

Chinese infiltration not unnoticed

Written by Parris Chang 珊珊
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The National Security Strategy report released on Dec. 18 last year by US President Donald Trump's administration contains a section that few people have noticed or discussed, in which it says that the US must make efforts to counter China's infiltration operations in the US.

The US National Security Council is alarmed by China's use of financial, political and other means to manipulate and control US academia, think tanks, media and Hollywood producers, and it has established a working group to investigate and plan how to counter Beijing's attempts.

There are 350,000 Chinese studying at US universities, accounting for one-third of all international students in the nation. The Chinese government encourages them to join Chinese student organizations at their universities, which are used by behind-the-scenes Chinese Communist Party (CCP) organizations to direct and control them.

The Office of Chinese Language Council International, known as Hanban, which is subordinate to the Chinese Ministry of Education, has worked with US universities, high schools and some towns and cities to set up several hundred Confucius Institutes in the US.

The purported aim of these institutes is to teach Chinese language and spread Chinese culture, but their real mission is to brainwash US students and promote the CCP's political goals.

Some educational institutions, including the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University, have closed their Confucius Institutes on the grounds that they were operating under false pretenses and obstructing academic freedom.

Over the years, China has been acquiring US companies, especially those related to advanced technology and defense. This has caused alarm bells to ring in US national security departments.

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The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which is responsible for US security implications of foreign investments, closely monitors acquisitions of US companies by Chinese capital and has blocked several attempts by Huawei Technologies Co, which has connections with the People's Liberation Army, to enter the US market.

Quite a few US think tanks have also been tainted by Chinese money. Under the pretext of funding research into China, government-controlled Chinese think tanks, as well as companies with close ties to the Beijing authorities, provide funding for US think tanks to engage in cooperative research.

US National Security Council officials say the findings of such projects are likely to be biased.

Beijing also uses financial means to interfere on a large scale in Australian politics. For example, Australian Senator Sam Dastyari, of the opposition Labor Party, has been accused of accepting political donations from a Chinese businessman and of advocating and implementing China's foreign policies.

Faced with a tide of criticism, Australian Labor Party leader Bill Shorten criticized Dastyari.

Shorten said that "his judgement has let him down," and forced Dastyari to resign from his post of deputy opposition whip and from his membership of Senate committees.

China also uses so-called "soft power" to interfere in Australian academia. It sends students to study in Australian universities and sets up CCP organizations within Chinese student associations to control them.

This Chinese cultural "invasion" is seen as a fuse that could spark clashes between communities in Australia.

In November last year, publication of Australian academic Clive Hamilton's book *Silent*

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Invasion: How China Is Turning Australia into a Puppet State, which presents his research into how Beijing is extending its influence in Australia, was put on hold shortly before it was scheduled to go to press, on the grounds that the publisher was worried that it would upset Beijing.

This move was seen as an example of interference and ideological censorship by the Chinese government that threatens Australian academia and freedom of expression.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has said that “Foreign powers are making unprecedented and increasingly sophisticated attempts to influence the political process, both here and abroad.”

He also said that this was making Australians feel anxious.

Turnbull has proposed legislation to ban political donations from abroad and foreigners’ interference in politics, and to stipulate that people who work and lobby for foreign interests must register as such.

A Chinese embassy spokesman responded by accusing the Australian government of being anti-China and said that news about “so-called Chinese influence and infiltration in Australia” was “made up out of thin air” and “reflected a typical anti-China hysteria.”

In a news conference on Dec. 8 last year, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Geng Shuang (耿爽) said: “We are shocked by the Australian leader’s remarks, which show a lack of principle and simply pander to those irresponsible reports by some Australian media. Imbued with bias toward China, these groundless and unfounded remarks can sabotage China-Australia relations and are detrimental to the foundation of mutual trust and cooperation. We are strongly dissatisfied with those remarks and have lodged stern representations with the Australian side.”

New Zealand has also been seriously affected by Chinese infiltration. After it came into government in 2008, the National Party, quickly intensified its relations with Beijing in various

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ways, such as supporting China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

At least 10 former National Party lawmakers, Cabinet officials or their spouses have since become senior executives of Chinese companies or banks in New Zealand.

Even former New Zealand prime minister John Key is taking part in China-related commercial projects, and an unnamed Chinese buyer purchased Key's private residence for NZ\$20 million (US\$14.4 million), more than the market price.

Yang Jian (杨坚), a member of New Zealand's parliament who was born and grew up in China, has been investigated by the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service. Masquerading as an academic, he was an instructor at a well-known Chinese military spy school.

He joined the New Zealand National Party, and quickly rose to prominence after becoming a lawmaker in 2011. He became a member of various committees, including the foreign affairs, defense and trade committees, and has on several occasions accompanied New Zealand's prime minister on visits to Beijing.

University of Canterbury professor Anne-Marie Brady, who is also a fellow of the Wilson Center in Washington, last year published a paper on the Chinese government's influence on New Zealand, in which she warns that the CCP's political infiltration is already affecting the nation's values and democratic ideals.

Her report recommends that New Zealand follow Australia's example by paying serious heed to China's political influence and infiltration and taking measures to counter it.

The report also says that the CCP's overseas infiltration has increased since Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) became China's paramount leader, and that its aim is to undermine Western countries' national sovereignty and change their political systems.

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According to reports published in The Economist and the New York Times, Beijing is not always successful in its efforts to infiltrate democratic nations or take advantage of the openness of the US, Canadian and European markets to make large-scale acquisitions of companies in those nations.

As well as the US, Australia and New Zealand, national security agencies in Germany and Canada have sounded the alarm about China's malevolent infiltration and political maneuvers and have begun to take countermeasures.

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Translated by Julian Clegg

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