless stream of flattering news about Han.” The stations, TVBS and CtiTV, “allegedly paid local eateries and hotels and other such popular sites . . . to have their broadcasts running 24/7, with algorithms doing a similar job in terms of social media coverage.” As part of a broader PRC campaign of disinformation and coercion, similar radio and so-

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121 “60 Countries Have Congratulated Taiwan’s President Tsai on Re-election: MOFA,” *Taiwan News* (Taipei), 13 January 2020.
cial media support catapulted Han into the 2020 presidential race as the KMT candidate.123

On 31 December 2019, 11 days before the election, the Legislative Yuan passed the Anti-Infiltration Act to help counter election disinformation.124 Similar to the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act, the law penalizes organizations and individuals for secretly acting on behalf of the PRC.125 Nevertheless, PRC election interference methods identified in the lead-up to the election ranged from “online content farms,” to exploiting YouTube, to offline rumor mongering at the all-important village levels in rural Taiwan. According to Puma Shen, an assistant professor at the National Taipei University’s Graduate School of Criminology and who specializes in investigating this type of election interference, the social media-based news outlets that have direct affiliations with the CCP are mostly based in China. Other locations include Hong Kong and Malaysia.126

Additional steps that the PRC took as part of its political warfare campaign included making Taiwan’s media scene more Beijing-friendly. PRC agents “quietly paid five Taiwanese news outlets to publish articles casting China as a land of opportunity that would bring prosperity to Taiwanese.” Another line of attack to influence the election involved diplomatic coercion. During Tsai’s first presidential term, the PRC “poached more than half a dozen of Taiwan’s few remaining diplomatic partners. Two of these countries, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands, switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing as recently as September 2019.” One PRC propaganda organ threatened that if Tsai was reelected, Beijing would flip all of Taiwan’s remaining allies.127

The COVID-19 Pandemic Battleground

As COVID-19 began to engulf first the PRC and then the world, Beijing used the virus to intensify military and diplomatic pressure against Taiwan. Taiwan responded to the COVID-19 threat extraordinarily well, ignoring inaccurate information from the World Health Organization (WHO) and Beijing’s disingenuous assurances that all was under control. The Tsai administration instituted “early and aggressive measures” learned from its experience fighting the 2003

123 Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, “China Steps Up Political Interference ahead of Taiwan’s Elections,” Axios, 10 January 2020; and Kastner, “Beijing’s Man in Taiwan Crashes and Burns.”
125 Allen-Ebrahimian, “China Steps Up Political Interference ahead of Taiwan’s Elections.”
126 “How ‘Fake News’ and Disinformation Were Spread in the Run-up to Taiwan’s Presidential Elections.”
127 Allen-Ebrahimian, “China Steps Up Political Interference ahead of Taiwan’s Elections.”
severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak that proved largely effective in stemming the virus spread.\textsuperscript{128}

From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Beijing's political warfare apparatus, exploiting strong influence over the WHO and global propaganda networks, was in play. The PRC's influence within the WHO, which excludes Taiwan's membership at Beijing's behest, "undermined global health as the novel coronavirus COVID-19 swept the world in the early months of 2020," according to Anastasya Lloyd-Damnjanovic at the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. Lloyd-Damnjanovic claims that the "WHO officials consistently ignored Taiwan's attempts to exchange information about the virus and share best practices for containing it."\textsuperscript{129} Subsequent efforts by the United States and countries friendly to Taiwan to have the WHO invite Taiwan to the 2020 World Health Assembly were met with a relentless CCP propaganda counterattack. The \textit{Global Times}, among other propaganda organs, slammed the United States and Taiwan for "politicizing a health problem to serve a secessionist agenda that will never succeed."\textsuperscript{130} China Daily blamed Taiwan for its exclusion from the World Health Assembly, as Taiwan refused to accept the One China policy.\textsuperscript{131}

Meanwhile, Beijing increased its coercion and intimidation efforts with a series of military exercises, conducted while the world was distracted by COVID-19, as part of a multifaceted campaign against Taiwan.\textsuperscript{132} Chinese military aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait three times in the early months of 2020, after only one such incursion in 2019. These line crossings illustrated a "sharp escalation" in military pressure.\textsuperscript{133} PLA forces also participated in a two-day joint air and maritime drill in February that involved back-to-back circumnavigating flights around the island, while a Chinese aircraft carrier and attached group of warships sailed near Taiwan in April.\textsuperscript{134}

Meanwhile, on 11 May 2020, the CCP employed foreign publications to generate uncertainty and fear that Beijing may be pushed by "nationalist fever" to invade Taiwan during this opportune time. A \textit{South China Morning Post} headline read: "Loud calls on social media urge Beijing to strike while world is busy with coronavirus crisis, but
observers say the authorities do not want to be rushed.” Beijing reinforced this political warfare gambit with a prominently highlighted *Global Times* report on 23 May stating that, after three decades of Beijing espousing “peaceful re-unification,” CCP policy no longer called for that reunification to be “peaceful,” and that military force remains “a final solution for the worst case scenario.”

The next chapter describes selected contemporary political warfare activities designed to achieve the CCP’s goal of taking physical and political control of Taiwan.

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135 Minnie Chan, “China Tries to Calm ‘Nationalist Fever’ as Call for Invasion of Taiwan Grow,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), 10 May 2020.
CHAPTER EIGHT

PRC Political Warfare against Taiwan: A Contemporary Analysis

As in chapter six on Thailand, the following analysis will examine selected People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) political warfare operations against the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan.
PRC Goals and Strategies for Conducting Political Warfare against Taiwan

The PRC’s primary goal is to “unify China” by bringing Taiwan under Beijing’s control as either a province or special administrative region. Intermediate objectives include effecting regime change and ensuring that Taiwan’s economic and diplomatic efforts fail. The PRC employs several strategies to achieve its goals, such as employing united front operations and liaison work, violence, economic pressure, military intimidation, and diplomacy to divide Taiwan’s society.

While the PRC tried in recent years to “win the hearts and minds” of the Taiwan populace to engineer its hoped-for “unification of China,” it has failed to do so. J. Michael Cole at the Global Taiwan Institute writes that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has now “abandoned that strategy” and is instead “intensifying efforts to corrode and undermine Taiwan’s democratic institutions, create social instability, further isolate Taiwan internationally, and hollow out Taiwan’s economy by attracting its talent.”

Desired Outcomes of PRC Political Warfare in Taiwan

Ultimately, Beijing seeks to destabilize Taiwan’s leadership, demoralize its populace, and destroy its sovereign status to the point that Taiwan either willingly joins the PRC or becomes so internally weak that it cannot defend itself against military assault. Specifically, the PRC hopes to achieve the following outcomes:

- Taiwan is absorbed into the PRC and comes fully under CCP control, thus fulfilling PRC president Xi Jinping’s “China Dream” of national reunification.
- The CCP finally resolves the Chinese Civil War on its own terms with the destruction of the ROC as a political entity.
- The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) exploits Taiwan’s natural resources and strategic location as well as the ROC’s national defense technologies, expertise, and manpower to enhance PRC control of the South China Sea and support the defense of the Chinese mainland. Of equal importance, Taiwan provides the PRC the regional power projection platform necessary to break through the chokehold of the first island chain into the Pacific.

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The influence of the United States in the region becomes seriously, if not fatally, compromised.

Taiwan’s democratic system of government, which presents an existential challenge to CCP political authority, is discredited and effectively destroyed.

The PRC achieves unchallenged political, military, economic, diplomatic, and cultural dominance, initially throughout the region and ultimately globally.

Themes and Audiences of PRC Political Warfare in Taiwan
The PRC’s primary political warfare themes, highlighting the many economic and cultural ties shared between the people of the PRC and Taiwan, include the following:

- There is only One China, and both sides of the Taiwan straits belong to the PRC.
- The peoples of China and Taiwan are kin and must be reunited.
- Taiwan’s secessionist position is doomed to fail.
- It is best to join the PRC now since it is at its strongest, while Taiwan is economically stagnant, politically divided, and diplomatically isolated.
- The PRC is strong, while the United States is weak and unreliable.
- Taiwan and the United States’ scheme to get Taiwan invited back in the World Health Organization and World Health Assembly is doomed to fail.

Primary Taiwanese audiences of the PRC’s political warfare include the news media, business communities, political officials, military leaders, academics, retirees from civil service and education posts, principals of senior high schools, and other elites across all sectors. Secondary audiences include influential social media users, criminal gang leaders and members, and owners of talk radio stations, while tertiary audiences comprise average Taiwanese citizens and students.
Tools, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for PRC Political Warfare in Taiwan

Many of the PRC’s historical and present-day political warfare operations employed against Taiwan have been discussed in the first four chapters of this book. These include united front operations, the Three Warfares (public opinion/media warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare), propaganda, diplomatic coercion, disinformation and misinformation, academic infiltration, business partnering, and the establishment of political parties.

The PRC’s current political warfare strategy against Taiwan involves a combination of united front tactics, economic and political pressure, military threats, art and culture, and active measures applied to squeeze the island into submission.

Beijing wages political warfare against Taiwan to undermine the ROC government and suppress political parties and organizations seeking independence for Taiwan. Further, it recruits Taiwan and foreign politicians to advocate for the unification of Taiwan with mainland China. The PRC also employs soft power functions, such as public diplomacy, public affairs, public relations, educational exchanges, and cultural activities.

Active measures include overt violence, cyber warfare, the use of criminal gangs, espionage, subversion, blackmail, deception, coerced censorship and self-censorship, “carrot-and-stick” funding practices, bribery, and coopting once-legitimate news agencies. Finally, the PRC also uses military power short of war, such as PLA live-fire training exercises in the Taiwan Strait, the PLA Navy’s transit of Taiwan’s waterways, and PLA Air Force overflights of Taiwan’s territorial waters.

Below is a detailed examination of some of the most significant PRC political warfare operations and activities, particularly in the realm of united front operations, pan-Red academics and university infiltration, diplomatic strangulation, economic warfare, partnering with criminal gangs, the establishment of new political parties, military intimidation and PLA support, and aggressive cyber operations to exploit Taiwan’s new social media environment.

United Front Operations

PRC united front operations against Taiwan are extensive and extraordinarily complex. They support a strategy to divide Taiwanese society by attempting to “sow divisions in Taiwan” and “lure Taiwan-
ese people to support pro-China ideas and unification with China.”

According to Russell Hsiao, executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute, in 2015 the CCP “issued a significant trial regulation on United Front work,” which was the “first official regulation issued that comprehensively governs United Front work and more importantly seeks to institutionalize, standardize, and establish procedures regulating this work.” The regulation explicitly links “the unification of Taiwan to the goal of the ‘great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ and the ‘China dream’.”

Senior officers at the ROC’s Fu Hsing Kang College, also known as the Political Warfare Cadres Academy, have provided specific insights into PRC political warfare goals against Taiwan. They state that there are different united front strategies pertaining to Taiwan and other overseas countries, which include winning support for PRC policies, increasing PRC influence, and collecting intelligence. Specifically, the PRC’s United Front Work Department (UFWD) has a hand in “developing political and business ties with overseas Chinese, bringing investment and research benefits, [and] helping the CCP shape foreign views of China.” CCP agencies work to draw overseas Chinese hometown associations, student associations, and other groups into their networks while also attempting to expand their influence over foreign politicians, academics, business leaders, and journalists.

The CCP regulation states that the primary tasks of the united front toward Taiwan are:

- Following the principle of the Central Government’s guidance on Taiwan.
- Adhering to the one-China principle.
- Opposing the separatist activities of Taiwan independence.
- Broadly unit[ing] Taiwan compatriots by consolidating the political, economic, cultural and social foundation for deepening peaceful development of cross-strait relations.
- Complet[ing] the great cause of the motherland’s unification in the process of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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1 Kerry K. Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers, Fu Hsing Kang College, National Defense University, Taipei, Taiwan, 2018.
3 Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.
5 Hsiao testimony.
The ROC government has estimated that the PRC spends more than $337 million annually on UFWD recruiting efforts in Taiwan, and there may be additional “invisible funding” as well.8 The *Taipei Times* notes that the PRC uses economic incentives to target “local townships, young people and students, Chinese spouses of Taiwanese, Aborigines, pro-China political parties and groups, temples, descendants of Chinese who retain roots in China, labor groups, farmers’ and fishermen’s associations, and military veterans.”9 As one example of selective targeting, Beijing rewarded eight Kuomintang (KMT) county magistrates in Taiwan who accepted the 1992 Consensus between the PRC and ROC by making swift promises to send Chinese tourists to their jurisdictions and Chinese delegations to purchase their agricultural products. Another approach involves the appointment of prominent Taiwan-born persons to PRC advisory boards such as the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, an influential united front political advisory body.

According to University of Miami professor June Teufel Dreyer, the UFWD “sponsors ‘exchange’ tours to China by Taiwanese students, their teachers, and principals,” offers scholarships to some of the PRC’s “most prestigious universities,” and extends job offers to “the large numbers of PhDs from Taiwan universities who have not been able to find employment there.” It has also founded a student baseball league in the PRC, “in which players compete against the backdrop of a large banner reading ‘both sides in the Taiwan Strait are one family’.” The UFWD especially targets Taiwan’s “independence by nature” generation, comprising those “who came of age after the lifting of Taiwan’s emergency decrees.” These citizens “have no memories of life in China, have grown up under a democratic system, and see no need to declare an independence the country already enjoys.”10

United front operations impacting the ROC military are multifaceted to an extraordinary degree. Former ROC military officers are often lured to support PRC objectives through business opportunities, appeals to common ethnic heritage, and family ties among those separated when the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949. For example, the Fifth “Linking Fates” Cultural Festival of Cross-Strait Generals, a meeting between retired PRC and ROC military generals in 2017, exposed the many different types of channels used to conduct political warfare operations. The united front operation was supported by

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9 Chung and Hsiao, “China Targets 10 Groups for ‘United Front’.”
numerous PRC organizations, including the Chinese Foundation for Military Families and Army Support, the China General Network, the Chinese Lien Surname Fraternal Association, the Fujian-Taiwan Exchange Association, two daily newspapers, one Taiwan-based group, and the ROC Association. Russell Hsiao notes that the events sponsors are “usually the State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office or other Taiwan-related [political warfare] organizations.”

The myriad of PRC united front organizations connected to the China Association for International Friendly Contact (CAIFC) is daunting enough, but the list of other organizations employed across the PRC’s united front is both lengthy and confusing for those not mapping the many interrelationships that exist among them. For example, J. Michael Cole describes the extensive influence web spun by the China Energy Fund Committee (CEFC), a Hong Kong–registered nongovernmental organization that advertises itself as a think tank. The CEFC is run by a former senior official of the PLA Liaison Department-linked CAIFC. The CEFC partners with a wide range of front organizations, foreign governments, and the United Nations (UN). Indirectly, the CEFC runs programs and festivals involving students, academics, entertainers, and religious figures from Taiwan. Cole reports that CEFC engages with the pro-Beijing “Want Want China Times Group” and the pro-unification Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education to sponsor pro-PRC programs for university students.

The CCP also uses united front proxy organizations to spread “fake news.” Hsiao writes that Taiwan’s democratic society makes it vulnerable to such attacks: “Observers have noticed a troubling up-tick in the infiltration of Taiwan’s civil society by proxy organizations associated with [the] CCP’s United Front Work Department, with possible financial ties to the PRC government. These united front organizations may then be used to propagate disinformation.”

**Pan-Red Academics and University Infiltration**
PRC united front operations in Taiwan, as elsewhere around the globe, strongly target academia. Based on this author’s personal experiences with academic institutions in Taiwan and discussions with security officials and selected Taiwan-based academics, it is clear that Taiwan’s key universities have been co-opted to alarming

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13 Russell Hsiao, “CCP Propaganda against Taiwan Enters the Social Age,” Jamestown Foundation, China Brief 18, no. 7, 24 April 2018.
14 Bower, China’s Overseas United Front Work, 3–16.
degrees by academics who have effectively joined the PRC’s united front. These pro-PRC academics have incurred the derogatory name “pan-Red professors,” for they are no longer seen as KMT-leaning “pan-Blue” or Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)-leaning “pan-Green,” but have in effect become agents of influence for the “Red” CCP. These pan-Red academics pose a serious threat to Taiwan’s future.

Some pan-Reds openly denigrate Taiwan’s democracy and extoll the PRC’s totalitarian regime to students who will become tomorrow’s teachers, professors, diplomats, judges, attorneys, legislators, military officers, and policy makers. This author has seen pan-Red academics in action and has listened to students describe in detail how these professors propagandize and demoralize their pupils, routinely enforce the prohibition of discussion of topics deemed taboo by the PRC, and use PRC doctrinaire terminology when discussing sensitive subjects. Some co-opted professors exhort students interested in serving as ROC diplomats and military officers “not to serve this regime,” but to wait until reunification with the PRC, which, the assert, “will occur in the next few years.” The students feel they cannot report this, as no one in a position of authority will hold the offending professors accountable and the students themselves could see their academic careers easily ruined by being accorded bad grades and other forms of retribution.

Numerous students, speaking on the condition of anonymity, have explained that while this talk demoralizes them, they try to ignore it. However, their anecdotal information likely does not reflect the ability of the general student body to inoculate themselves from this near-daily pro-PRC propaganda in their classrooms.

 Taiwanese professors and other academic officials are routinely invited to “consult” with PRC officials during all-expense paid trips to the PRC. From discussions with security officials and some professors who accepted invitations to the PRC but were dismayed by attempts to coopt them once there, several trends are apparent. First, academics sometimes leave for the PRC on very short notice to con-

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15 Similar to the United States, Taiwan’s political party system is color-coded in popular discourse. The DPP leads the pan-Green Coalition, named for the DPP party colors, which normally includes the Taiwan Independence Party, the Taiwan Solidarity Union, and the New Power Party. This coalition favors “Taiwanization” and independence for Taiwan as opposed to “reunification” with the PRC. The KMT leads the pan-Blue Coalition, named for the KMT party colors, which normally includes the People First Party, the New Party and the Non-Partisan Solidarity Union. This coalition favors a Chinese nationalist identity over a separate Taiwanese one as well as close political and economic ties with the PRC. It has historically supported Taiwan’s “reunification” with the PRC but now often proclaims that it supports the “political status quo.” The author coined the term pan-Red academic to describe Taiwanese academics who support Taiwan’s absorption into the PRC and who consistently parrot PRC propaganda narratives. Key Taiwan officials and academics with whom the author discussed the term agreed that pan-Red academic is a valid descriptor.

16 Kerry K. Gershaneck, discussions with Taiwanese academics and government officials, Taiwan, 2018–20.

17 Kerry K. Gershaneck, discussions with Taiwanese and foreign graduate students, Taiwan, 2018–20.
sult in the PRC for weeks at a time. Second, academics that attend PRC “conferences” and “consultations on reunification” are often offered the promise of academic positions or other rewards in a “re-unified” Chinese academic institution. They are also offered funding for conferences, study, and travel, with the funding being provided under various guises such as think tanks and foundations. Finally, several academics report being offered “entertainment”—generally sexual favors but including other enticements as well—and other perks in the PRC that would, under certain circumstances, lead to entrapment.18

Upon return to Taiwan, many of these professors become models of PRC “conditioned behavior.” Having succumbed to persuasion, inducement, and/or coercion, as Ambassador Bilahari Kausikan described, they think and act “in such a way that [they] will of [their] own volition do what [the CCP] wants without being told.”19 These co-opted academics will reliably never publicly criticize the PRC for fear of losing future travel, funding, and professional opportunities afforded by the PRC. They are also fearful of being reported to Beijing for even the mildest criticism of the PRC by fellow co-opted Taiwan academics or PRC students.20

This author has witnessed this practice repeatedly at academic conferences and forums. The script that plays out is generally as follows: co-opted academics passionately criticize ROC president Tsai Ing-wen’s regime and other democratically elected leaders, such as Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe or U.S. president Donald J. Trump. They will also criticize democracy or, for example, the arbitral court ruling on the South China Sea, in conformance with current PRC propaganda narratives. But when confronted with exposure of their incorrect facts, hypocrisy, or misrepresentations, these academics fall silent. When challenged with sound reason to criticize the totalitarian nature and history of the CCP or questions regarding their lack of intellectual honesty and moral courage by failing to defend democracy and expose totalitarian oppression, these academics avoid eye contact and look at the table. They cannot respond, because to do so would cause them to criticize the PRC, and they know that any criticism of the PRC, however slight, will be reported to Beijing by other pan-Red professors or informants.

Pan-Red professors also refuse to directly and openly confront topics Beijing deems taboo, such as the PRC’s illegal occupation of Tibet, its concentration camps in East Turkestan, the brutal suppres-

18 Gershaneck, discussions with Taiwanese academics and government officials.
20 Gershaneck, discussions with Taiwanese academics and government officials.
sion of civil rights and police-state censorship in the PRC, its illegal occupation of the South China Sea, and the totalitarian and fascist nature of the CCP. Their failure to speak about these subjects enables the PRC’s censorship regime to continually expand its reach in Taiwan, swallowing up new topics as forbidden.

Students from the PRC in Taiwan also engage in, and are subject to, PRC political warfare. Beijing cut the number of mainland Chinese students allowed to study in Taiwan by as much as 50 percent beginning in 2017 to punish the Tsai administration, and few Chinese students were allowed back into Taiwan after the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2020. Nevertheless, these Chinese students have had a dramatic impact on Taiwan’s educational institutions. They are a major conduit for transmitting PRC policies and propaganda. Further, these students and their Chinese Students and Scholars Associations at Taiwan universities intimidate and coerce professors and fellow students.

One instance at Chung Yuan Christian University in Taiwan in April 2020 provides a disturbing example of academic harassment and intimidation. It is a textbook case of mainland Chinese student intimidation, pan-Red Academics aiding and abetting that intimidation, and PRC propaganda organs attacking the victim of the intimidation. In April 2020, a professor at Chung Yuan Christian University mentioned the “Wuhan pneumonia caused by the covid-19 virus” in class. A PRC student in the class protested and pressed the charge of “discrimination” against the professor. Rather than defend this professor’s academic freedom, the institution made the professor apologize. They apologized in class and said, “As a professor of the Republic of China, I will not discriminate against the students.” Four days later, the university asked the professor to issue another apology for the using the phrase “Republic of China.” While the Tsai administration then asserted that “institutions of higher education can allow neither self-censorship and interference of teachers’ freedom in conducting lectures,” PRC propaganda organs such as the Global Times initiated sustained attacks on the professor, with lengthy quotes from the aggrieved student and a university threat to prosecute them.

Another vector for PRC political warfare in Taiwan includes the large number of Taiwanese students who study in the PRC. According to the ROC ministry of education, there are approximately 10,000

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21 Study International reports that while 2,136 Chinese students were approved to attend Taiwan universities in 2016, only 1,000 were allowed to do so in 2017. See “China Doesn’t Want Its Students to Study in Taiwan,” Study International, 7 July 2017.

such students who have studied or are studying in China, whereas prior the pandemic there were 9,300 Chinese students studying in Taiwan. Beijing has recently made it easier for Taiwanese students to attend PRC universities; Taiwanese high school graduates need only show a passing grade to apply, compared to in the past when only those students with top grades or those from Taiwanese international high schools in the PRC could apply.23 Even more than the Taiwanese academics and others who are lured to the PRC with offers of lucrative jobs and academic status, the students are ill-prepared to fend of the relentless propaganda and other forms of malign influence to which they are routinely subjected.24

**Diplomatic Strangulation**

According to Russell Hsiao, “The PRC is engaged in an intensifying political warfare campaign that is aimed at isolating Taiwan by suppressing the island’s international space.” Beijing has concentrated great efforts on depriving Taiwan of this international space by coercing or bribing foreign governments to break diplomatic relations with Taiwan.25 In the spring of 2018, the Dominican Republic and Burkina Faso established ties with the PRC, and that August, El Salvador cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan.26 Panama, São Tomé and Príncipe, the Solomon Islands, and Kiribati have also severed ties with Taipei, leaving just 15 countries that maintain official diplomatic allegiance with the island nation.27

The PRC also pressures countries to evict Taiwan from international organizations, such as the World Health Assembly, the governing body of the World Health Organization, and the International Civil Aviation Organization. Taiwan has seen its title in the World Economic Forum changed from “Chinese Taipei” to “Taiwan, China.”28 In some instances, Beijing threatens foreign companies unless they literally erase Taiwan from their websites. Moreover, in what can only be deemed a bizarre and hypocritical UN policy, Taiwanese citizens who hold ROC passports are forbidden from entering UN facilities in New York City and Geneva, Switzerland. According to Taiwan’s representative office in Bern, Switzerland, those Taiwanese

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23 “China Doesn’t Want Its Students to Study in Taiwan.”
24 Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.
28 David W. F. Huang, “Cold Peace’ and the Nash Equilibrium in Cross-Straits Relations (Part 2),” *Global Taiwan Institute, Global Taiwan Brief 2*, no. 2, 11 January 2017.
citizens must go through the PRC embassy to get permission to visit the UN, even for issues regarding international human rights.

Finally, Dr. David W. F. Huang writes that alleged Taiwanese lawbreakers who were “accused of crimes in Kenya, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Vietnam were deported (or abducted) to Beijing, rather than to Taiwan,” which demonstrates Beijing’s supposed “judicial power over Taiwan under the ‘One-China’ policy.” He concludes that such incidents are designed to “punish” the DPP government “for its reluctance to accept the terms of the so-called ‘1992 Consensus’.”

**Economic Warfare**

Through economic warfare, the PRC seeks to create political problems to ensure that the Tsai administration’s economic strategy fails. The PRC has blocked some of Taiwan’s trade diversion measures, such as a free trade agreement with Australia, and has greatly reduced the number of tourists it allows to visit Taiwan as well as the number of delegations purchasing Taiwan’s products. It has also leveraged internal Taiwan divisions to influence its 2018 elections by offering to work directly with farmers in southern Taiwan to purchase more of their products. Since most of Taiwan’s trade is with the PRC, the CCP devotes special attention to Taiwanese business people. Those who endorse policies favorable to China receive special treatment and appointments to PRC organizations, while those who do not find themselves cut off from such opportunities. Further, the Taiwan Affairs Office of the PRC’s State Council invites young Taiwanese to start their own businesses in mainland China.

**Criminal Gangs**

The use of criminal, business, and political organizations is another weapon in the PRC’s political warfare arsenal against Taiwan. Former ROC president Lee Teng-hui addressed this challenge, and several ROC political warfare officers that were interviewed by this author state that PRC united front work in Taiwan includes sponsoring organized criminal activities to stir up interethnic conflict and destabilize society.

Paul Huang at *The Epoch Times* writes, “Taiwanese gangs are the cat’s paw of the Chinese regime, working for [Taiwan’s] unification with the mainland while using violence to subdue those the [PRC] opposes.” The Chinese Unification Promotion Party (CUPP) and the Patriot Alliance Association, two criminal-gang-related groups, are useful examples. Both organizations are known for openly advocat-
ing PRC rule in Taiwan. Chang An-lo, known as the “White Wolf,” is founder the Taiwanese branch of the CUPP and leader of Bamboo Union, a large criminal triad in Taiwan. The CUUP, which claims to have 20,000 members, is frequently seen as a recruitment front for the Bamboo Union.\(^{31}\)

Moreover, Taiwan’s news media reports that Bamboo Union and another criminal triad group, the Four Seas Gang, are both “under the influence or even direct control” of China’s Ministry of State Security (MSS). The MSS allegedly runs the Fujian-Xiamen bureau of the Taiwan Affairs Office, which was established to control the gangs in Taiwan and recruit Taiwanese gang members to work for the benefit of the CCP.\(^{32}\)

In addition to providing muscle for political intimidation, organized crime syndicates are “a primary conduit for the Chinese government to funnel an estimated [New Taiwan] NT$35 billion ($1.13 billion USD) in financial support to pro-China parties to run propaganda organizations and political campaigns in an attempt to subvert the (2018) nine-in-one elections.” They are also alleged to have “recruited young people to attend political rallies . . . paying each participant NT$1,000 on the condition that they wear CUPP vests and carry Chinese flags.”\(^{33}\)

**New Political Parties and a Paramilitary “Youth Association”**

In addition to organized crime and political associations, the PRC has also attempted to establish a political party, the New Party, and an associated youth paramilitary organization in Taiwan. June Teufel Dreyer notes that in 2005, more than 20 Taiwanese political figures from both the KMT and DPP who had been sidelined by their parties were invited to “serve as organizing central committee members of a new, pro-Beijing, party.” *The Taiwan Crisis*, written by Chinese dissident Yuan Hongbing, confirmed that by 2008, the CCP’s politburo “had passed a political strategy for settling the Taiwan issue that listed organizing a political party in Taiwan as its most important united front tactic.” The New Party, “which espouses policies that echo those of the CCP, is legitimate under Taiwan law,” Teufel Dreyer concludes. It has also been alleged that the party has

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\(^{32}\) Huang, “Beating of Students in Taiwan Puts Spotlight on Chinese Regime’s Influence.”

“founded a paramilitary New China Youth Association with the goal of ‘wartime control’” of Taiwan.34

Military Intimidation and Hybrid Warfare
The strategic focus of the UFWD and PLA is to manipulate international perceptions of One China and undermine Taiwan’s international legitimacy, while also “disintegrating” the ROC’s will to resist. This combination of military and political warfare capabilities is the foundation of PRC hybrid warfare, according to David R. Ignatius at The Washington Post, who asserts that “traditional military combat may be the least of Taiwan’s worries.” The reason? “Hybrid warfare is cheaper and harder for an open, democratic society such as Taiwan to resist than a conventional military assault,” Ignatius argues. “And it’s a challenge that Taiwanese experts are struggling to understand and address.”35

Military intimidation is designed to physically and psychologically wear down an adversary’s armed forces and civilian populace. While the PRC’s relentless military intimidation against Taiwan, especially since the advent of the Tsai administration in 2016, has been detailed in the previous chapter, recent organizational changes have significantly impacted the PLA’s substantial contributions to PRC political warfare against Taiwan.

Beijing’s February 2016 establishment of the PLA Eastern Theater Command (ETC), which replaced the Nanjing Military Region (NJMR), was a key milestone for the PRC in the cross-strait security situation. However, even before the establishment of the ETC, the PLA founded a joint command in the NJMR that would have provided improved command and control in a Taiwan-related combat scenario. In December 2015, the CCP’s Central Military Commission established a general command unit to control integrated operations of ground, naval, and air forces and established a joint operational command structure for each of the “battle zones” to include the NJMR.36

The ETC plays a major role in directing political and military coercion against Taiwan, and its reorganization into the expanded theater command increases it operational capacity. In addition to PLA Ground Force, Navy, and Air Force units, the ETC has operational authority—to include political warfare—over the Anhui, Fu-

34 Teufel Dreyer, “A Weapon without War.”
jian, Fuzhou, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang military districts as well as the Shanghai Garrison.37

Much of the PRC’s political warfare against Taiwan is directed by the PLA Political Work Department’s 311 Base in Fuzhou, which Mark Stokes and Russell Hsiao assert is at “the forefront of applied psychological operations and propaganda directed against Taiwan.”38 Working in concert with the UFWD’s complex web of public and ostensibly private entities that constitute Beijing’s political warfare apparatus, 311 Base plays a central role within the ETC in the PRC’s coercive persuasion campaign against Taiwan. As a deputy corps-level organization, it “carries roughly as much status as . . . [the] six conventional missile brigades that target Taiwan combined” and “is actively involved in PLA cyber operations,” reports J. Michael Cole.39

The Political Warfare Threat in Taiwan’s New Social Media Environment

“New information and communication technologies [have] magnified PRC propaganda and disinformation to an unprecedented degree,” writes to Russell Hsiao. “The viral aspect of social media has made it an effective tool for propaganda and disinformation.”40 According to Hsiao, Taiwan boasts one of the highest internet usage and smartphone penetration rates in the world, and it has a vigorous information and communications technology industry with one of the fastest internet speeds in the Asia-Pacific region. The most popular social media platforms in Taiwan are Facebook, LINE, YouTube, and the Professional Technology Temple. The CCP uses this extensive social media network to spread propaganda and disinformation in various ways as a part of its influence operations against Taiwan.41 Keoni Everington at the Taiwan News writes that the PRC “has long regarded Taiwan as a test ground for its cyber warfare techniques, with an average of 100,000 cyber attacks reported per month in 2017 alone.” The PRC has also reportedly established its own version of the Russian “troll factory” that takes to social media platforms to influence foreign attitudes and events.42

In support of the PRC’s troll factory is the PLA Strategic Support Force (SSF), which is responsible for offensive and defensive cyber missions, intelligence operations, and technical reconnaissance. The

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37 Burton and Stokes, “The People’s Liberation Army Theater Command Leadership.”
40 Hsiao, “CCP Propaganda against Taiwan Enters the Social Age.”
41 Hsiao, “CCP Propaganda against Taiwan Enters the Social Age.”
42 Keoni Everington, “China’s ‘Troll Factory’ Targeting Taiwan with Disinformation Prior to Election,” Taiwan News (Taipei), 3 November 2018.
PLA reportedly has approximately 300,000 soldiers serving with the SSF, while more than 2 million are alleged to be members of the “50 Cent Army” that manipulates public opinion and attacks PRC critics and other targets in support of the CCP.43

According to the ROC’s National Security Bureau, the PRC’s modus operandi is to “spread false news in Taiwan, focusing on cross-strait relations, military defense, and policy implementation by the Tsai administration, among other issues.” First, PRC state-run media outlets publish fake news stories about these topics. Next, PLA cyber soldiers and 50 Cent Army members disseminate the disinformation via Facebook, LINE, YouTube, and the Professional Technology Temple.44 Specific techniques include “circulating fake imagery, in the hopes that it will go viral and be picked up on by traditional media outlets in Taiwan.” For example, an image displaying PRC bombers flying near Yu Shan (Jade Mountain) in Taiwan was posted on social media, clearly as a psychological warfare tactic meant to “instill fear in the hearts of the Taiwanese public.” The photograph was widely shared on social media before Taiwan’s defense ministry could deny the legitimacy of the image.45

The PRC also uses disinformation and propaganda on social media platforms to cause social instability in Taiwan by influencing the nation’s ongoing pension reform debate. Hsiao writes that users of LINE and other platforms in Taiwan “reported a flood of messages and websites that falsely claimed that the central government was planning to impose draconian restrictions on pensioners,” forcing the ROC government to quickly issue a statement denying that charge.46

Hsiao also notes that the PRC has reinvigorated another “time-honored tactic” in the new social media era: intentionally concealing or misreporting statements made by Taiwanese officials or ex-officials “to tarnish the person’s reputation or mislead the readers into believing that the person supports a particular political position held by the CCP.” Both PRC- and Hong Kong-based media outlets employ these tactics against ROC retired generals, national security officials, lawmakers, and even entertainers.47

Moreover, the CCP uses computational propaganda, typically in the form of social media, content farms, and bots, to “saturate Taiwan’s information space with pro-Beijing political propaganda.”

43 Everington, “China’s ‘Troll Factory’ Targeting Taiwan with Disinformation Prior to Election.”
44 Everington, “China’s ‘Troll Factory’ Targeting Taiwan with Disinformation Prior to Election.”
45 Hsiao, “CCP Propaganda against Taiwan Enters the Social Age.”
46 Russell Hsiao, “China’s Intensifying Pressure Campaign against Taiwan,” Jamestown Foundation, China Brief 18, no. 11, 19 June 2018.
47 Hsiao, “CCP Propaganda against Taiwan Enters the Social Age.”
J. Michael Cole argues that “computational propaganda has allowed Beijing to insert itself into the battleground of domestic Taiwanese politics, so much so that various (dis)information campaigns can no longer be solely attributed to the KMT and other pan-blue forces.” He goes on to explain that Chinese disinformation efforts have recently begun overlapping with “traditional blocking action by opposition legislators and civic groups opposed to reforms,” which includes “protests against pension reform, government plans to limit the . . . burning of large quantities of incense and ghost money at Buddhist temples, and limits for the Tsai administration’s Forward-looking Infrastructure Development Program.”

Finally, it is important to note the use of the Chinese web platform WeChat in Taiwan. Combining many of the features of Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Skype, WeChat is the single largest web platform for news and communication in the Chinese-speaking world, with half a billion users in the PRC alone. It is owned and operated by the Chinese web company Tencent, which reportedly cooperates very closely with the PRC’s state security apparatus. Accordingly, WeChat works alongside the PRC’s propaganda apparatuses to track the communications of possible dissidents and to censor content, comments, and links deemed unfavorable to the CCP and its worldview. Since many Taiwanese citizens use WeChat, the long arm of PRC’s security arm is able to censor communications within Taiwan’s borders. As one example, by March 2020, WeChat had assisted the PRC’s global COVID-19 propaganda campaign by blacklisting more than 500 keywords related to the coronavirus, and was found to have the capability to identify “certain users and [create] a portfolio about them, feeding other aspects of the [Chinese Communist Party’s] transnational repression apparatus.”

Equally disturbing, the CCP uses WeChat and other social media platforms as a united front weapon to mobilize Chinese both within the PRC and abroad to organize street protests, as has been evidenced in major demonstrations in U.S. cities and student protests against campus free speech in Canada. If it has not already been used to coordinate united front and other political warfare operations in Taiwan, WeChat’s use in North America for such purposes proves the efficacy of social media platforms in PRC operations against Taiwan.

49 Gershaneck, discussions with senior ROC political warfare officers.
51 Julie Makinen, “Chinese Social Media Platform Plays a Role in U.S. Rallies for NYPD Officer,” Los Angeles (CA) Times, 24 February 2018; and Gerry Shih and Emily Rauhala, “Angry over Campus Speech by Uighur Activist, Students in Canada Contact Chinese Consulate, Film Presentation,” Washington Post, 14 February 2019.
The purpose of this book is to examine the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) political warfare in sufficient detail to provide recommendations for the United States to successfully combat this existential threat to America and its partners and allies. As was evidenced during the Cold War, if the United States displays the strength and leadership to fight, friendly and allied nations will follow.

PRC political warfare entails a relentless, multifaceted onslaught of strategies, tactics, techniques, and procedures. However, each government’s responses to these attacks are quite different, as reflected in the two country studies herein. Thailand’s ruling establishment, for example, seems amenable to PRC influence operations and does not seek to publicly confront or expose them. This approach is based on Thailand’s unique history, geography, business ties, and current political situation regarding China. Nevertheless, PRC political war-
fare has the clear potential to limit Thailand’s sovereignty and its historical flexibility to “bend with the wind” to protect its national interests. The government of Taiwan, on the other hand, realizes the existential danger that PRC political warfare poses to its continuance as a self-ruling, vibrant democracy. For many historical, political, and ethnic reasons, Taiwan faces both external and self-imposed constraints on how to deal with the threat. While it attempts to resist PRC political warfare within its limited maneuvering space, Taiwan has failed to develop a comprehensive approach to confronting the threat, and there currently exists no coherent strategic or operational framework for doing so.

Other countries and regions vital to the United States have demonstrated disturbing temerity under the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) political warfare assault. Notable recent examples related to the COVID-19 pandemic include the European Union, under pressure from Beijing, delaying and then heavily watering down a report documenting the massive PRC disinformation campaign, as well as Southeast Asian nations self-censoring regarding the PRC’s egregious actions during the pandemic.¹

Ideally, this book will help the United States lead its own united front of free, like-minded nations to deter, counter, and defeat PRC political warfare. Further, other countries under assault can benefit from this work as they assess their own vulnerabilities, capabilities, and strategies in the face of Beijing’s political warfare campaigns against them. Given strong, visionary, and agile leadership, the following recommendations are achievable. To deter, counter, and ultimately defeat PRC political warfare, the United States should consider the following actions.

Identify the PRC Threat by Its Rightful Name: Political Warfare
The PRC is engaged in war against the United States. It is not mere competition or malign influence, but war by PRC definition. Words matter. Ideally, correct terminology leads to proper national goals, objectives, policies, and operations. That is precisely why American diplomat George F. Kennan outlined both his successful Cold War-era strategies of containment and counterpolitical warfare in straightforward terms. But national leaders must educate internal and external audiences that the PRC is engaging in political warfare

against the United States and explain, in general terms, why and how it plans to confront the threat.

Develop a National Strategy to Counter PRC Political Warfare

Through legislation, the United States should mandate a national strategy, appoint a highly respected coordinator for political warfare within the U.S. National Security Council (NSC), establish a strategic operational center of gravity like the Cold War-era U.S. Information Agency (USIA) with broader authority than the existing Global Engagement Center and external to the U.S. Department of State, and develop counterpolyitical warfare career paths in diplomatic, military, and intelligence organizations. The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments study by Ross Babbage provides an excellent delineation of steps to be taken to build a strategy. The United States must first state its goals in combating political warfare and then develop a “theory of victory” and an end state. It should also determine if its chief aim is to “force a cessation of authoritarian state political warfare and instill greater caution” in regimes such as the PRC or Russia or to “facilitate the demise of these regimes and their replacement by liberal democratic alternatives.”

Rebuild National Institutions to Counter PRC Political Warfare

The U.S. executive and legislative branches of government must revive the nation’s ability to engage in information operations and strategic communication similar in scope to the capabilities that were developed during the Cold War. This means establishing a twenty-first-century USIA equivalent, which ideally would be under direct control of the NSC. Pending legislation and funding authorization that begins the slow process of reestablishing this USIA equivalent, the command and control organization that unifies the national effort could be a standing Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) modeled on the JIATF-West counterdrug organization headquartered at Camp Smith, Hawaii. This JIATF could begin operations quickly and

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1 The Global Engagement Center has been criticized for being too heavily focused on the threat of Russia, with little focus on sophisticated Chinese disinformation and information warfare operations, and for failing to help educate the American public about the PRC threat. See Bill Gertz, “Inside the Ring: Global Engagement Secrecy,” Washington Times, 11 March 2020.

would start the process of building cooperation with the private sector, civil society, the legal community, and the news media.

Rebuilding institutions also includes reestablishing the Ronald W. Reagan administration-era Active Measures Working Group, as well as better coordinating the work of the U.S. State Department, the Global Engagement Center, other cabinet-level strategic communications and public affairs structures, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio and TV Martí, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks.4

Establish Education Programs Regarding PRC Political Warfare

The U.S. Departments of State and Defense, especially, should establish courses of varying lengths for senior-level and intermediate-level professionals. Entry-level courses should also be planned for students within the Foreign Service, military, intelligence, commerce, public affairs, and academic communities. This education program would be voluntary for individuals within private-sector industries and nongovernmental organizations but compulsory for government workers, federal contractors, and students attending U.S. government education institutions. Similarly, the private sector and civic groups should initiate public information programs in coordination with news media organizations.

The focus of these courses will be on building internal defenses within the most highly valued PRC target audiences: elected officials, senior policy makers, thought leaders, national security managers, and other information gatekeepers. Similar governmental, institutional, and public education programs were employed successfully during the Cold War, with threat briefs and public discussion a routine part of each. To help propel this education effort forward, the outline for a notional five-day counterpolitical warfare program of instruction is contained in the Appendix of this book.

As a related important initial step, U.S. officials should conduct a content analysis of what is being taught about PRC political warfare at U.S. government education and training institutions. Based on this author’s discussions at the Defense Information School and Foreign Service Institute, there are no courses at these foundational schools designed to address political warfare. Discussions with recent graduates of National Defense University, the Army War Col-

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lege, and the U.S. Naval War College indicate there is no formal education being offered on this threat at those institutions, either.

It is also important to assess prior and planned guest lectures, conferences, and symposiums at these education and training institutions as they pertain to PRC political warfare. As one rationale, it is perplexing that speakers such as a widely recognized CCP member and a relentlessly pro-PRC former Australian prime minister were invited to provide keynote addresses to the U.S. Military Academy (West Point) and Naval Academy, respectively. Education institution leadership must be held accountable regarding what and how they teach future U.S. military and diplomatic leaders about both the PRC military and the political warfare threat, as well as how they defend their institutions against being used as platforms for hostile political warfare operations.

Immediately available mass-education instruments include public affairs and media assets within the Departments of State and Defense. As was done during the Cold War, public affairs can be used today to educate internal and external audiences about PRC political warfare and routinely expose such operations publicly. As a matter of policy, the U.S. government’s public affairs assets should be used to counter propaganda generated by such organs as the People’s Liberation Army Daily newspaper, as well as to expose united front operations such as efforts by the China Association for International Friendly Contact to co-opt retired U.S. military officers. By exposing those political warfare operations on a sustained basis in U.S. government publications, internal and external audiences learn over time the nature of the PRC threat.

Establish an Asian Political Warfare Center of Excellence Think Tank

An Asian Political Warfare Center of Excellence (APWCE) would be similar to the Finland-based European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, as would its mission: “To develop a common understanding of PRC political warfare threats and promote the development of a comprehensive, whole-of-government response at national levels in countering PRC and other political warfare threats.” The APWCE would be a whole-of-government effort, but in practice its primary U.S. government sponsors would be the Department of Defense, Department of State, Department of Commerce, Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investi-

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The APWCE will provide the intellectual foundation and education needed to develop and synchronize counterpolitical warfare and offensive political warfare capabilities, but it would not have authority to conduct or coordinate those operations.

Notional APWCE functions would be to:

- Encourage strategic-level dialogue and consulting between and among like-minded nations, in Asia and throughout the world.
- Investigate and examine political warfare operations targeted at democracies by the PRC and map the vulnerabilities of participating nations to improve their resilience and response.
- Conduct tailored training and arrange scenario-based exercises for practitioners aimed at enhancing the individual capabilities of and interoperability among participants in countering PRC political warfare threats.
- Conduct research and analysis into PRC political warfare methods to counter such operations.
- Invite and engage in dialogue with government and nongovernmental experts and practitioners from a wide range of professional sectors and disciplines to improve situational awareness of PRC and other political warfare threats. Typical participants would be practitioners, scholars, policymakers, congressional staff, journalists, strategists, campaign planners, legal specialists, and selected civil servants as well as foreign service, military, intelligence, and law enforcement officers.

Ultimately the APWCE’s curriculum would comprise a wide range of courses of varying duration. However, because the United States is far behind the PRC in this fight, a short introductory course should be established immediately. The notional five-day program of instruction provided in the following appendix allows for rapid initiation of the APWCE’s proposed education and training mission. With strong, agile leadership and competent faculty and staff, an initial APWCE training program could be put in place within 30 days.
Investigate, Disrupt, and Prosecute PRC Political Warfare Activities

The U.S. Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, FBI, and Intelligence Community each play key roles on countering PRC political warfare. Based on past U.S. failures in countering political warfare operations and prosecuting espionage prosecutions, as described by Peter Mattis in his testimony before Congress in 2018, it is imperative to review existing laws, legislation, and policies that apply to PRC political warfare to ensure the existence of clear mission statements, requirements for action, and assessments of success.6

Screen, Track, and Expose PRC Political Warfare Activities

In this author’s discussions with FBI, military intelligence, and Department of State officials, it is apparent that combatting PRC political warfare has not received the priority it deserves to compete successfully in resource battles within government bureaucracies. As Mattis highlights, “the Executive Branch has failed to prosecute or botched investigations into Chinese espionage,” which are more straightforward to prosecute than political warfare and other influence operations.7 The Intelligence Community and Department of Justice personnel that perform counterpolitical warfare are likely the same who conduct counterespionage, and for them to succeed there is a need for better analytical, investigative, and legal training.

Routinely Expose Covert and Overt PRC Political Warfare Operations

Through legislation and/or executive order, the United State should mandate an annual, NSC-led, publicly disseminated report on the CCP’s political warfare against the United States. The annual report would be similar to the Reagan-era annual report on Soviet active measures, with focus on PRC united front interference and influence operations. It would include practical advice for ordinary citizens about how to recognize and avoid those threats. According to Mattis, an annual report on the CCP’s activities would force “government agencies to come together to discuss the problem and make decisions about what information needed to be released for public consump-

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6 Hearing on U.S. Responses to China’s Foreign Influence Operations, before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, 115th Cong. (2018) (testimony by Peter Mattis, Fellow, Jamestown Foundation), hereafter Mattis testimony.

7 Mattis testimony.
tion.” It would also “have the beneficial effect of raising awareness and convening disparate parts of the U.S. Government that may not often speak with each other. A classified annex could be produced for internal government consumption.” This annual report should be augmented by periodic publicly disseminated reports on PRC political warfare in geographic regions and against institutions such as the United Nations and the news media.

As the Hudson Institute suggests, one way to operationalize the public’s exposure to PRC political warfare is for the U.S. executive branch to work with academic institutions, journalists, think tanks, and other organizations to map out political warfare operations and expose those that can be publicly uncovered without harming national security. One approach is to design a “united front tracker” that can expose PRC political warfare fronts, enablers, and operatives and hold them accountable. This tracker could, for example, reveal the myriad of groups engaged in united front activities, such as taxpayer-funded conferences at universities and academic institutions that parrot PRC propaganda themes. By exposing political warfare operations on a sustained basis, the United States can better inform its citizens of the threat they face and how best to contend with those threats. Such a tracker could also be used to publicly shame united front and other political warfare operations. That kind of shaming can be quite beneficial, as was proven when the U.S. government took forceful action against Republic of South Africa influence operations during the apartheid era with the United States Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986.

Other steps that should be taken include publicly identifying those involved in foreign censorship and influence in the news media. Most Americans are likely unaware that PRC-based news organizations act as organs of the CCP and that their reporting is directed by the CCP Propaganda/Publicity Department, as opposed to the often-independent reporting of commercial news media organizations. It is also important to publicize business organizations and public relations and law firms involved in lobbying on behalf of the PRC, as well as academics and universities that support PRC political warfare.

Raise the Costs for CCP Interference
Too often, the U.S. government has been weak in confronting PRC transgressions, even on American soil, by overriding U.S. law en-

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8 Mattis testimony.
forcement officials and thereby accommodating illegal PRC intelligence activities. For example, consider the May 2017 incident in New York City, when the FBI was prevented by the Department of State from arresting several high-ranking Chinese Ministry of State Security officials and other intelligence personnel who were conducting an illegal mission in violation of their U.S. visas. "Beijing faces few if any consequences for its interference inside the United States," Mattis notes. It is long past time to raise the cost of PRC political warfare within the United States. When PRC embassy and consulate officials travel to universities to "threaten students or turn them out for a rally," as they have done to foment counter-Hong Kong protest rallies and disrupt the layover of Taiwan's president in Honolulu, the U.S. government "can revoke their diplomatic status," and "travel restrictions can be placed on such officials."9

Take Legal Action against PRC Officials and Affiliates Engaged in Civil Rights Offenses

Although ostensibly a student support association, the real mission of Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSA) is to penetrate academia to subvert democratic institutions and engage in espionage against foreign countries, academics, and Chinese students matriculating abroad. Confucius Institutes, meanwhile, engage in various forms of censorship, coercion, and surveillance of Chinese students and academics. To help counter those actions, Mattis suggests leveraging civil rights legislation such as "Conspiracy Against Rights" (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 241). Legal action could be taken against CSSAs, Confucius Institutes, and other united front and undercover CCP intelligence and security officials "who threaten, coerce, or intimidate Chinese people (or others) in the United States." Specifically, this provision "makes it unlawful for two or more persons to conspire to "injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate any person in any State, Territory, Commonwealth, Possession, or District in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him by the Constitution or laws of the United States, or because of his having so exercised the same."10

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9 Mattis testimony.
10 Mattis testimony.
Encourage Academic Study that Focuses on Combating PRC Political Warfare

The U.S. government should support research into this existential challenge and how to contain, deter, and/or defeat it; provide funding to students in the field; and offer special high-level recognition and awards.

Pass Legislation to Diminish the Offensive Power of PRC News and Social Media

Freedom of the press must be scrupulously safeguarded in democracies, but allowing totalitarian states such as the PRC to dominate the democracies’ news media is the path to national suicide. Legislation, combined with exposure and public shaming, would help diminish the harm that the PRC does through its insidious infiltration of the news media.

Initially, simple steps can be taken, such as passing legislation that requires reciprocity pertaining to news media, social media, and entertainment sectors. Legislation should be passed stating that no PRC-affiliated entity or person should be allowed to buy or engage in any news media, business, education, or entertainment activities in the United States that U.S. citizens cannot do in the PRC. Implicit in this is the requirement that U.S. citizens be allowed to engage in the activity in the PRC without interference, which would allow for free speech, lack of censorship, and no intimidation through direct threats to corporate business interests and physical harassment of individual journalists and their families. Legislation should also be passed that supports and encourages Chinese-language publications, social media, and broadcasts that counter PRC propaganda outlets globally. Finally, U.S. government officials and civic organizations should confront American news media outlets that parrot PRC political warfare narratives.
APPENDIX

Curriculum for a Five-Day
Counter-PRC Political Warfare Course

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a rationale, pedagogy, and curriculum for education and training programs to counter People’s Republic of China (PRC) political warfare, with particular focus on a notional five-day counterpolitical warfare course. Although designed for rapid implementation by the proposed Asian Political Warfare Center of Excellence (APWCE), other organizations in the United States and countries under PRC political warfare attack may adopt and tailor this course to meet the urgent need to rapidly build capacity to combat this existential threat.

Background
The PRC is engaged in political warfare against most countries of the world. This is an aggressive brand of total war that integrates all aspects of PRC national power into its political warfare campaigns. Open societies normally lack a whole-of-government understanding and response to the political warfare threat and therefore typically establish weak applicable laws and policies to combat it. Consequently, those nations lack national counterpolitical warfare policies, strategies, organizations, and resources. Worse, as many countries do not realize that they are under attack or are in denial of that fact, they are unwilling and/or unable to effectively respond.

Most countries lost the ability to recognize and combat political warfare nearly three decades ago after the end of the Cold War. The United States, which has historically provided national security focus and resources for its global network of allies and coalition partners, does not teach about PRC political warfare at either the Foreign Service Institute or the Defense Information School, premier institutions where diplomats and military officers prepare to compete on the information battlefield. Further, there are no systematic courses at its National Defense University or various war colleges. Other countries face similar challenges.

Democracies are particularly vulnerable to political warfare because they lack the necessary education about the threat and be-
cause the open nature of free societies offers numerous pathways for the PRC to engage in influence and coercion operations. Many authoritarian nations choose to ignore PRC political warfare in their own countries, obtaining validation for their dictatorships from the PRC’s totalitarian rule or fearing they may anger the Chinese Communist Party if they confront it. In order to effectively combat the PRC political warfare threat, democracies must refocus their national security cultures and initiate new governmental and public education programs.

Meaningful study of PRC political warfare requires a broad curriculum of extended duration, longer than the five-day course proposed herein. Ultimately, some degree- and certificate-granting institutions, particularly those funded by the U.S government, should incorporate such in-depth curriculum in national security-related programs. In the absence of existing curriculum and programs of study, this notional course provides a relatively easy-to-implement introduction to orient key audiences to critical aspects of PRC political warfare and how to counter it.

Public Education and Training Program Focus
Counter-PRC political warfare education and training should do the following:

- Lay the foundation that political warfare is now a part of the “perpetual rhythm of struggle” on the continuum of conflict.
- Teach how to identify, map, and fight PRC political warfare and assess outcomes.
- Teach how to build enduring legal mechanisms, policies, institutions, and organizations to counter PRC political warfare.
- Develop a network of diplomatic, military, intelligence, law enforcement, legal, and security practitioners and scholars.

In general, the focus of these education and training programs should be on how democratic nations can counter political warfare through a variety of strategies and tactics that range from educating internal audiences about the threat to raising the price of PRC coercion and manipulation. Foundational teachings should illustrate how to identify and track PRC political warfare, engage in strategic

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communications, develop thought processes to devise useful policies and actions, and build an internal defensive capacity for a long-term political warfare fight.

In addition to teaching defensive actions, courses should educate on skills and tools that can be used to fight back, such as addressing how to introduce asymmetric cost-imposing measures and other offensive strategies and tactics. For example, although the PRC is much more difficult to influence than open democracies, it is more fearful of external ideas and information because of its tenuous legitimacy and massive concentration of wealth and power. Therefore, innovatively introducing alternative perspectives that counter PRC narratives and expose political and economic corruption as well as ineptitude can impose significant costs.

Notional Course Outline
A notional five-day counter-PRC political warfare course should cover the following:
- History of PRC political warfare
- Theory, doctrine, and practice of PRC political warfare
- Terminology
- Political warfare mapping
- National strategic communication planning
- News media and social media
- Intergovernmental coordination
- Civil society engagement
- Legal and law enforcement implications
- Defensive and offensive strategies
- Contemporary political warfare campaigns and case studies

The content of each topic should be tailored specifically for counterpolitical warfare operations. For example, higher-level training courses focusing on national strategic communication planning should teach how to think about strategic communications in countering hostile political warfare. Notional content should include the following:
- Hostile political warfare problem research and analysis
- Friendly political warfare-related strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
• Counterpolitical warfare campaign objectives, duration, themes, and messages
• Key audiences
• Strategies, tactics, and messages and the tools necessary to convey them
• Scheduling campaign milestones and events
• Budget, personnel, and other resources
• Evaluation criteria and tools
• Coordination with allies, partners, and civic society

Lower-level training courses, meanwhile, should focus on how to execute aspects of this counterpolitical warfare strategic communications framework (table 2).

By the end of the education or training course, students should be able to perform basic mapping of political warfare influence operations (figure 1).

Figure 1. CCP circles of influence

Table 2. Political warfare course five-day schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding PRC Political Warfare</td>
<td>Detecting Political Warfare</td>
<td>Strategies to Counter Political Warfare</td>
<td>Tools and Practical Applications</td>
<td>Practical Application and Expert Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class 1:</strong> 0830–1030</td>
<td><strong>Class 2:</strong> 1045–1230</td>
<td><strong>Class 3:</strong> 1330–1515</td>
<td><strong>Class 4:</strong> 1530–1730</td>
<td><strong>Class 5:</strong> 1730–1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome and Course Introduction</td>
<td>Mapping PRC Political Warfare Operations</td>
<td>Combatting PRC Political Warfare</td>
<td>Strategic and Crisis Communications</td>
<td>Participant Case Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch:</strong> 1230–1330</td>
<td><strong>Break:</strong> 1030–1045</td>
<td><strong>Break:</strong> 1515–1530</td>
<td><strong>Lunch:</strong> 1230–1330</td>
<td><strong>Break:</strong> 1515–1530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class 2:</strong> 1045–1230</td>
<td>Overview: The Three Warfares Plus</td>
<td>United Front Operations</td>
<td>Legal and Law Enforcement Implications</td>
<td>Building the Counter-political Warfare Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC Political Warfare Tools</td>
<td>Influence Operations and Special Measures</td>
<td>Whole-of-Government Cooperation</td>
<td>Tabletop Exercise #1</td>
<td>Tabletop Exercise #2 Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Break:</strong> 1515–1530</td>
<td><strong>Lunch:</strong> 1230–1330</td>
<td><strong>Break:</strong> 1515–1530</td>
<td><strong>Lunch:</strong> 1230–1330</td>
<td><strong>Break:</strong> 1515–1530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Political Warfare Country Case Studies</td>
<td>Assessing PRC Political Warfare Effectiveness</td>
<td>Engaging News Media and Civil Society</td>
<td>Tabletop Exercise #1 Assessment</td>
<td>Course Assessment and Closing Remarks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled by the author, adapted by MCUP
Students will also learn how to map target audiences and influence means (table 3).

Realistically, it will be difficult for all participants to fully absorb the theory and terminology required to become true political warfare specialists in just five days. But it is vital that government officials and key public leaders begin building a foundation to understand these topics. They must also begin learning how to identify, map, and fight PRC political warfare, assess outcomes, and build enduring legal mechanisms, policies, institutions, and organizations to counter the threat.

Extended courses, such as those at the National Defense University or equivalent educational institutions, should focus on national-level political warfare-related objectives, policies, organizing principles, strategies, campaign plans, and legal framework from a U.S. and friendly/allied perspective, as well as from the PRC perspective. The courses should culminate in a student’s development of a country-specific counterpolitical warfare campaign plan or comprehensive supporting campaign plans. All courses should provide students the opportunity to discuss unique political warfare challenges they face in their home countries and exchange lessons learned and best practices. All courses should also include practical application tabletop exercises, during which students develop solutions to hostile political warfare campaigns and operations in a “war room” environment.

Faculty and Students
For this course, faculty should be selected from those with firsthand knowledge of the topics on which they are recruited to speak. This field of candidates includes political warfare planners and operatives, intelligence officers, journalists, social media experts, strategic communications and information operations practitioners, and seasoned academics with demonstrated experience and expertise in the field.

In assessing prospective faculty, candidates with a doctorate or a professorship at a prestigious university may not be as important as those candidates with real-world practical knowledge and hard-won experience. In general, there has been little rigor within U.S. academia invested in the research and analysis of PRC political warfare. Most of the useful work on this topic has been completed by organizations and individuals outside prestigious universities. This author recommends avoiding the recruitment of “instant experts” who have recently discovered the topic, regardless of academic pedigree.
Table 3. CCP targets of influence

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*Jonas Parello-Plesner and Belinda Li, The Chinese Communist Party’s Foreign Interference Operations: How the U.S. and Other Democracies Should Respond (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, 2018), 45, adapted by MCUP*
Initially, students should represent a cross section of high- to mid-level civil servants and foreign service officers, as well as military, intelligence, and law enforcement officers with career growth potential or who serve in particularly sensitive planning, operations, and public information/public diplomacy billets. Expertise must be built across the whole of government, so officials from all departments, ministries, and agencies should be required to participate. After the program has matured during the course of a year, non-government leaders and other influential persons should then be invited to participate in the course. These include trusted business and industry leaders, news media executives, journalists and editors, educators and professors, and elected officials.

Conclusion
The United States and many other democracies are ill-prepared to confront and defeat PRC political warfare, as are certain authoritarian states that do not desire to become vassals or tributary states of Beijing. Within the United States and other nations that oppose PRC hegemony, it is essential to begin a systematic education program to teach government officials across the board—not just national security specialists—about the threat and how to counter it.

This proposed rationale, philosophy, methodology, and notion-al curriculum for a five-day counter-PRC political warfare education course provides a solid basis for establishing a systematic governmental and public education program. It should be adapted as needed and implemented immediately, while efforts continue to develop longer-duration education and training programs at governmental and civilian institutions of higher learning.
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