

Open Culture Foundation deputy executive Wu Ming-hsuan (吳明璽) told a forum in Taipei on Tuesday that Beijing's "one China" principle is part of a disinformation campaign directed at harming Taiwan.

This disinformation campaign is just one part of a much larger, extremely well-coordinated, decades-long enterprise known as China's "united front."

Governments the world over are increasingly becoming aware of this.

A report by the US-based Hudson Institute think tank, released on Wednesday last week and titled The Chinese Communist Party's Foreign Interference Operations: How the US and Other Democracies Should Respond, outlines in detail the historical and current activities of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that fall under the "united front" aegis.

The report classes this basket of activities on a spectrum running from "interference" — including espionage, bribes and overseas party cells — at one extreme, to "influence" — lobbying, party-state media think tanks, student associations and university funding — on the other.

The machinery of the "united front" has the CCP Central Committee and the State Council, or Cabinet, at its center, with a series of concentric circles surrounding it: the ministries of commerce, foreign affairs, education and culture on the inner circle; followed by state-owned media, think tanks and enterprises, and Confucius Institutes; and, on the outermost circle, overseas Chinese associations, Chinese student associations, overseas higher education institutions and overseas Chinese-language media.

Foreign governments are well aware of Beijing's espionage activities and its attempts to influence policy directions to orientate them to be more favorable to Chinese interests. To this end, the US and Australia has banned the use of Chinese components in US telecommunications equipment.

Australia is in the process of introducing legislation to prevent election campaign contributions from foreign sources.

Taiwanese know of the “united front” in terms of its objective of engineering conditions conducive to eventual unification with China. Its broader aim is being operated globally: to influence the narrative in the eyes of members of the Chinese diaspora and the governments of the countries in which they have settled. The ultimate goal is to shape a narrative favorable to the CCP and commandeer overseas democratic institutions and systems so that they serve this narrative.

The report focuses on “united front” tactics influencing this narrative in the US. It identifies independently owned Chinese-language media, higher education and academic institutions, US companies with ties to China, mainstream media, overseas Chinese groups and US politicians as targets for leveraging this narrative.

Much of Taiwan's efforts to increase its international profile, retain diplomatic ties and emphasize its value as a democracy are being severely undermined by the “united front” tactics aimed at shaping the narrative in the way Beijing wants it to be seen.

Espionage and influence peddling are dangerous; for Taiwan, Beijing's shaping of the narrative is subtle and existential, as it seeks to deny Taiwan's efforts to present the reality of its sovereign existence.

The report made a chilling point when it said: “The traditional assumption was that engaging and trading with China would lead it to become more liberal and even democratic. In 2018, it is clear that such a transformation is not happening.”

It said that the situation is reversed: “Initially, democracies wanted to export liberal values and help build civil society in China. Now we need to defend these values on home ground.”

It seems as if other nations are waking up to a threat that many in Taiwan have been laboring under for years.

## World waking up to Taiwan's truth

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
Thursday, 28 June 2018 00:09

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2018/06/28](#)