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Senator Dan Sullivan, Chair
Representative Christopher H. Smith, Cochair

Stand with Taiwan: Countering the PRC's Political Warfare and Transnational Repression
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**Fundamental Elements of the Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare
Directed Against Taiwan**

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

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

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

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

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

The PRC's Asserted Sovereignty Claims Over Taiwan

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

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

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

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

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

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

² PRC Foreign Ministry, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on the Government of the Republic of Nauru's Announcement to Break Diplomatic Ties with the Taiwan Region and Seek to Reestablish Diplomatic Ties with China,” Jan. 15, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202401/t20240115_11223838.html.

³ Deng Xiaoping Puts Forward “One Country Two Systems” (邓小平提出“一国两制”), Central Broadcasting Network, Aug. 17, 2014, https://news.cnr.cn/special/dengxiaoping/latest/201408/t20140817_516235884.shtml.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴ For examples of this discourse, see: “Scholar: The Central Emphasis of the Mainland’s Policy Is Changing from ‘Preventing Independence’ to ‘Promoting Unification’ and More Actively Taking Initiative to Achieve the Chinese Dream” (學者：大陸對台政策重點由「防獨」轉為「促統」更積極主動實現中國夢), *Global Times*, Nov. 15, 2017, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1584129856792056664&wfr=spider&for=pc>; and Jin Canrong (金燦榮), “「武統台灣」警告的指向性很清晰” (“The Direction of the Warning of ‘Armed Unification with Taiwan’ Is Very Clear”), *Global Times*, Dec. 13, 2017, <https://opinion.huangqi.com/article/9CaKrnK61PV>.

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

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

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

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

What Is Political Warfare?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Forms of CCP Political Warfare

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

Information Manipulation:

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

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

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

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

“Lawfare”:

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

Gray Zone Operations:

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

Economic Coercion:

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

United Front Subversion:

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

Intelligence Operations:

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

Cyber Operations:

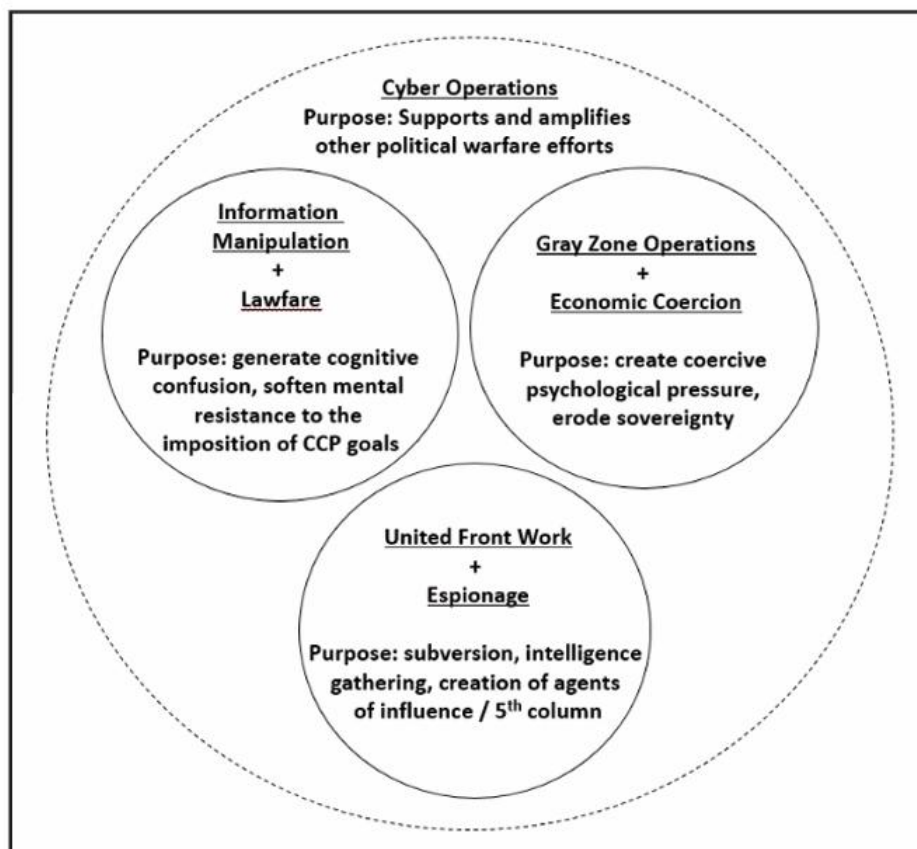
Cyber operations consist of the use of directed online activity—including, but not limited to, clandestine network penetrations and directed online propaganda-cum-disinformation—in order to gather intelligence, identify exploitable infrastructure vulnerabilities, and sow confusion and social divisions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

¹² Major General Liu Jiaxin (刘家新), “法律战——现代战争的第二战场” (“Legal Warfare--Modern Warfare’s Second Battlefield”), *Guangming Daily* (光明日报), Nov. 3, 2004, <https://mil.news.sina.com.cn/2004-11-03/0958239693.html>.

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

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

Figure 1: The Major Component Elements of Political Warfare



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

Examples of CCP Political Warfare Directed Against Taiwan

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

Information Manipulation

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

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

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

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

Specific Examples of Information Manipulation in Taiwan:

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

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

¹⁴ These two terms are often used interchangeably, although they mean different things. “Misinformation” is false information spread though ignorance or indifference. By contrast, “disinformation” is false information that the disseminator knows to be false, but actively promotes nonetheless—usually because of a financial or political motive. See: “Misinformation v Disinformation: What’s the Difference?,” BBC (undated), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z3hhvj6>.

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

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

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

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

“Lawfare”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gray Zone Operations

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

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

²² One clear example of this was the 2016 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (The Hague, Netherlands) that ruled for the Republic of the Philippines (RP) and against the PRC in a case brought by the RP in relation to contested maritime claims in the South China Sea. [See: Permanent Court of Arbitration, *The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of Philippines v. The People's Republic of China)*, decision issued July 12, 2016, <https://pca-cpa.org/en/cases/7/>.] The PRC has simply ignored this ruling, while maintaining its excessive territorial sovereignty claims in the region.

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

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

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

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

Economic Coercion

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

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

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

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

²⁷ Isaac Stone Fish, “How China gets American Companies to Parrot Its Propaganda,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 11, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/how-china-gets-american-companies-to-parrot-its-propaganda/2019/10/11/512f7b8c-eb73-11e9-85c0-85a098e47b37_story.html; and *Made in Hollywood, Censored by Beijing: The U.S. Film Industry and Chinese Government Influence*, PEN America, August 2020, https://pen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Made_in_Hollywood_Censored_by_Beijing_Report_FINAL.pdf.

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

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

United Front Subversion:

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

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

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

Intelligence Operations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Examples of recent PRC intelligence operations include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cyber Operations:

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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