



## **The Long Arm of China: Exporting Authoritarianism with Chinese Characteristics**

**Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

**December 13, 2017**

*Representative Christopher H. Smith  
Cochair*

This hearing is the second in a series looking at China's foreign influence operations and the impact on universally-recognized human rights. With the Congress and U.S. public focused on Russian influence operations, Chinese efforts have received little scrutiny and are not well understood. This must change.

Attempts by the Chinese government to guide, buy, or coerce political influence, control discussion of "sensitive" topics, and export its authoritarian practices globally are widespread and pervasive.

Long-time allies Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have been rocked by scandals involving Chinese sponsored influence operations targeting politicians, businesses, and academic institutions.

Australia in particular is in the midst of a national crisis and all like-minded democratic allies should be supporting their efforts to root out those elements intended to corrupt or coopt Australian political and academic institutions.

All countries pursue soft power initiatives to promote a "positive" global image and build goodwill, but the Chinese government's use of technology, coercion, pressure, and the promise of market access is unprecedented and poses clear challenges to the freedoms of democratic societies.

An example of Chinese rewards given to companies and individuals for abiding by the Chinese government's rules is the case of publisher Springer Nature, the world's largest academic book publisher.

Springer Nature removed more than 1,000 articles from the websites of the *Journal of Chinese Political Science* and *International Politics* in order to comply with China's censorship

directives and was later “rewarded” for its censorship by signing a lucrative strategic partnership with the Chinese tech giant Tencent Holdings.

In addition to academic publishers, the Chinese government is going to school on college and universities. American institutions are being seduced by the promised infusion of much-needed wealth from China.

But one always has to pay a price--play by China’s rules, don’t ruffle feathers and don’t discuss or write about “sensitive topics.” Universities committed to academic freedom are bound to run into problems eventually.

I have held two hearings on the threat to academic freedom posed by Confucius Institutes and the creation of U.S. campuses in China.

We should all be for creative research partnerships and expanding educational opportunities for U.S. students, but not at the cost of fundamental freedoms.

I have asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate academic partnerships between the U.S. colleges and the Chinese government. The first report came out last Spring.

The GAO is now in the process of conducting investigations of Confucius Institutes. I have written to all U.S. colleges with Confucius Institutes and asked them to make their contracts public and available for public inspection.

Many foreign businesses in China have already faced similar dilemmas. Some, like Apple, which recently removed from its Chinese app store applications that help users bypass China’s “Great Firewall.” The networking site LinkedIn agreed to censor content and Facebook is promising to do the same in order to get access to the Chinese market.

Chinese operations to curtail the activities of dissidents and critics of the Communist Party are also pervasive, troubling, and must be stopped. We have heard multiple stories from U.S. citizens and foreign nationals living in the U.S. about efforts to intimidate, censor, and silence them.

The case of Chinese billionaire Guo Wengui is just the latest example of egregious behavior. High-ranking Chinese security ministry officials, in the US on transit visas no less, met with Mr. Guo multiple times in order to threaten and convince him to leave the U.S.

Chinese agents have repeatedly violated U.S. sovereignty and law according to the Wall Street Journal report on the incident.

These incidents and those we will discuss today are just the tip of the iceberg.

The Commission’s 2017 Annual Report contains several recommendations to counter Chinese foreign influence operations—including expanding the mandate of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) to include Chinese government media organizations and think-tanks, expanded Internet Freedom initiatives and efforts to counter Chinese propaganda and disinformation at the State Department. I encourage those interested to look at our recommendations.

As we start to grapple with the scale and scope of Chinese influence operations, we will be looking for new legislative ideas and I hope our witnesses today can provide recommendations for the Commission's action.

We must be clear from the outset that we support better relations with the people of China and the United States. The issues we are discussing here today are part of influence operations conducted by the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government.

President Xi Jinping, who has concentrated more power than any Chinese leader since Mao, is determined to make the world safe for authoritarianism. Beijing is intent on exporting its censorship regime, intimidating dissidents and their families, sanitizing history, and stifling critical discussions of its repressive policies.

These actions pose direct threats to deeply held core values and fundamental freedoms enjoyed by all democratic societies. We must find ways to effectively and resolutely push back. Doing so should be a critical national interest.