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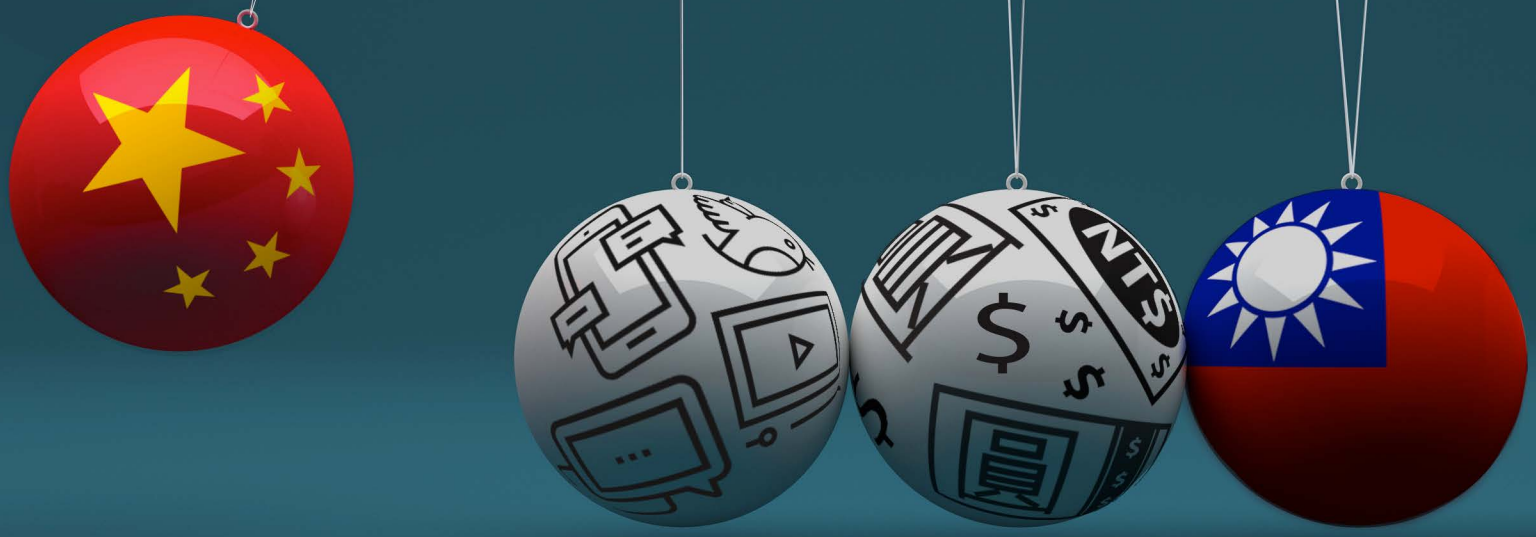
DEMOCRACY UNDER FIRE

China's political warfare against Taiwan during President Tsai Ing-Wen's first term



J. Michael Cole

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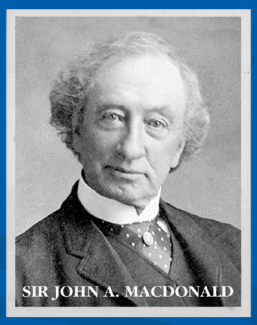
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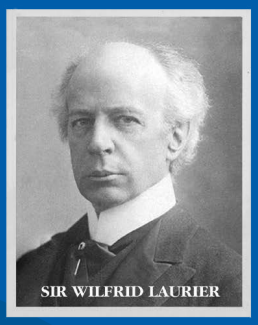
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Executive Summary

Canada has a large Chinese diaspora that, amid closer economic and social interactions with China, has also become the target in recent years of attempts by Beijing to manipulate government policy, society, and academic institutions. Among the many reasons why China has the incentive to use "sharp power" to interfere with Canada are the latter's membership in the Five Eyes intelligence community and NATO; its longstanding alliance with China's principal competitor, the United States; and a democratic system and observance of rule of law based largely on Western concepts that have increasingly clashed with the CCP's revisionist – and now arguably global – aspirations.

Like other countries, Canada has been playing catch up as it attempts to better understand the nature, mores, and ideology of this increasingly assertive "frenemy." Consequently, we need to closely study other societies that, over the years, have had to conjugate with this particular type of interference. A good example of such a society is Taiwan, which has had to balance close economic, social, and geographical interactions with its large, despotic, and irredentist neighbour while preserving its sovereignty and way of life. Taiwan does not provide a template, but it certainly is an example of resilience whose response to this external challenge can serve as an inspiration to all.

Chinese influence operations received special attention following the 2016 election in Taiwan of President Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and greater awareness worldwide of Beijing's sharp power efforts abroad. Yet the CCP's reliance on political warfare is as old as the party itself. While its use of political warfare undeniably increased markedly after Tsai assumed the presidency on May 20, 2016, China's efforts to penetrate, co-opt, and weaken Taiwan's state institutions, political parties, and civic organizations already constituted an aspect of its overall strategy vis-à-vis Taiwan even when Tsai's more Beijing-friendly predecessor was in office from 2008 to 2016.

While more constructive and less belligerent aspects of Beijing's strategy toward Taiwan were given greater weight during the Ma years, political warfare was always present. Tsai's election and the DPP's capturing of a majority

of seats in the Legislative Yuan in 2016 compelled Beijing to recalibrate its strategy by renewing its focus on political warfare and military coercion and downgrading, although never completely abandoning, its efforts to cultivate goodwill among the Taiwanese public.

Yet components of Chinese sharp power that are meant to win hearts and minds, such as economic incentives, have not succeeded in capturing or swaying a large number of Taiwanese. And punitive measures (economic coercion) have failed to subjugate the populace into submission or to generate substantial dissatisfaction with the Tsai administration. In most instances in Taiwan, such as in the tourism industry, punitive efforts by China have compelled the Taiwanese government to redouble its efforts to diversify its sources of revenue.

The same can also be said in Canada, where attitudes toward China have also been shifting, despite Beijing's best efforts, in large part due to its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and growing awareness about the nature of the Chinese regime. Chinese "sanctions" on certain sectors of Canada's economy has also failed to compel the government to give in on the Meng case. And Canada can certainly learn lessons from Taiwan when it comes to diversifying its exports away from China.

When it came to the 2020 general elections and cross-Strait policy, Beijing's political warfare fell flat and may even have backfired. After four years of intense sharp power efforts meant to sabotage her administration, Tsai was re-elected in January 2020 with a record number of votes. Still, one area where Beijing might be able to claim some satisfaction is in its efforts to deepen polarization within Taiwan, often by using disinformation.

While the CCP will likely de-emphasize sharp power operations aimed at winning hearts and minds in Taiwan, it is expected to redouble its efforts in areas where it can further erode the coherence of Taiwan as a functioning state, undermine belief in and support for democracy, and capture politicians who are willing to serve Beijing's interests. Globally, China will continue to use sharp power to shape the political environment to its advantage and to exploit differences of opinion within societies. Other national governments will have to decide if they should adopt a more cautious and restrictive approach to their engagement with China.

However, despite mounting evidence of Chinese interference in our affairs, countries like Canada have been reluctant to adopt laws and implement measures to effectively counter China. Relative newcomers to this game, like Canada, have much to learn about China's sharp power and the means by which to protect their democratic institutions. Consequently, China's influence operations may be more successful in shaping the discourse in its favour than has been the case in Taiwan.

Sommaire

Il y a au Canada une vaste diaspora chinoise qui, en raison de ses liens économiques et sociaux étroits avec la Chine, est aussi récemment devenue la cible des tentatives de manipulation orchestrées par Pékin en vue d'influencer les politiques gouvernementales, la société et les milieux universitaires. Parmi les nombreuses raisons qui incitent la Chine à déployer ce qu'on appelle un pouvoir tranchant (« *sharp power* ») pour s'ingérer dans les affaires du Canada, il faut compter l'adhésion du pays au réseau de renseignement *Five Eyes* et à l'OTAN, son alliance de longue date avec le principal concurrent de la Chine, les États-Unis, son système démocratique et son observance des lois basées en grande partie sur des concepts occidentaux de plus en plus décalés des aspirations révisionnistes – et maintenant probablement mondiales – du Parti communiste chinois (PCC).

Comme d'autres pays, le Canada est en mode rattrapage en ce qu'il tente de mieux comprendre la nature, les us et coutumes et l'idéologie de cet « *ennami* » de plus en plus affirmé. Nous devons donc étudier de près d'autres sociétés qui, au fil des ans, ont eu à composer avec le type particulier d'ingérence en cause. À titre d'exemple, il y a Taïwan, qui a dû instaurer un juste équilibre dans ses rapports économiques, sociaux et géographiques étroits avec son despotique et irrédentiste grand voisin, tout en préservant sa souveraineté et son style de vie. Taïwan ne nous offre pas de mode d'emploi, mais est certainement, dans sa réplique à ce défi extérieur, un exemple de résilience qui peut nous inspirer tous.

Les activités d'influence de la Chine ont reçu une attention particulière après l'élection en 2016 de la présidente Tsai Ing-wen, chef du Parti démocrate progressiste (PDP) de Taïwan, et ont mieux fait connaître le pouvoir tranchant de Pékin à travers le monde. Pourtant, la dépendance du PCC à l'égard de la guerre politique est aussi ancienne que ce parti lui-même. Indéniablement, cette dépendance s'est beaucoup intensifiée après l'entrée en fonction de Tsai Ing-wen le 20 mai 2016, mais les efforts de la Chine pour pénétrer, manipuler et affaiblir les institutions étatiques, les partis politiques et les organisations civiles de Taïwan représentaient déjà un aspect de sa stratégie globale vis-à-vis de ce pays même de 2008 à 2016, années au pouvoir de l'administration pro-Pékin du prédécesseur de Tsai.

Les aspects plus constructifs et moins belliqueux de la stratégie de Pékin à l'égard de Taïwan ont reçu plus de poids durant les années Ma, mais la guerre politique a toujours eu cours. L'élection de Tsai et la majorité de sièges remportés par le PDP à l'Assemblée législative en 2016 ont incité la Chine à recalibrer sa stratégie en mettant à nouveau l'accent sur la guerre politique et la coercition militaire et en délaissant le travail accompli, sans jamais s'en détourner complètement, pour cultiver la bonne volonté du public taïwanais.

Malgré tout, les éléments constitutifs du pouvoir tranchant de la Chine censés rallier les cœurs et les esprits, comme les incitatifs économiques, n'ont pas réussi à influencer un grand nombre de Taïwanais. Puis, les mesures punitives (coercition économique) ont échoué à assujettir les masses populaires et à susciter de franc mécontentement envers l'administration Tsai. Dans la plupart des cas, les efforts punitifs de la Chine ont forcé le gouvernement taïwanais à redoubler d'efforts pour diversifier ses sources de revenus, par exemple dans l'industrie touristique.

Il en a été de même pour le Canada, où, malgré tous les efforts de Pékin, les attitudes envers la Chine ont également changé, en grande partie à cause de sa gestion de la pandémie de COVID-19 et de la prise de conscience grandissante à l'égard de la nature du régime chinois. Les « sanctions » de la Chine contre certains secteurs de l'économie canadienne n'ont pas non plus incité le gouvernement à céder dans l'affaire Meng. Au bout du compte, le Canada peut certainement tirer des leçons de Taïwan en ce qui a trait à la diversification de ses exportations afin de moins dépendre de la Chine.

Pour ce qui est des résultats des élections générales de 2020 et de la politique interdétroit, la guerre politique orchestrée par Pékin a échoué lamentablement et pourrait même s'être retournée contre la Chine. Malgré ce qu'ont signifié en sabotage quatre ans de pouvoir chinois particulièrement tranchant pour l'administration Tsai, cette dernière a été reconduite en janvier 2020 avec un nombre record de voix. Il reste que Pékin pourrait se déclarer un tant soit peu satisfait dans un domaine, celui du travail accompli pour intensifier la polarisation de la société taïwanaise, souvent au moyen de la désinformation.

Le PCC atténuera sans doute ses tactiques acérées afin de rallier les cœurs et les esprits des Taïwanais, mais on s'attend, par contre, à ce qu'il redouble d'efforts dans les domaines où il aura une occasion supplémentaire de diminuer la cohésion de Taïwan en tant qu'État fonctionnel, de saper l'attachement et le soutien à la démocratie et d'influencer les politiciens prêts à s'asservir aux intérêts de Pékin. À l'échelle mondiale, la Chine continuera d'exercer un pouvoir tranchant pour façonner l'environnement politique à son avantage et exploiter les différences d'opinions au sein des sociétés. Les gouvernements nationaux devront décider s'ils doivent adopter une approche plus prudente et réservée en ce qui concerne leur engagement avec la Chine.

Toutefois, malgré la multiplication des preuves prouvant l'ingérence de la Chine, des pays comme le Canada répugnent à adopter des lois et à mettre en œuvre des mesures visant à lutter efficacement contre ce pays. Les pays relativement nouveaux sur l'échiquier, comme le Canada, ont beaucoup à apprendre sur le pouvoir tranchant de la Chine et les moyens de protéger leurs institutions démocratiques. Par conséquent, les activités d'influence de la Chine pourraient orienter les débats avec plus de succès qu'à Taïwan.

Introduction

Political warfare, or what is now commonly known as "sharp power,"[1] is one of several instruments the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has deployed against various societies to complement its diplomatic objectives. Used alongside other measures, political warfare is intended to shape the environment in the CCP's favour while undermining its adversary's ability to resist by perforating the adversary's institutions and cohesion. A more assertive and global China is now a fact of life for societies around the world.

Canada is among the countries with a large Chinese diaspora that, amid closer economic and social interactions with the Asian giant, has also become the target in recent years of attempts by Beijing to manipulate government policy, society, and academic institutions through a multitude of vectors.[2] Among the many reasons why China has the incentive to use "sharp power" to interfere with Canada are the latter's membership in the Five Eyes intelligence community and NATO; its longstanding alliance with China's principal competitor, the United States; and a democratic system and observance of the rule of law based largely on Western concepts that have increasingly clashed with the CCP's revisionist – and now arguably global – aspirations.

Like other countries, Canada has been playing catch up as it attempts to better understand the nature, mores, and ideology of this increasingly assertive "frenemy." Consequently, it is incumbent upon this country's government, journalists, academics, and general public to closely study other societies that, over the years, have had to conjugate with this particular type of interference. A good example of such a society is Taiwan, a democratic island-nation of 23.8 million people that, for decades, has had to balance close economic, social, and geographical interactions with its large, despotic, and irredentist neighbour while preserving its sovereignty and way of life. Although the threat posed to Taiwan is idiosyncratic, due largely to Beijing's effort to annex it through its euphemistically named strategy of "peaceful unification," other democratic societies can learn important lessons from Taiwan in numerous areas. Taiwan does not provide a template, but it certainly is an example of resilience whose response to this external challenge can serve as an inspiration to all.

The CCP's overall strategy of political warfare is set by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress (CPPCC, 中國人民政治協商會議), which brings together the various participants in this effort: intelligence officers, diplomats, propagandists, party elders, military officers, workers with the United Front, academics, media workers, and businesspeople. Under the CPPCC Standing Committee, the Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan Affairs Committee (港澳台僑委員會) is in charge of orchestrating that strategy, which is then implemented by various agencies, among them the State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO, 國務院臺灣事務辦公室), the People's Liberation Army (PLA, 中國人民解放軍), the United Front Work Department (UFWD, 中共中央統一戰線工作部), various ministries, and a plethora of other actors within society (foundations, think tanks, organized crime, private individuals) and enterprises. This strategy also depends upon the capture, or co-optation, of counterparts in the targeted society.

Although Chinese influence operations received special attention following the 2016 election in Taiwan of President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and greater awareness worldwide of Beijing's sharp power efforts abroad, the CCP's reliance on political warfare is as old as the party itself. While its use of political warfare undeniably increased markedly after Tsai assumed the presidency on May 20, 2016, China's efforts to penetrate, co-opt, and weaken Taiwan's state institutions, political parties, and civic organizations already constituted an aspect of its overall strategy vis-à-vis Taiwan even when Tsai's more Beijing-friendly predecessor, Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) was in office (2008-2016).

For the CCP, political struggle is on-going. Consequently, it sees no contradiction in employing active or even offensive measures alongside more peaceful means to achieve its objectives. Thus, even when cross-Strait relations were less conflicted during the Ma years, a period which saw the signing of dozens of bilateral agreements and a relaxing of restrictions on cultural and business exchanges, the CCP did not completely cease its political warfare efforts or military intimidation (Wu, Tsai, and Cheng 2017). Beijing's overall strategy, therefore, was two-pronged: it both sought to win over the Taiwanese public through "goodwill" and economic incentives and continued its efforts to weaken Taiwan's state and democratic institutions. While more constructive and less belligerent aspects of Beijing's strategy toward Taiwan were given greater weight during the Ma years, political warfare was always present and regained its importance following the Sunflower Movement's occupation of the Legislative Yuan in March-April 2014, when Beijing concluded that Ma's KMT was in no position to deliver what Beijing wanted.

Tsai's election and the DPP's capturing of a majority of seats in the Legislative Yuan in 2016 compelled Beijing to recalibrate its strategy by renewing its focus on political warfare and military coercion and downgrading, albeit never completely abandoning, its efforts to cultivate goodwill among the Taiwanese

public. As was the case under Ma, sweeteners existed alongside more coercive measures and were not considered contradictory. However, the nature of the overall strategy was turned on its head: whereas coercion had played a secondary role under Ma, under Tsai it was to become the primary component of Beijing's approach. Moreover, during the eight years when cross-Strait ties were opened up under Ma, his administration made little effort to increase its counterintelligence capabilities in a manner commensurate with the new opportunities for penetration from China that resulted from the loosened restrictions. That created a number of new avenues for the CCP to penetrate, influence, and corrode Taiwanese institutions.

Unless she gave in to China's full set of demands, Tsai would receive a failing grade.

Weary of Tsai and her party from the outset, Beijing subjected her to a "test" in the days leading up to the president-elect's inauguration. Whether she passed was contingent on the new president agreeing to preconditions set by Beijing – chief among them being the acceptance of the so-called "1992 consensus" (九二共識) and "one China" (一個中國) policy. Therefore, even though President Tsai committed to maintaining the "status quo" in the Taiwan Strait and carefully referred to the Republic of China's (ROC) "constitutional order" while recognizing the "historical fact" that the two sides had met in 1992 (and that the two governments should continue to build their relationship based on the foundations that had evolved from that meeting), Beijing judged the new president's performance "incomplete" (Cole 2020b). Unless she gave in to China's full set of demands, Tsai would receive a failing grade.

Elected by democratic means and subject to the will of the people, President Tsai simply could not give Beijing what it demanded. The KMT's poor showing in the elections following eight years of rapprochement convinced Beijing that economic incentives, and what it regarded as "good will," had failed to win over the Taiwanese and only resulted in the election of a candidate who was unquestionably more skeptical of Beijing's intentions. As a result, despite initial optimism that the two sides could find some *modus vivendi* and coexist peacefully, the disagreements were too stark. Developments in Hong Kong underscored the unviability of the "one country, two systems" (一國兩制) model for Taiwan and created further incentives for Beijing to seek to erode Taiwan's state institutions and democracy. As relations soured, Beijing began

accelerating its political warfare campaign against Taiwan. This also coincided with CCP Secretary General Xi Jinping's (習近平) worldwide implementation of a more robust strategy using the United Front (Groot 2016; Joske 2019).

The first part of this paper analyzes China's political warfare activities against Taiwan from President Tsai's first day in office on May 20, 2016, through the last day of her first term, May 19, 2020. The second part discusses the various efforts the Tsai administration has undertaken to mitigate, if not outright counter, China's sharp power efforts during that period and in preparation for President Tsai's second term. The paper offers an assessment of China's political warfare efforts during those four years to determine areas of success and failure. It concludes with a discussion of how Taiwan's experience with Chinese political warfare can provide inspiration for Canada and other democracies.

The CCP sharp power playbook

The CCP's political warfare efforts against Taiwan can be narrowed down to five main aims:

(1) corrode, bypass, and manipulate democratic institutions, elections, and public trust in the country;

(2) undermine the Taiwanese people's morale and weaken their resistance to Beijing's objectives by exacerbating their feelings of abandonment, isolation, and inevitability;

(3) sow confusion and intensify divisions and contradictions within the society;

(4) co-opt elites, businesspeople, politicians, retired military officers, civil society, and the media; and

(5) coerce opponents and critics of the CCP into supporting Beijing's position.

Through these methods, the CCP has sought to "Lebanonize" or "balkanize" Taiwanese society and its body politic; efforts to do so increased markedly following Tsai Ing-wen's 2016 election. A principal aim of this strategy is to bypass central state and government institutions – especially, but not limited to, the Tsai administration and DPP-run municipalities – and directly capture local politicians, grassroots organizations, the agricultural and fisheries sectors, the tourism industry, and the land development sector. This strategy also involves the creation of associations via a multitude of local proxies with

counterparts in China linked to the United Front. Other components of China's sharp power strategy include the co-optation of local officials, as well as deploying dis- or misinformation campaigns through traditional, new, and social media to increase polarization, sow confusion, and undermine support for Taiwan's elected government.

Political parties, organized crime, and proxies

United Front efforts have also taken advantage of the inherent leniency of Taiwan's democracy by supporting a number of secret societies – e.g., the Heaven and Earth Society, or Hongmen (洪門) – and political parties, chief among them the China Unification Promotion Party (CUPP, 中華統一促進黨), New Party (新黨), and the Taiwan Red Party (中國台灣紅黨 — 红黨),[3] to promote the unification agenda and the "one country, two systems" formula. Those parties, which are legally registered and can field candidates in elections, have questionable sources of funding which have resulted in police raids and longstanding investigations (Wang and Chang 2018).

Under Taiwanese law, it is illegal for a political party to receive funding from China or the CCP. The CUPP in particular has been the target of investigations to establish where its funding comes from. Its leadership denies any illegal funding, though it is suspected that it may be using companies in China, including the Taolue Group (韜略集團) and its subsidiary, Strategic Sports Ltd (韜略運動器材), to recycle CCP money. Other possible sources of funding for the CUPP and other pro-unification groups include proceeds from criminal activities (e.g., prostitution, drugs, debt collection, underground gambling, and more "legitimate" business activities), Buddhist temples, donations by CCP "front" companies, and by participation in "cross-Strait development forums" co-organized by United Front organizations worldwide – e.g., the New York chapter of the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Unification (CCPPR, 紐約中國和平統一促進會) and the US-China Cultural Exchange Society (美國美中文化交流促進會).[4] Regional groups, such as the Bangkok-based Asian Association for the Promotion of the Peaceful Reunification of China (AAPPRC, 亞洲地區中國和平統一促進會聯合總會) and local affiliates may also be involved in fundraising for pro-CCP groups and political parties in Taiwan.

The CUPP was behind the creation of the Tainan Cross-Strait Exchange Promotion Association (台南市兩岸交流協會) and the Cross-Strait Taiwan Guangdong Exchange Association (台粵交流協會會), two entities that sought to bypass central government authorities in Taiwan by providing direct connectivity with counterparts in China (Commonwealth Magazine 2018; Lee and Pomfret 2019). The CUPP, which promotes unification under the "one country, two systems" formula, also has a symbiotic relationship with organized crime, chief among them the Bamboo Union (竹聯幫) and, more recently, the Four Seas Gang (四海幫). Both are "mainlander" triads that accompanied

defeated KMT forces following their defeat in the Chinese Civil War in 1949. The founder of the CUPP in 2006, Chang An-le (張安樂, aka "White Wolf"), is a former head of the Bamboo Union and served a 10-year prison sentence in the US on drug-trafficking charges.[5]

The CUPP has been involved in violent protests and intimidation of civil society, and during the Ma Ying-jeou administration often hired muscle from local gangs (*jiaotou*) to provide extra security for visiting CCP officials. Many of the local hires have no apparent political ideology but will do anything for a few dollars. Crime syndicates such as the Bamboo Union and Four Seas Gang have access to and traffic in firearms (Cole 2018a).[6]

An ally of the CUPP, the New Party has also been implicated in efforts that have attracted the attention of Taiwanese authorities. Three of its members, including spokesman Wang Ping-chung (王炳忠), were implicated in an operation codenamed "Star Fire Secret Unit." Led by Zhou Hongxu (周泓旭), a Chinese national, the operation used websites to recruit Taiwanese into a spy ring. The trio, as well as Zhou, were all indicted on charges of espionage (Lin and Kao 2019). Wang, along with the New Party chairman and a number of senior members of the CUPP, were all present at the aforementioned gathering in New York City (see note 4).

In April 2019, the little-known Taiwan Red Party was the centre of a controversy when it became involved in organizing a planned event in Taichung. Details of the event were distributed on various Facebook pages and sent to an unknown number of recipients on Line and WeChat. The event, which was eventually cancelled after some scrutiny, was titled "2019 Peaceful Integration and Development Forum" (2019和平統一融合發展論壇) and carried the slogan "Promote the 1992 Consensus, Support Peace and Support Unification" (「宣揚九二共識、支持和平、支持統一」). It was co-sponsored with the UFWD-linked China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification (Taiwan) (CPPRC, 中國和平統一促進會 (台灣)), and the China Peace Development Association (中華和平發展促進會) – all peripheral CCP organizations – as well as the Taichung City Cross-Strait Business and Trade Association (台中市兩岸商務經貿協會) (*China Review News* 2019).[7]

The Taiwan Red Party was also involved in efforts, specifically an advertising campaign, to recruit young Taiwanese to the Communist Party School Fujian Provincial Party School – Taiwan Social Elite Class (中共黨校福建省委黨校台灣社會菁英班) (Cole 2019a). One of the first appearances of the ad was observed on May 5, 2017, on Taiwanese Chinese Heart (台灣人中國心), one of hundreds of pro-unification Facebook forums created in recent years. Among the qualifications for admission to the school stated in the ad are "support for 'one China'" and self-identification as a Chinese citizen. According to the ad, classes provide training on subjects such as Chinese law, Chinese economic theory, institutions, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), special economic

zones, and practical experience sharing. Faculty come from think tanks affiliated with the central leadership in Beijing. The ad states that the party school serves as an incubator of the central government, adding that students can use their graduation certificate anywhere in the "Chinese mainland."[8]

The "Sing! China: Shanghai-Taipei Music Festival" (2017《中國新歌聲》上海·台北音樂節), which was scheduled to be held at National Taiwan University (NTU) on September 24, 2017, highlighted the overlapping nature of organizations involved in political warfare against Taiwan. This event was organized by the Taipei City Government in conjunction with the Shanghai City Cross-Strait Cultural Exchange Promotion Association (上海市海峽兩岸交流促進會), the Shanghai Cultural Association (上海文化聯誼會), Shanghai Canxing Trading Co., Ltd. (上海燦星文化傳媒股份有限公司), and Shanghai Voice of Dream Media Co. (夢響強音文化傳播). Ostensibly cultural in nature, the event was anything but: among other things, the Shanghai City Cross-Strait Cultural Exchange Promotion Association clearly states on its website that it is dedicated to the "peaceful unification of the motherland."[9] The event was eventually cancelled after protests by students and pro-independence advocates, though shows on other campuses were held as planned earlier in the week, as well as in 2015 and 2016.

> *The Sing! China controversy also involved the CUPP, whose members engaged in physical clashes with students.*

The Sing! China controversy also involved the CUPP, whose members engaged in physical clashes with students who were protesting the event. Among the assailants was Chang Wei (張瑋), the second son of CUPP founder and ex-Bamboo Union chief Chang An-le. Five others were charged over the physical clashes, including one of the protesters. On July 30, 2018, the Taipei District Court sentenced Chang Wei to 40 days in jail for assault (Wang and Wang 2018).[10]

Entities such as the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (ACFROC, 中華全國歸國華僑聯合會), which falls under the United Front Work Department, have also organized cultural activities and concerts in Taiwan and been accused of spreading pro-Beijing propaganda (Wang and Miao 2019). Although the potential for recruitment or "brainwashing" during cultural events is limited, such activities serve to reinforce certain themes

espoused by the CCP. On occasion these events will only be held after local Taiwanese authorities have agreed to specific changes that comply with Beijing's preferences. For example, promotional material for the aforementioned Sing! China festival saw "National Taiwan University" changed to "Taipei City Taiwan University." More troubling is the high likelihood that CCP work agents with the United Front use such visits to establish networks while in Taiwan. In other words, rather than the event itself, it is the extra activities that such individuals may engage in while away from public scrutiny that pose a problem. Since the second term of the Ma administration, TAO officials had a tendency to act on their own initiative when in Taiwan, bypassing central government figures and, sometimes meeting with locals off-schedule. The risks of co-optation during such contact are relatively high and worthy of attention.

Pro-unification parties in Taiwan also collaborate with a constellation of ideologically aligned "civic organizations" (e.g., the Concentric Patriotism Association, CPA, 中華愛國同心會) in promoting their agenda, organizing protests and, on occasion, using intimidation or violence against elected officials and their opponents within civil society.[11] In some instances, these groups have coordinated their efforts with like-minded groups in Hong Kong to protest against, intimidate, and assault visiting pro-localization and pro-democracy activists from Hong Kong (Mok and Lo 2017; see also Miu, Wang, and Chen 2017). Members of the Falun Gong have also been repeatedly physically assaulted by such groups (Hsiao 2015). An undercover investigation in 2018 revealed that the CPA was paying approximately $40 (between NT$800 and NT$900) per day for individuals to wave the PRC national flag at various venues in Taipei. The CPA is believed to rely on donations from China-based Taiwanese businesspeople who, like its chairman, Zhou Qinjun (周慶峻), are close to the Chinese regime (Al Jazeera 2018).

Members of Buddhist and Taoist temples are also suspected of involvement in United Front activities through pilgrimages to and exchanges with China, where pro-unification ideology figures prominently, often with involvement by the TAO.[12] Suspected Chinese United Front operatives are also believed to be using annual pilgrimages of the Goddess Mazu in Taiwan to set up closed-door meetings with their counterparts in Taiwan, while threatening to boycott uncooperative temples that refuse to adopt the CCP's rhetoric on Taiwan. Some temples are also suspected of exploiting lax financial oversight to funnel overseas money into Taiwan to fund United Front activities. When, in 2017, the Tsai administration moved to change oversight regulations for religious organizations and to implement stricter environmental regulations for the burning of incense and ghost (fake) money, various religious leaders around Taiwan (and the identified Chinese content farm COCO01.net), launched a campaign of disinformation accusing Tsai of "persecuting religion" (Liberty Times 2017a).

Co-optation has also been an issue with *taishang*, Taiwanese businesspeople who work in China, some of whom have arguably become complicit in political warfare efforts against Taiwan – at least those who act as representatives of *taishang* organizations and must perforce closely collaborate with the local TAO (Schubert 2016, 222). Some are members of provincial CPPCCs, United Front Work Department's Overseas Association, or have close relationships with CCP officials (Wang 2015). In February 2020, in the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hsu Cheng-wen (徐正文), a businessman who headed a support group for *taishang* wishing to return to Taiwan, sparked controversy when his efforts appeared to have been synchronized with Beijing's policy on the repatriation of Taiwanese nationals from Wuhan. Hsu, who had well-known connections with the CCP (Fount Media 2020), was also a member of the KMT Central Committee and was involved in the presidential campaign of Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜), Beijing's favourite in the 2020 Taiwanese presidential election.[13]

China has also used the gift of access to special trade zones to capture Taiwanese politicians for its political warfare efforts. One incident surrounding Lin Kuo-ching (林國慶), a former legislator from the DPP who unsuccessfully ran as an independent in the January 2020 legislative elections, is a case in point (Apple Daily 2019). Lin made headlines after it was revealed that he had told an online program that "nobody loves Taiwan more than Xi Jinping." Soon thereafter, it was revealed that his son, Lin Chih-yuan (林智遠), was involved with the CPPCC, which as stated earlier is one of the key coordinating bodies for China's United Front work and political warfare. The young Lin was once highly praised by the Fujian Provincial Party Committee and the provincial government as a model worker in Fujian Province, where he operates a business in the Pingtan free-trade zone promoting tourism and the creative industry. He has also served as the deputy general manager of the Pingtan Free Trade Zone Cross-Strait Development Co (平潭自貿區兩岸發展公司).[14]

Trade, tourism, and artists

Beijing has weaponized trade by bypassing municipalities in Taiwan that are governed by the ruling DPP and denying them tourism and investment opportunities, while rewarding those that recognize the so-called "1992 consensus" or are governed by politicians with whom the CCP believes it can work (Taipei Times 2016; Cheng and Li 2019). Those efforts were accompanied by anti-government protests by tour operators early in the Tsai administration on claims that her "anti-China" policies were harming their businesses. The protests quickly fizzled after they failed to gain public support.

The strategy of bypassing the central government and favouring cities that are governed by KMT or independent officials gained new importance following the KMT's gains in the November 2018 nine-in-one elections, when Beijing saw an opportunity to isolate and increase pressure on the Tsai

administration (Up Media 2019a). Rewards have included all-expenses-paid junkets for such officials to Beijing and other parts of China for meetings with senior CCP officials, investment delegations from China, increases in tourism, massive purchases of agricultural produce at premium prices, and so on. Such municipalities have also been "rewarded" by being allowed to organize cultural events and concerts with partner cities in China. In many cases, organizers on the Chinese side have included those with suspected ties to the CCP's United Front Work Department (Hsiao 2017).

CCP organs including the Communist Youth League (中國共產主義青年團), with the assistance of ultranationalistic Netizens and cyber armies, have also launched a campaign to identify and shame Taiwanese members of the entertainment industry who are alleged supporters of Taiwanese independence; such targets are then compelled to issue public apologies and identify themselves as "Chinese" (Dou and Hsu 2016; Lew 2019a, 2019b). Failure to comply with such demands has often resulted in the cancelling of roles in Chinese movie productions or films funded by China or the cancellation of concerts in China. In 2016 and again in 2020, China issued edicts ordering members of Taiwan's showbiz industry to vow to stay "politically correct" in order to be allowed to perform in China (Liberty Times 2020a). Blacklisting has also affected popular YouTubers who were critical of Beijing or did not support candidates favoured by the CCP in Taiwanese elections (Formosa TV English News 2019). Entertainers, socialites, and fashion models have also used social media to reproduce and spread CCP propaganda and disinformation, ostensibly in return for profitable opportunities in China.

Electoral interference

In the lead-up to elections in Taiwan in recent years, the CCP has increasingly supported "outlier" candidates it can better control, either "independent" ones or marginal or populist voices within existing parties. The CCP's efforts have been bolstered by extensive coverage by pro-Beijing media. Frustrated with the main parties' embrace of democratic norms, Beijing has sought to erode or bypass longstanding checks and balances within Taiwan's established political parties. To do so, it is suspected of providing funding for preferred candidates, political parties, and civil society. Such funds are believed to be made available through Hong Kong, through "dual use" Chinese companies, via Taiwanese companies with a presence in China, and in the form of hard cash brought by couriers (e.g., businesspeople on visits across the Taiwan Strait).

For example, weeks before the November 24, 2018, nine-in-one local elections, the Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau (MJIB, 法務部調查局) revealed it had launched investigations into 33 cases of suspected Chinese funding of various candidates with evidence that the money was coming directly from the Chinese government. In most cases, the funds were reportedly funnelled

to candidates favoured by Beijing via Taiwanese businesspeople with operations in China (Liberty Times 2018a). In December 2019, the Ministry of Justice revealed it had been investigating 66 cases of underground money transfers since July with a total exceeding $4.72 billion (NT$100 billion). The money was wired from accounts in various Chinese cities, as well as from Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Vietnam (Central News Agency 2019a). Part of the investigation involved determining how much of that money, if any, was being used to influence electoral outcomes.

Underground gambling is also believed to have been a factor in the November 2018 elections in which the ruling DPP lost a large number of municipalities. In some cases, the likelihood of high returns if a certain candidate is elected could encourage bettors to call upon their friends and families to vote for the candidate in question, thus warping normal electoral decisions. Such activities were targeted by Taiwanese authorities in the lead-up to the 2020 general elections, resulting in the busting of an estimated 1700 underground gambling dens and more than $2.4 million (NT$50 million) in gambling money (Central News Agency 2019a). Special attention also appears to have been given to local officials (legislators, city councillors, borough chiefs) from small parties or running as independent candidates, often by granting them and their family members preferential access to the Chinese market, experimental trade zones, and so on (Cole 2019b).

Although active measures may not have dictated the outcome of these elections, there is reason to believe that, in conjunction with other factors, they may have exacerbated trends which ended up supporting candidates whom Beijing regards favourably. Finally, suspicions of external interference can also undermine the legitimacy of electoral outcomes with the public and contribute to social tensions as well as loss of faith in electoral processes and democracy in general (Wang and Yen 2019).

Incentives and the 'ghost island'

The CCP has also launched attempts to intellectually capture and indoctrinate students, academics, teachers, and professors through all-expenses-paid trips to China, where they receive briefings by CCP officials. The extent to which such attempts at co-optation succeed in furthering Beijing's political objectives remains a matter of dispute. Alongside such activities, the CCP has sought to undermine faith in Taiwan's economy through propaganda, disinformation, and the propagation of the negatively connoted meme "ghost island" (鬼島) to refer to the low wages and alleged lack of opportunities for Taiwan's youth.

The CCP has also endeavoured to compound these trends and perceptions with its efforts to lure Taiwanese talent and intensify Taiwan's "brain drain" by offering much-publicized preferential (or "equal") treatment to targeted Tai-

wanese (e.g., "31 incentives," 對台31項措施) (Chung 2018) and 26 additional measures unveiled in November 2019 (Radio Taiwan International 2019). The incentives are very much in line with the "one generation and one stratum" (一代一線) strategy unveiled by then-CPPCC Chairman Yu Zhengsheng (俞正聲) in March 2017 (China Times 2017).

Disinformation, pro-Beijing media

Another major rung in the CCP's political warfare efforts against Taiwan is its co-optation of the media. In early 2019, it was revealed that Want Want China Holdings (中國旺旺控股有限公司) had received upwards of US$495 million in subsidies from the People's Republic of China since 2007 via its holdings company in Hong Kong (Kawase 2019; see also Cole 2019c). The company denies that the funding has influenced the editorial line of the media controlled by the Want Want China Times Media Group (旺旺中時媒體集團).[15] It has also threatened legal action against journalists who have reported on possible CCP influence on their operations (Reporters without Borders 2019).

Other Taiwanese media outlets have adopted editorial stances that suggest outside influence. Their participation in cross-Strait media forums (see below) has also drawn attention to this problem. Such efforts have resulted in censorship (e.g., the *China Times* has reportedly cleansed from its archives all reports that directly reference the Tiananmen Square Massacre) (Central News Agency 2019b), anti-government disinformation, and support through saturation coverage for ostensibly pro-Beijing political candidates. Similar tactics have also been used to promote self-censorship by media beholden to China. Such media have played a key role in manufacturing the popularity of Beijing-friendly political candidates (e.g., the KMT's Han Kuo-yu) by providing them with saturation coverage.

Want Want Chairman Tsai Eng-meng (蔡衍明), Taiwan's second-wealthiest individual who made his fortune in China and acquired the *China Times* media consortium in 2008, has been intimately involved in cross-Strait media forums. Four "Cross-Strait Media People Summits" (兩岸媒體人峰會) have been held in Beijing since 2015. The first year, a total of 34 representatives from Taiwan participated in the summit. By May 2019, more than 70 did, from the print, TV, magazines, new media, film, public relations, and publishing sectors (Up Media 2019b). The chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Wang Yang (汪洋), told participants it was their "responsibility" to promote "peaceful reunification," the "1992 consensus" and the "one country, two systems" formula (「宣揚九二共識、支持和平、支持統一」). Delegates also reportedly signed a series of "cooperation agreements" (China Times 2019).

The Want Want Group has also been actively involved in organizing cross-Strait cultural forums which are used to indoctrinate targeted Taiwanese

participants and create opportunities for contact. Partners have included the (now defunct) Hong Kong-based "think tank" named the China Energy Fund Committee (CEFC, 中華能源基金委員會),[16] which was funded by the Shanghai-based CEFC Energy Co Ltd (中國華信), the China Institute of Culture Limited (CIOC, 中國文化院), which is another CEFC subsidiary (Cole 2015), and many organizations with suspected ties to the United Front Work Department or PLA (People's Liberation Army) political warfare units, among them the China Association for Friendly International Contact (CAIFC, 中國國際友好聯絡會), Nishan Forum on World Civilizations (尼山世界文明論壇), and the Fujian-based 311 Base (61716 Unit).[17] The energy company has since been "nationalized" by CITIC (中國中信集團), and was also discovered to have an office in the Taipei 101 skyscraper under the name China Ocean Fuel Oil Co. Ltd (中國海洋燃油有限公司).

> *Disinformation is subsequently injected into the Taiwan media environment via social media.*

New online media, such as Master Chain Media (大師鏈), which emerged in 2018, have also received Beijing's blessing. Besides being the first Taiwanese media to be officially accredited by Beijing, Master Chain Media counts among its senior employees a handful of retired top military and intelligence officers from Taiwan's National Security Bureau (NSB, 中華民國國家安全局) and Military Intelligence Bureau (MIB, 國防部軍事情報局) (Liberty Times 2019b). After the passage in the legislature of new anti-interference laws in late 2019 (see below), Master Chain Media held an emergency board meeting at which it was decided that it would cease operating in Taiwan (SET-TV 2019).

Recent research has demonstrated that China's disinformation strategy targeting Taiwan relies on a four-step approach, with disinformation first appearing in Chinese state- or party-controlled media. It is then spread via Chinese social media. The disinformation is subsequently injected into the Taiwan media environment via social media – PTT board (a Taiwanese bulletin board system), Facebook fan pages, and closed groups – and is finally picked up and legitimized by traditional media.[18]

Besides state-owned media such as Xinhua News Agency, *People's Daily, Global Times*, CCTV, CGTN and the China Association for Promotion of Chinese Culture (CAPCC, 中華文化發展促進會)[19]-linked *China Review News* (CRN, 中國評論通訊社), pro-unification groups in China, Taiwan, and elsewhere have

relied on content farms or mills to generate and spread disinformation aimed at undermining support for the Tsai administration, widening social divisions, and promoting "peaceful reunification" and "one country, two systems" (Taiwan Foundation for Democracy Undated). To date, dozens of such sites, which increasingly employ Taiwanese (or Malaysia-based ethnic Chinese) to generate more "credible" content, have been uncovered. These sites have provided additional vectors to spread mis- or disinformation aimed at Taiwan and the Tsai administration (Lin and Wu 2019). Some content farms[20] were created by Chinese nationals, while others were projects by ostensibly co-opted Taiwanese businesspeople, many of whom had attended the annual Strait Forum (海峽論壇) in cities across Fujian Province.[21]

Facebook groups and fan pages,[22] Line groups,[23] Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Weibo, WeChat (Weixin QQ), and the popular PTT bulletin board have served as channels by which to spread mis- or disinformation (The Reporter 2019). Trolls,[24] bots, cyborgs and "sock puppets"[25] have been used to swarm targeted individuals and pages, increase share volume, and possibly interfere with algorithms (Monaco 2017). Facebook in particular has been a crucial battleground for these kinds of activities in Taiwan: it is the number one social media platform in Taiwan, with a coverage rate of 88 percent – significantly higher than the average of 79 percent in other countries (Taiwan Foundation for Democracy Undated).

"Influencers" or "opinion leaders" – online personalities with a large following and whose sponsors often are registered in Hong Kong or China – have also reportedly been approached by the CCP for the spreading of mis- or disinformation. As we saw earlier, "influencers" who have failed to toe Beijing's line have lost their sponsorship and their Chinese accounts on Weibo have been shut down (Wang, Ye, Wang, and Kao 2019). Borough chiefs and temple heads are also understood to have generated disinformation and spread it within their respective communities (Liberty Times 2019c).

Longstanding weaknesses in Taiwan have also compounded the mis- or disinformation problem; presumably the CCP has identified those weaknesses as areas that can be exploited. The high degree of polarization in Taiwan – the blue (pro-unification) versus green (pro-independence) divide – has been reflected in the Taiwanese media environment resulting in tribalism, "groupthink," and confirmation bias. This phenomenon has also often resulted in the sidelining of moderates who call for collaboration. Poor corroboration and fact-checking practices, a highly competitive media environment, overworked beat journalists, a vertical chain of command with older editors lording it over younger reporters, and lack of incentives for investigative journalism have often provided the false-corroboration necessary for disinformation to enter the Taiwanese media bloodstream. An incident surrounding the suicide of a Taiwanese diplomat in Japan in September 2018 (Yang and Hsu 2018) is a clear example of this process: the incident started with a post on Chinese so-

cial media linked to an IP address in China. The information was submitted to PTT board, then appeared as a news story in Taiwan's state-run Central News Agency followed by other media. It then became the object of discussions on evening TV talk shows and led to pressure from opposition lawmakers.

More generally, there also is reason to suspect that China may influence and exacerbate the problem of disinformation apparently produced within Taiwan itself. This includes controversies such as pension reform (Liberty Times 2017b), same-sex marriage (overlapping with the views of fundamentalist Christian Evangelicals in Taiwan) (Steger 2018), President Tsai's PhD from the London School of Economics (Lin 2019), new laws governing accounting, and incense burning at Buddhist temples (discussed earlier), agricultural-sector reform and crop price reporting (Yeh 2018), and the validity of the Taiwan/ROC passport abroad (Liberty Times 2018b). Several China-linked content farms have also repeated the aforementioned meme of Taiwan as a "ghost island" to create poor perceptions of the Taiwanese economy while reinforcing the appeal of China for young Taiwanese. This has been accompanied by disinformation by the TAO about the number of Taiwanese who have allegedly enrolled in Beijing's incentive programs.

"China may influence and exacerbate the problem of disinformation apparently produced within Taiwan.

Imagery is also subject to disinformation. An example is the official People's Liberation Army Air Force PLA (PLAAF) Weibo account posting images suggesting that H-6K bombers have passed near Taiwanese landmarks (e.g., Jade Mountain). Such images have been used as part of a psychological warfare campaign to exacerbate feelings of helplessness and to imply that the Taiwanese military is unable to defend the country's sovereignty (Strong 2016). The PLA has also relied on hawkish retired military generals and complicit media to amplify China's military exercises, often to coincide with efforts by Beijing to pressure the Taiwanese government. Through this pressure campaign routine live-fire drills have been transformed into instruments of coercion. Taiwanese media as well as foreign media and wire agencies have often given undue credibility to articles that clearly contain fabrication and quotes by so-called "experts" who are known to be unreliable.

As the Tsai administration has sought to counter mis- or disinformation and external influence, co-opted pro-Beijing politicians, political parties (CUPP,

Red Party Taiwan, New Party), and deep-blue (pro-unification) (KMT) political commentators portrayed those efforts as undemocratic, an authoritarian "green terror" (i.e., pro-independence), or of being based on "fake news." The response by some KMT politicians to the William Wang Liqiang (王立強) spy case scandal in 2019, and attacks on the integrity of Australian journalist Nick Mckenzie (Strong 2019) who broke the story, is a case in point (McKenzie, Sakkal, and Tobin 2019). Wang had confessed to being a Chinese intelligence operative who had sought political asylum in Australia. Politicians, for reasons that range from pro-Beijing inclinations to ignorance to electoral gains, have themselves been occasional purveyors of disinformation, and the tendency of Taiwanese media outlets to make news out of Facebook posts has given these sources the oxygen and platform they need.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, Taiwan's MJIB announced that an investigation had identified 271 fake news cases related to the outbreak, of which 196 originated from China. According to Taiwanese authorities, the disinformation campaign, which sought to spread panic in Taiwan and undermine support for the Tsai administration's response to the outbreak, was well coordinated among Chinese social media users and relied on fake accounts[26] to spread the information on Facebook groups. Besides providing misleading information about the number of confirmed cases and deaths, which suggests a government cover-up, the campaign also included Photoshopped imagery and fake government announcements (Miao, Lai, and Chiang 2020).

There is an absence of appropriate regulations to govern the media, especially the "grey zones" involving new media and social media. Punitive measures adopted by the National Communications Commission (NCC, 國家通訊傳播委員會) against media outlets that willingly generate or distribute false content are insufficient and have failed to make a dent in the activities of business empires that have billions of dollars in their bank accounts and which receive large subsidies from China; it is also clear that market forces alone will not resolve the problem of large media outlets that choose to act as purveyors of disinformation. Efforts to curtail their activities have been hampered by the necessity of ensuring media freedom and avoiding a slippery slope: excessive harshness would give Beijing what it wants by undermining Taiwan's democratic values.

Additional measures

The CCP is working to split the Taiwanese pro-independence movement and "green" camp in ways similar to the penetration of Uyghur, Tibetan, and Chinese democracy activists worldwide. Efforts in the latter cases have relied on a combination of co-optation, intimidation, and disinformation. Beijing has also resorted to kidnapping Taiwanese nationals, such as Lee Ming-che (李明哲), a democracy activist (BBC 2017), to put pressure on the Taiwan-

ese government. Overreaction to this kidnapping and other issues by Taipei could have provided Beijing the justification it needed to escalate its actions against Taiwan; conversely, a perceived lack of interest or mishandling of this and other case by the Taiwanese government could have had a delegitimizing effect on the administration and fostered internal divisions or highlighted the "powerlessness" of Taiwan's government.

Abroad, United Front organs have sought to co-opt academics, journalists, retired military personnel, intelligence officers, and politicians. They have been encouraged to abandon Taiwan, the *Taiwan Relations Act* (TRA), and arms sales to Taiwan in their papers, talks, and at academic conferences. Those conferences include the one organized by the Nishan Forum on World Civilizations (尼山世界文明論壇) under the guise of promoting "dialogue between civilizations"[27] and the Sanya Initiative (三亞倡議).[28] Related areas discussed at these conferences have included Japanese rearmament, BRI, and China's territorial claims in the East and South China Seas. Co-optation has mainly occurred through access to all-expenses-paid trips to China, conferences, lucrative positions at Chinese firms, casinos, and so on. In other cases, prominent figures, including a former CIA director, may simply have been tricked into speaking at conferences organized by United Front or PLA-linked "think tanks" (e.g., CEFC), ostensibly without being fully cognizant of what they had gotten themselves into.[29]

Pro-Beijing media, academics, and officials worldwide have often portrayed Taiwan as being connected to (or supported by) the far-right, the Trump camp, Western intelligence or the defence industry. Critics of the CCP have also faced accusations that they have a "cold war mentality," "anti-China sentiment," or, simply, are racist. Such accusations have served to undermine the credibility of those who advocate for the defence of Taiwan and the preservation of its democratic institutions in the face of Beijing's hostility. There is no doubt that Beijing has an interest in such views continuing to be disseminated.

China has also succeeded in using its influence at the United Nations and within specialized UN agencies to prevent Taiwan from joining those institutions as an observer. Besides having some of its nationals as heads of those organizations, Beijing has exploited its relationships with member states – particularly those seeking infrastructure investment – to ensure that compliant candidates are elected to head the agencies. Through this, it has conditioned employees at many UN agencies to echo Beijing's official policy (the "one China principle") at every turn.

Taiwan's responses

Countering Chinese political warfare has proven challenging for the Tsai administration. Despite the insistence by Taiwanese authorities that Chinese political warfare posed a serious threat to Taiwan's democratic institutions, it wasn't until 2019 that the government began taking concrete action to counter the threat. Part of the reason for the delayed response can probably be attributed to forces in the opposition, which used democracy against itself to create a "moral equivalence" by depicting any measure and legislative amendment adopted by the government to address hostile external influences as "undemocratic."

Before adopting new laws to empower intelligence and law-enforcement agencies – and the courts – the Tsai administration launched a series of investigations into the funding of political parties to establish whether there existed any irregularities or illegal finding from China. Chief among the targeted parties were the CUPP and New Party, whose offices were the object of police raids. In August 2018, Taipei prosecutors raided the CUPP's office in Taipei and its founder's residence to determine whether the party had received illegal funding from China to influence the outcome of the November elections. The investigation was carried out under the *National Security Act* (國家安全法), the *Political Donations Act* (政治獻金法), and the *Organized Crime Prevention Act* (組織犯罪防制條例) (Pan 2018). In August the following year, Chang, his son, and four others, including the current chairman of the CUPP Chang Fu-tang (張馥堂) and former chairman Lee Hsin-yi (李新一), were indicted for alleged violations of the *Political Donations Act* and misappropriation of funds (Lin and Kao 2019).[30] Throughout the investigations Chang An-le has denied receiving money directly from the CCP and maintains that his funding comes from his business operations in China.

The Tsai administration's investigative efforts, however, fell short of addressing the larger threat posed by CCP political warfare. Taiwanese efforts to counter Chinese "sharp power" had long been complicated by legal blind spots, including problems caused by the inability, due to the ROC Constitution, to categorize the People's Republic of China as an "enemy state." Those shortcomings were finally addressed at the Legislative Yuan. Amendments to the Criminal Code, for example, have helped law enforcement and intelligence agencies take action against individuals who collude with enemy forces in China, Macau, Hong Kong, and elsewhere (Wang and Kao 2019). The Tsai administration also revised several bills governing national security, making changes to the *Criminal Code*, the *Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area* (兩岸人民關係條例), the *Classified National Security Information Protection Act* (國家機密保護法), and the *National Security Act*. Among other things, the revised bills impose more serious sentences for individuals who pass classified information to CCP agents (Fang 2019).

In late 2019 DPP legislators also introduced an *Anti-Infiltration Act* modelled on the US *Foreign Agents Registration Act* and Australia's national security and foreign interference laws enacted in 2018. Despite initial attempts by opposition KMT lawmakers to block the bill, alleging that it would treat *taishang* and the heads of Taiwan business associations representing their interests in China as enemies of the state, the act was passed and came into force in early January 2020, in time for the general elections later that month (Taiwan Today 2020).

Critics of the Tsai administration's response to Chinese political warfare often pointed to the few instances of prosecution as evidence that her government was either dragging its feet or that it had oversold the severity of the problem facing Taiwan. Lost in this argument is the fact that intelligence and law enforcement agencies first needed the proper set of legal tools to take action – especially when the activities under investigation fall into "grey zones" and don't constitute outright illegal activity. Such tools were finally introduced at the end of 2019.

Another important factor is that intelligence agencies, and to a lesser extent law enforcement agencies, have every incentive to delay prosecution so as to have more time to widen the scope of their investigations. Jumping the gun and rushing to arrest and prosecute will end an investigation – and carry the additional risk of exposing human sources and other means of data collection. Especially in the counter-intelligence sector, agencies prefer to patiently draw as detailed a map as possible of the various networks within the opposite camp. Thus, unless an enemy operation presents a clear and immediate threat to national security, the preference in intelligence circles is to delay taking legal action against the targeted entities and individuals. This may well account for the few prosecutions that have occurred during President Tsai's first term.

An additional challenge posed by political warfare is one of jurisdiction, as the behaviour tends to overlap both counter-intelligence and law enforcement. This becomes evident when, say, Taiwanese authorities investigate a crime syndicate that uses the proceeds from its criminal activities to fund pro-Beijing political parties or underground CCP entities. Should law enforcement agencies take the lead in the investigation, as the activities certainly are *criminal*, or should their counterparts in intelligence take charge given the *political* and *national security* elements to the case?[31] Quite often, jurisdictional blind spots can result in delays and incomplete sharing of intelligence among law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Civil society has also increased its efforts to promote media literacy and awareness campaigns with various groups, among them DoubleThink Labs, the Open Culture Foundation, and Cofacts, endeavouring to identify, track, and flag disinformation. As the 2020 elections approached, and following consul-

tations between Taiwanese government officials and Facebook, the popular platform took action against a number of pages and groups that were suspected of spreading disinformation. It also created a "war room" against disinformation that was in close contact with the Central Election Commission, law enforcement agencies, and the campaign headquarters of all three presidential and vice presidential candidates (Wu and Yeh 2019). Additionally, various pages, many of them supporting the then-KMT presidential candidate, Han Kuo-yu, were shut down (Wang and Wu 2019). A total of 118 Taiwan-based fan pages – including one with as many as 155,443 members – along with 99 public groups and 51 accounts used to administer these pages and groups were taken off Facebook. Facebook also took action against identified content farms by blocking users' ability to share their content on its platform. Various civic groups have also launched programs to promote media literacy in schools and with the elderly and raise awareness about the risks posed by disinformation.

Working with the United States, Taiwan has also held three rounds of Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF) conferences on media literacy and combating disinformation. Japan and Sweden have also officially joined the effort (Taiwan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019). The most recent one, held virtually in late April 2020, focused on disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic (American Institute in Taiwan 2020). Moreover, various academic workshops have been organized in collaboration with other democracies.

Lessons for Canada and other democratic societies

Although the challenges Chinese political warfare pose to Canada and other democratic societies differ in some cases from those confronting Taiwan (largely because Beijing does not claim sovereignty over them), there are nevertheless areas in which Taiwan's experience can provide important lessons.[32] This experience has certainly become relevant for Canada in the ongoing controversy over the detention and potential extradition to the United States of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou (孟晚舟) (Warburton 2020). While Beijing engages in traditional diplomacy, it has also turned to instruments of political warfare to divide Canadian society, manipulate decision-making in Ottawa, co-opt or use potential partners in government or parliament (see Blackwell 2019a), sow confusion through disinformation and CCP-front organizations,[33] interfere in electoral processes, and, where it feels it is necessary, to undertake more direct, punitive action, such as lawfare against Beijing's critics[34] and by "weaponizing" both Chinese students (Smith 2020)[35] and trade.

In addition, the Chinese regime has leveraged its relationships with large enterprises in Western democracies to influence both think tanks that are financed by those companies and high-level government officials. It has also relied on retired Canadian government officials to push its agenda, on occasion in ways that were diametrically opposed to the policies of the current government.[37] A good example can be seen in the open letter by a group of prominent Canadians. The 19 signatories, including former foreign ministers, parliamentarians, and senior diplomats, suggested that the government should end the extradition process for Meng Wanzhou, in return for possibly freeing Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, who have been unlawfully languishing in Chinese jails in retaliation for Meng's arrest.

> *One key instrument of political warfare is how the CCP approaches the Chinese diaspora community.*

One key instrument of political warfare is how the CCP approaches the Chinese diaspora community, which it surveils, intimidates, and uses to further its global ambitions. Before governments can fully appreciate the magnitude of the problem this poses for people of Chinese origin on their soil, they must first understand the mechanisms through which Beijing extends its sway over ethnic Chinese worldwide. Taiwan has had decades of experience developing unequalled skills in identifying front and underground organizations, societies, councils, and chambers of commerce that act as proxies for the Chinese regime, conduits for influence, and vectors for surveillance and intimidation. Taiwan has also developed an unequalled understanding of the intersection between secret societies and organized crime on the one hand, and the CCP on the other; similar activities may very well be taking place in parts of Canada, Australia, the United States, Germany, and other countries with a large Chinese diaspora.

Taiwan's experience with disinformation – content farms, social media, and the mechanisms by which disinformation is disseminated within a targeted society – can also be an asset to Canada and other states, which have had their own problems with WeChat (Nuttall and Chiu 2018) and with Chinese-language media which, as recent incidents suggest, have come under Beijing's influence (Blackwell 2019b; Nuttall 2020). Intelligence sharing between Taiwan and those countries would also greatly benefit all, as would Taiwan's linguistic abilities. Furthermore, some of the lessons that those countries can learn from Taiwan, both in how to track and mitigate China's political warfare and disinformation will help these countries combat similar influence operations waged by other revisionist countries such as Russia.

Taiwan has learned important lessons about how to counter external attempts to interfere with electoral processes – including cyber attacks – and will continue to do so as the CCP adapts and refines its techniques. With Canada and the Western world arguably on the cusp of a more confrontational relationship with China (Reuters 2020), the likelihood that Beijing will seek to meddle in elections to help more China-friendly candidates, or that it will weaponize trade to punish or favour provinces and foster divisions within our society, will increase. Those, too, are areas where Taiwan has ample experience, which could certainly be beneficial to societies that are only just now awakening to the reality that China is a factor in our lives.

Taiwan's recent passage of and revisions to existing national security laws are also something Ottawa may wish to emulate so as to better equip its law enforcement and intelligence agencies to address the problem of "grey zone" political warfare activities. Geographically close to China, highly dependent on its economy, and with nearly 1.5 million Taiwanese nationals living and working in China, Taiwan must continually perform a balancing act between economic opportunity and national security. Taiwan's ability to maintain and perfect its democracy despite a sustained assault by its annexationist authoritarian neighbour, and the demonstrated willingness of the Taiwanese people to protect their way of life despite Beijing's threatening attitude, can serve as examples for Canada and other democracies that arguably have yet to find the appropriate balance between their economic ambitions in China and the need to protect the cherished values that define them. For one thing, though by no means impeccable, Taiwan has done a much better job in recent years than many of those countries in preventing Chinese interest groups and large corporations from hijacking the policy-making process.

Located on the front lines of the CCP's assault on the system that has mostly underpinned international relations since the conclusion of World War II, Taiwan has demonstrated that it is possible to stand up to Chinese intimidation and continue to prosper, both economically and in the quality of its democracy. Like many countries that are now confronted with the threat of Chinese political warfare, Canada has tended to be overly cautious so as not to "offend" the Chinese regime, even when that regime's behaviour has been an affront to the values that define us as a nation. Canada and other democratic societies have been very sensitive to accusations of racism and "anti-China" sentiment, which the CCP and the outlets it controls have had no compunction in deploying to undermine the implementation of countervailing measures and those who propose them (Fitzgerald 2020). Resilience and commitment to a non-negotiable bottom line is probably the most important lesson that Canadians and the citizens of other targeted democracies can learn from Taiwan's experience with Chinese interference.

Conclusions

Quantifying the impact of China's political warfare against democratic societies is as much science as it is an art. More often than not, sharp power instruments at best exacerbate existing trends or vulnerabilities within the targeted society. In isolation, none of China's political warfare efforts are capable of swaying an election – except, we can assume, when two or more candidates are locked in a close race – or undermining a government to such an extent that a constitutional crisis will ensue.[38] Beijing's efforts, furthermore, have been confronted and rebuffed by a society (Taiwan) that has had several years of experience being the target of such tactics. This acclimatization, along with the awareness about the problem that this has engendered, have provided Taiwan with a prophylactic by which it can defend itself against, and mitigate the effects of, Chinese political warfare. Relative newcomers to this game, as Canada is, have much to learn about the practice of sharp power and the means by which to protect their democratic institutions against this "grey zone" assault. Consequently, China's influence operations on our governments, universities, think tanks, and the media may have been more successful in shaping the discourse in its favour than has been the case in Taiwan.

Components of Chinese sharp power that are meant to win hearts and minds, such as economic incentives, have not succeeded in capturing or swaying a sufficiently large number of Taiwanese to create the kind of momentum that would compel the country's leaders to make significant policy direction changes. And in Canada and elsewhere, attitudes toward China have also been shifting, despite Beijing's best efforts, in large part due to its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and growing awareness about the nature of the Chinese regime (Burton 2020). In Taiwan, punitive measures (economic coercion) have failed to subjugate the populace into submission or to generate substantial dissatisfaction with the Tsai administration. In Canada, discontent generated by Chinese "sanctions" on certain sectors of Canada's economy (e.g., canola oil producers) has also failed to compel the government to give in on the Meng case. In most instances in Taiwan, such as in the tourism industry, punitive efforts by China have compelled the Taiwanese government to redouble its efforts to diversify its sources of revenue, a lesson that certainly applies to Canada's export-reliant and education sectors.

As an instrument by which to undermine the Tsai administration and the DPP, China's political warfare strategy has largely failed. Although disinformation and other means of interference may have influenced the outcome of the November 2018 local elections – resulting, among other things, in the surprise election of Han Kuo-yu in Kaohsiung – those alone could not have accounted for the results. Among other things, the election provided a platform for various segments of society, among them retired public servants who saw their pensions reduced by the Tsai government and opponents of same-sex marriage, to punish the DPP at the polls. Underperforming DPP mayors and

commissioners in some municipalities, or a desire for change in those where the DPP had ruled for many years (as in Kaohsiung) also probably factored in the outcome. The central government's poor management of the nation-wide local elections, which were held concurrently and included as many as 14 referendum questions and which resulted in long lines at voting booths, may also have dissuaded Taiwanese from voting. At most, Chinese political warfare probably succeeded in exacerbating certain trends and may have helped a few politicians to get elected.

> *"Taiwan people's self-identification as Taiwanese has continued to rise.*

When it came to the 2020 general elections and cross-Strait policy, Beijing's political warfare fell flat and may even have backfired. After four years of intense sharp power efforts meant to sabotage her administration, Tsai was re-elected in January 2020 with a record number of votes (8.2 million) and her party retained its majority of seats in the Legislative Yuan. Despite the sustained campaign against President Tsai and concerted efforts to prop up her opponent, Han of the KMT (Beijing's favourite candidate) was defeated (although the case could be made that with 5.5 million votes, the outlier, gaffe-prone, and arguably unqualified candidate nevertheless fared surprisingly well, which may in part be attributed to the influence operation campaign that supported him).[39] Public attitudes toward China, meanwhile, have remained firmly opposed to unification (Election Study Center, National Chengchi University 2020). while the Taiwan people's self-identification as Taiwanese has continued to rise – particularly among its youth, of whom more than 70 percent told an opinion poll conducted by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy in 2018 that they were willing to fight to defend their nation's democratic way of life (Taiwan Foundation for Democracy 2018).

One area where Chinese political warfare has performed more to Beijing's satisfaction is its attempts to deepen polarization within Taiwan, often by using disinformation. From the moment Han hinted at a possible run for the presidency, various pages and groups on Facebook and social media became a conveyor belt for disinformation, much, albeit not all, originating in China. Synchronized with "pro-Beijing" traditional media in Taiwan, this campaign quickly elevated the relatively unknown outlier within his own party to a position where even questioning the viability of a Han candidacy resulted in unprecedented online threats – even against members of the KMT and political commentators in the KMT camp.[40] Some death threats were traced

back to IP addresses in China (Wang and Huang 2019).[41] The polarization also contributed to perceptions that Taiwan's real enemy was the opposite camp (the DPP) rather than the authoritarian regime across the Taiwan Strait. Such divisions can undermine the cohesiveness of the state and foster social instability, and can also succeed in eroding respect for electoral outcomes.[42] The war on the information sphere in Taiwan has also successfully undermined perceptions of the independence and reliability of most traditional media. Among those most affected by disinformation, it may have cultivated a loss of faith in objective reality itself, "a calculated effort to undo logic and factuality" – an age-old trick adopted by Marxist-Leninist parties.[43]

Despite its partial success at deepening polarization within Taiwan, China failed to accomplish its 2020 electoral objectives.

In future, the CCP will likely de-emphasize sharp power operations aimed at winning hearts and minds in Taiwan and redouble its efforts in areas where it can further erode the coherence of Taiwan as a functioning state, undermine belief in and support for democracy, and capture politicians who are willing to serve Beijing's interests. As such, while the CCP can be expected to score more *tactical* successes in the future through such a strategy, it is unlikely that it will yield satisfactory results for the Chinese at the *strategic* level. In a global context, China will continue to use sharp power to shape the political environment to its advantage and to exploit differences of opinion within societies. Other national governments will have to decide if they should adopt a more cautious and restrictive approach to their engagement with China, such as has been done by Australia in recent years. Despite mounting evidence of Chinese interference in our affairs, countries like Canada have been reluctant to adopt laws and implement measures to effectively counter China's sharp power, regarding actions such as those seen in Australia, which has made the necessary adjustments in its China policy, as "overreaction."

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Endnotes

1 For the purposes of this paper, the author uses the National Endowment for Democracy's definition of sharp power, which constitutes various efforts to "pierce, penetrate, or perforate the information and political environments in the targeted countries." Those efforts "are not necessarily seeking to 'win hearts and minds,' the common frame of reference for 'soft power' efforts, but they are surely seeking to influence their target audiences by manipulating or distorting the information that reaches them." Sharp power is also separate from other, traditional means of advancing the state's interests, such as military force and coercion, traditional intelligence collection as well as diplomacy. National Endowment for Democracy 2017.

2 For recent works analyzing Chinese political warfare aimed at Western societies, see Hamilton and Ohlberg 2020; Manthorpe 2019; and Spalding 2019. See also Cole 2018a.

3 The lesser known Taiwan Red Party was created in Taichung on March 25, 2017. It states in its declaration that it aims to "integrate the majority of Taiwanese farmers and fishermen" (「統合廣大農漁工」). Historically, those have been areas of KMT influence.

4 For an example of such gatherings abroad, see: 2017年全美中國和平統一促進會年會暨海峽兩岸和平發展論壇 : Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Nw8D9GSloU and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxADVlR5JrI.

5 Chang was among seven Bamboo Union leaders arrested in California, Texas, and New York in the 1980s for murder, drug trafficking, gun smuggling, and gambling (Chin 2003). After serving his sentence in the US, Chang returned to Taiwan, only to become embroiled in a bid-rigging scandal at CKS International Airport (now Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport). Chang fled Taiwan and was placed on its most-wanted list. He returned to Taiwan in June 2013. During his time as a fugitive in China, Chang established connections with various "princelings" within the

CCP, including Hu Shiying (胡石英), the son of former CCP propaganda chief and vehement anti-reformist Hu Qiaomu (胡喬木) and reportedly a member of Xi Jinping's "close circle."

6 In May 2018, a large cache of firearms – the largest in a decade, according to the authorities – was seized in Taiwan originating from the Philippines. A total of 109 firearms, including Bushmaster XM15-E25s, Spike's Tactical ST-15s and a Striker-12 shotgun, as well as 12,378 rounds of ammunition, were found in Keelung. One officer said of the arms cache, "You could set up an army with those!" Commenting on the matter, Minister of the Interior Yeh Jiunn-rong (葉俊榮) said that if the guns had flown into the market, "the consequences would have been disastrous." The individuals arrested in the case were from the Bamboo Union. Some of them fled to Singapore but were eventually sent back to Taiwan (ET Today 2018).

7 Li Yi (李毅), a Chinese sociologist with ties to Renmin University who was slated to be the keynote speaker at the event, was deported by Taiwanese immigration after it was discovered that he had entered Taiwan on a tourist visa and was thereby barred from participating in political activities (Chiu and Chung 2019). In previous years, Li, who advocates the imposition of Chinese laws in Taiwan and the total replacement of Taiwanese political institutions after unification, had made various appearances at aconference in Washington, DC. He had visited Taiwan on at least four occasions since 2017, and met with the CUPP's Chang An-le in May 2017 (Liberty Times 2019a).

8 The ad provided the same cell phone number (0903316739) as the one given for the cancelled "2019 Peaceful Integration and Development Forum" event. According to journalist Melissa Chan, "China's ruling Communist Party's 80 million members attend special [Party] schools to learn party ideology at facilities that serve as a training ground for the next generation of Chinese leaders" (China Digital Times, 2012).

9 Li Wenhui (李文輝), the "honorary chairman" of the association who came to Taiwan for the event, is the TAO's director of the Shanghai Municipal People's Government. Li's application for a visa to visit Taiwan after Lunar New Year in 2018 was turned down, reportedly due to "inappropriate behaviour" during one of his many visits to Taiwan (Li allegedly visited Taiwan about every two weeks) (Hsiao 2017).

10 This wasn't the young Chang's first case involving physical assault. Earlier in 2017, he had been involved in another altercation, this time at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, where he and other pro-CCP activists attempted to disrupt the arrival in Taiwan of pro-democracy activists from Hong Kong, among them lawmakers Edward Yiu (姚松炎),

Nathan Law (羅冠聰), and Eddie Chu (朱凱迪), and activist Joshua Wong (黃之鋒), who had been invited to Taiwan to participate in a forum (Ng 2017). Prior to their departure for Taiwan, the lawmakers and activists had also been threatened by pro-Beijing groups at the airport in Kong Kong, suggesting coordination between pro-Beijing elements in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Reports also indicated that the individuals involved in the altercation at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport belonged to both the Bamboo Union, which is close to the CUPP, and the Four Seas Gang (Cheung 2017).

11 Other "civic" groups include the Peace and Development Research Center (四川國際和平與發展研究中心), the National Society of Taiwan Studies (全國台灣研究會), the China Painting Academy for Friendly Contact (中國友聯畫院), the Alliance for Unification of China (中國統一聯盟 (統盟)), China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification (Taiwan) (CPPRC, 中國和平統一促進會 (台灣)), the Chinese Democratic Progressive Party (中國民主進步黨), the Cross-Strait Integration Society (兩岸統合學), the Chinese Huangpu Four Seas Alliance Association (中華黃埔四海同心會), the China People's Democratic Unification Association (中國全民民主統一會), the Cross Strait Unification Association (海峽兩岸統促進會 海峽兩岸統一促進會), the Taiwan Cross Strait Peaceful Development Association (台海兩岸和平發展研究會), the Taiwan One Country Two Systems Studies Association (台灣一國兩制研究協會), the China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands (中國民間保衛釣魚台聯合會), and the Chinese Association for Political Party Liaison (中華政黨聯誼會). Many of them were created in 2008 or 2009.

12 As this author has observed as part of his investigation, in some instances temples have posted TAO notices of visits by the entrance of the building. In one case, after its members participated in a pilgrimage to China, a local "land god" temple installed a TV set facing the sidewalk outside the temple. For weeks it treated passersby to programs on the CCP-run CCTV. After the Tsai administration introduced new regulations to combat foreign interference in late 2019 and early 2020 (see below), the TAO notices were removed.

13 Soon after his election in November 2018, Han travelled to Hong Kong, Macau, Shenzhen and Xiamen and held closed-door meetings with Wang Zhimin (王志民), the head of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (LOCPG HK) – Beijing's top agency in the territory – and other top Chinese officials, including Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥). See Miao, Yeh, Wen, Cheung, and Lin 2019.

14 Following the revelations about his son's possible role within the CPPCC, Lin stated that the revelations were a "smear campaign," adding

that Lin Chih-yuan was not employed by the CPPCC but was rather an "unpaid adviser," a position that "many Taiwanese businesspeople in China have taken." The young Lin is said to have resigned from his position as a Pingtan CPPCC member. The Lin family's business connections with China are also extensive. Lin's wife Lin Hsiu-mei (林秀美), has established Pingtan Yongshun International Trade Co., Ltd (湧樟國際貿易有限公司), while Lin Chih-yuan has set up Sui Industrial Co., Ltd (穗實業有限公司), also in Pingtan. His daughter, meanwhile, heads Aibo Co., Ltd., (愛玩客有限公司), also in Pingtan, and his daughter-in-law is also said to have business interests in China.

15 The Want Want China Times Media Group operates the *China Times* (中國時報), *Commercial Times* (工商時報), CtiTV (中天電視), and China Television (中國電視公司). Want Want, which made a fortune selling food products in China, also operates hotels in various Chinese cities including Shanghai, Nanjing, Huai'an and Xining.

16 Before its demise following the arrest of Patrick Ho Chi-ping (何志平) in New York in late November 2017 on conspiracy and bribery charges (Marsh 2019; see also Stevenson, Barboza, Goldstein, and Mozur 2018), CEFC was involved in the co-optation of academics, government officials (active and retired), the UN, businesspeople and heads of state worldwide (in the US, Taiwan, Czech Republic, Georgia, Myanmar, and elsewhere), promoting the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, 一帶一路), China's territorial claims in East and South China Seas, and Beijing's Taiwan policy.

17 Also known as the Public Opinion, Psychological Operations, and Legal Warfare Base (輿論戰心理戰法律戰基地).

18 See Information Operations Research Group 2020. The report has yet to be made accessible to the public, but the author accessed it on June 16, 2020.

19 The CAPCC is a key platform of the Political Work Department (中央軍委政治工作部) under the Central Military Commission (CMC, 中央軍事委員會) headed by Xi Jinping. It is actively involved in the promotion of a cross-Strait "peace accord" and "re-unification."

20 Among the dozens of content farms identified in recent years are COCO01, COCO0X, cocohk, cocomy.net, Read01.com, kknews.cc and mission-tw.com, aboutfighter.com, bldaily.com, bomb01.com, BuzzHand, damaday.com, ezp93.com, funnyacecdote.com, foyuanvip.com, gigacircle.com, happytifhome, happtify.cc, hotstartabloid.com, imama.tw, ptt01.com, teepr.com, twgreatdaily.com, and contw.co.

21 Launched in 2009, the Strait Forum is organized by the Taiwan Affairs Office, the Fujian Provincial Government, and "civic groups" in Taiwan. According to the organizers, between 5000 and 10,000 representatives from Taiwan, mostly from the grassroots and local governments, attend the forum every year (China Times 2020).

22 For example, "Love and Peace Qipao Society Taiwan Federation" (愛與和平旗袍會台灣總會), "Chinese Revival Forum" (中华复兴论坛), "The Descendants of the Yan and Yellow Emperors Rise United to Build the Chinese Dream" (炎黃子孫團結奮起共築中國夢), and "What the government doesn't dare to let you know" (政府不敢讓你知道的事).

23 A very popular instant-messaging app in Taiwan, with several groups set up for retired law enforcement and public servants.

24 Including so-called member of the "fifty-cent army," or *wumao*, now known as "eighty-cent army," or *bamao*, following online rumours in April 2020 that the CCP has increased the financial compensations for pro-Beijing online trolls. See Liberty Times 2020b.

25 For a useful discussion on how cyborgs and "sock puppets" can be used to distort information, see Pomerantsev 2019.

26 One group of accounts on Facebook and Twitter often used to spread disinformation about COVID-19 all used the name Sun Xiaochuan (孫笑川).

27 The Nishan Forum Organizing Committee is chaired by Xu Jialu (许嘉璐), chair of the aforementioned China Association for Promotion of Chinese Culture, and a former a senior adviser to the China Association for International Friendly Contact (CAIFC, 中國國際友好聯絡會). According to the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, CAIFC is "a front organization for the former [PLA] General Political Department, performs dual roles of intelligence collection and conducting propaganda and perception management campaigns" (Bowe 2018; see also Nishan Forum on World Civilizations Undated; and Stokes and Hsiao 2013).

28 Sponsored by CAIFC and the China-US Exchange Foundation (中美交流基金會), the Sanya Initiative is a series of dialogues between retired senior naval officers from the US and the PLA (see Grant 2010).

29 See for example, *China Daily* 2016. Coincidentally, the former CIA chief under President Bill Clinton, James Woolsey, was a non-executive member of the board of Imperial Pacific International Holdings, a Chinese developer that was looking to build a hotel and casino on Saipan in the US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, in 2016. Eugene Sul-

livan, a retired US federal judge who was a member of Richard Nixon's defence team during the Watergate scandal, also sat on that board until June 2017. Other prominent American figures on the advisory committee included former FBI director Louis Freeh, former New York governor David Paterson, and Edward Rendell, a former governor of Pennsylvania and former chairman of the US Democratic National Committee. See Stanton 2016 and Toh 2019.

30 In late 2019, Taipei prosecutors also raided six travel agencies that were suspected of involvement in document forgery to help Chinese government officials enter Taiwan under the pretext of attending short-term exchange programs. One of the firms, Huaxia Dadi Travel Service Co. (華夏大地), was operated by Chang Wei, the son of CUPP founder Chang An-le (Hsiao and Lin 2019).

31 An analogue to this is the challenge faced when investigating the Lebanese Hezbollah's financing of its operations through the selling of contraband cigarettes.

32 This section limits itself to a general discussion of the main ramifications of PRC political warfare on democratic societies. For a more in-depth analysis of the means and impact of this political warfare and policy recommendations for combatting it, see Hamilton and Ohlberg 2020, Manthorpe 2019, Spalding 2019, and Cole 2018a.

33 For example, one suspected United Front entity is the Tibetan Association of Canada (TAOC, 加拿大藏族同胞联谊会, also known as the Tibetan Canadian Friendship Association). (See Cole 2019d.)

34 This includes use of WeChat for fundraising purposes with the intent of filing a lawsuit against a Canadian journalist who exposed a Chinese state-backed effort to stockpile personal protective gear in the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. (See Connolly 2020; see also Canadian Press 2015.)

35 Besides the threat of reducing or altogether halting enrollment by full-tuition-paying Chinese students at universities whenever a government falls into disfavour with Beijing, Chinese consulates and embassies have also mobilized Chinese students to protest appointments of and visits by individuals who are perceived as inimical to the CCP, such as the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, human rights activists, Taiwanese officials, and others (see Nasser 2019).

36 Here there are similarities with Taiwan, where China has used the carrots of investment and tourism inflows and the sticks of denying those inflows to reward or punish municipalities within the country, often to play

one against the other. China has also used changes in investment and tourism policies to sever ties with central governments (see Cole 2019e.)

37 See, for example, Fife and Chase 2019.

38 Despite fears of Chinese interference in Canada's latest general elections, Canadian officials told a G7 Rapid Response Mechanism closed-door conference in Ottawa in late 2019, at which the author was present, that external forces had been a negligible factor in those elections, in large part due to preparedness and other prophylactic measures adopted by Ottawa.

39 Han was removed from office in an unprecedented recall on June 6, a first in Taiwan's democratic history (see Mazzetta 2020).

40 This includes online death threats against the son of Chiang Wan-an (蔣萬安), a grandson of former president Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國), after he was overheard criticizing supporters of Han Kuo-yu (Newtalk 2019.)

41 This author was also the target of an online campaign of intimidation after he published an article critical of Han. Dozens of threatening messages appeared to originate in Malaysia, where it is believed that ethnic Chinese with business ties to China have been called upon to participate in an online campaign against Taiwan.

42 In the hours following Tsai's re-election in January, a few members of the Han camp called the results "invalid." Thankfully, the KMT quickly put an end to such allegations and respected the election results.

43 Needless to say, this assault on reason isn't limited to Marxist-Leninist regimes (see Snyder 2018, 151).

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Paul Martin

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