



How the Chinese Communist Party Disrupts the Whole of American Society

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In the spring of 2024, pro-Palestinian protests erupted across the campuses of American colleges. The disruption they caused was substantial as they blocked instruction, took over educational buildings, damaged infrastructure, and threatened students of Jewish descent.

After clearing out a pro-Palestinian barricade at Columbia University's Hamilton Hall, the New York Police Department found that the protesters were surprisingly well-equipped, with industrial-grade chains, gas masks, ear plugs, goggles, hammers, knives, and ropes. They also discovered that of all the arrests they made at Columbia, 25% were not students. At the City University of New York, 60% of the arrested protesters were not students.

Credit for these protests was claimed by a coalition of activist groups called Shut It Down for Palestine (SID4P, 为巴勒斯坦关闭一切), which called upon their followers to "mobilize in the belly of the beast" to "comba[t] material support for Zionism and weake[n] the handmaiden of U.S. global imperialism."

Further investigation, however, reveals that many of these seemingly grassroots groups

share a common funder: Neville Roy Singham, a Shanghai-based American tech multimillionaire who has had a long history of collaboration with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中共).

From 2001 to 2008, he served as a consultant to Huawei, a telecommunications firm that has been blacklisted around the world for concerns about CCP espionage. In 2019, he began a consulting business with Chinese partners who are active in the CCP's propaganda apparatus. In July of 2023, Singham was seen at a Shanghai strategic communications conference hosted by the CCP. Later the same year, India's Enforcement Directorate summoned him for questioning regarding NewsClick, an Indian media outlet he owns that was raided in 2021 for suspicions of promoting CCP propaganda with CCP money.

The group of organizations funded by Singham, dubbed the "Singham Network," have been found to be "funneling undisclosed funds and disseminating CCP-supported agendas and narratives into the United States since at least 2017," according to the Network Contagion Research Institute.

"This network has played an increasingly



significant role in fueling a more radical pro-Palestinian activism,” the institute further concluded, pointing out Singham’s heavy financial ties to at least three of the seven groups that make up SID4P.

As a part of its unrestricted warfare tactics, the CCP has long been infiltrating various aspects of American society in an effort to expand its influence and disrupt the American way of life. It has done this under the cover of an array of innocuous-seeming organizations and individuals that have embedded themselves within the fabric of Western societies. This has not only caused significant damage to these societies, but also led many people into becoming the CCP’s unwitting pawns.

The nucleus of infiltration: the United Front Work Department

Since the 1930s, the CCP has had a department expressly responsible for promoting its influence outside of its own jurisdiction. On January 5, 1939, the Central Secretariat of the CCP officially established the United Front Work Department (UFWD, 中共統戰部) as an arm within the Party. This

department was responsible for creating a “united front” of CCP operations among all aspects of Chinese society—such as religious groups, ethnic minorities, other political parties, business owners, and non-CCP affiliated literati—as well as in overseas societies.

Evidence of these operations lies within the UFWD’s own stated goals. Regarding ethnic and religious minorities, it seeks to maintain connections with representatives of ethnic and religious minorities, “coordinate related departments in nurturing and promoting cadres within ethnic and religious minorities,” and “coordinate related departments in conducting *douzheng* against the Dalai Lama Group and other enemy forces within and outside of the country that seek to divide the motherland.”

Douzheng (鬥爭), often translated as “struggle,” is a specialized CCP term meaning an attempt to dismantle an organization it views as an enemy.

As for other nations and regions, the UFWD aims to “launch work operations that have the unification of the motherland as the primary priority,” and to establish pro-CCP connections within Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan that can further the CCP’s goals.

Chinese emigrants to other nations are also within the UFWD’s purview, with the UFWD being responsible for communications between “representatives” of Chinese expat groups, monitoring the “status” of expat groups, and for promoting its propaganda via expat groups. In fact, a separate stated goal of the UFWD is to “launch propaganda operations” both within and outside of China’s borders.

Foreign relations experts around the world have recognized the UFWD as an extension of the CCP into other nations, and potentially a source of danger to these other nations. “China uses ‘United Front’ work to co-opt and neutralize sources of potential opposition to the CCP’s policies and authority,” describes the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission in its 2022 report to Congress.

“The united front system’s reach beyond the borders of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—such as into foreign political parties, diaspora communities and multinational corporations—is an exportation of the CCP’s political system,” states the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. “This undermines social cohesion, exacerbates racial tension, influences politics, harms media integrity,



facilitates espionage, and increases unsupervised technology transfer.”

Furthermore, it notes that because the CCP uses seemingly benign organizations to perform its united front work, its influence is often “covert” or “deceptive” and difficult to trace. In the same 2022 report, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission recommends that Congress keep an “unclassified directory” of the CCP’s apparatus of control that includes “organizations affiliated with the United Front Work Department.”

Through following the movement of these pro-CCP groups, we can shine a light on several of the UFWD’s key strategies for disrupting overseas societies: funding disruptive groups, elite capture, espionage, and media manipulation.

Funding social unrest

Long before the Singham Network, the CCP has been linked financially to groups in the United States that seek to cause social unrest at scale.

In 2020, the Black Lives Matter (BLM, 黑

命貴) movement led to protests across the nation due to the perception that African Americans were being unfairly subjected to police brutality. Though many of these protests had a noble goal, this did not stop a significant portion of them from turning destructive. An estimate from the Insurance Information Institute put the total amount of insured property loss from the unrest at anywhere between \$1 to \$2 billion—making BLM the most destructive civil unrest episode in American history.

One of the founders of BLM, Alicia Garza, began a venture called the Black Futures Lab to support these protest efforts. An investigation by the Heritage Foundation discovered that strangely enough, the Black Futures Lab’s donation webpage says that all of its donations are processed through an organization called the China Progressive Association, or CPA (中國進步協會).

According to a Stanford University paper, the CPA “began as a Leftist, pro-People’s Republic of China organization, promoting awareness of mainland China’s revolutionary thought and workers’ rights, and dedicated to self-determination, community control, and ‘serving the people.’” It also works with “other pro-PRC groups with-

in the U.S.” to further its goals. The Boston branch of the CPA has hosted flag-raising events in honor of the CCP that were attended by high-level CCP officials. The CCP’s state-run media outlet, *China Daily*, has also praised the San Francisco branch of the CPA for its participation in the BLM protests.

During Xi Jinping’s visit to San Francisco for the APEC Summit in November of 2023, the *Washington Post* found that at least 35 pro-CCP Chinese diaspora groups were mobilized to disrupt the protests of anti-CCP groups. The *Post* noted that they used a variety of violent tactics against anti-CCP protesters, including pepper spray and physical attacks with blunt force weapons. They also stole the personal belongings of anti-CCP protesters.

WeChat messages obtained by the *Post* also confirmed that the Chinese Consulate in Los Angeles had provided financial incentives for these diaspora groups by paying for their hotels and meals in San Francisco.

Buying up American elites

Traces of UFWD activity have also been detected in support for people in key po-



sitions of power in American society. Pro-CCP groups will often give money or other material rewards to individuals for acting according to the CCP's wishes, effectively cultivating its own agents within foreign societies that appear to act independently,

In a 2024 hearing, Dr. Robert Atkinson, president of a Washington D.C. think tank, testified in Congress to the pervasiveness of elite capture by the CCP. When questioned by Representative Andy Biggs as to who the CCP was trying to “capture,” Dr. Atkinson gave the following response: “All. Pretty much all the elites, they try.”

A 2023 investigation by *Newsweek* discovered some of these capture efforts through UFWD-linked funding to candidates in New York. From 1990 to 2023, over \$1 million in campaign donations to New York politicians at the federal, state, and city levels were traced to UFWD-linked groups and individuals.

Representative Grace Meng, one of the focal points of the investigation, had accepted over \$270,000 of UFWD-linked contributions to her campaigns since 2006. In particular, she had accepted thousands of dollars in donations from one An Quanzhong—a

Chinese businessman who was sentenced to 20 months for his participation in Operation Fox Hunt, a CCP ploy to coerce overseas dissidents to return to China. She had also declared an “An Quanzhong Day” in her congressional district to honor this donor.

Henan Chinese Associates USA (美國河南同鄉會), an expat group associated with the UFWD, also credited itself for helping Meng win a New York Assembly seat in 2008.

American academia is also not immune to CCP influence. In just one high-profile case, Harvard nanoscientist Dr. Charles Lieber was arrested in 2020 for making false statements to federal authorities about his involvement in the CCP's Thousand Talents Plan (TTP, 千人計劃) and tax fraud.

Dr. Lieber had served as principal investigator of his own research group at Harvard, which had received \$15 million in federal funds from various U.S. government agencies from 2008 to 2019. However, he later became a strategic scientist at China's Wuhan University of Technology (WUT) and a contracted participant of the CCP's TTP from 2012 to 2015.

The TTP is an initiative which aims to

attract foreign scholars into working for the CCP and has a direct tie to the UFWD. “The UFWD's Western Returned Scholars Association (WRSA, 欧美同学会) runs the official association for participants in the Thousand Talents Plan,” notes the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

As part of his three-year contract, Dr. Lieber received “a salary of up to \$50,000 a month, living expenses of up to \$150,000, and approximately \$1.5 million to conduct research at the WUT,” according to a Department of Justice report. He hid this employment from Harvard University.

When Dr. Lieber was interviewed by officials at the Department of Defense in April of 2018, he lied and said that he had never been asked to participate in the TTP. Again in 2019, he “caused” Harvard to falsely tell the National Institutes of Health that he was not, and never had been, a member of the TTP. Both U.S. agencies had funded Dr. Lieber's research.

He was convicted in 2023 of making false statements to federal authorities, for hiding the Chinese bank account he used to receive TTP payments, and for falsifying his tax returns—a total of six felonies. The presid-



ing judge sentenced him to a two-day detention, two years of supervised release with six months of home confinement, and a total of \$83,600 in fines and restitution.

Even after serving his sentence, Dr. Lieber continues to work with Chinese universities and is now a chair professor at Tsinghua University's Shenzhen International Graduate School.

Finding eyes and ears outside Mainland China

Although the Ministry of State Security (MSS) is the agency primarily responsible for the CCP's spying operations, the UFWD also coordinates a fair amount of espionage through its covert overseas networks.

Two high-profile cases in the United States have convicted TTP members of transmitting American trade secrets to Chinese entities. The first individual, Xiarong You, was convicted in 2021. She was a polymer scientist who had been employed at Coca-Cola and subsequently the Eastman Chemical Company from the years 2012 to 2018.

However, during her tenure, she had used

trade secrets from the two companies to begin a competitor of her own in China—the Weihai Jinhong Group, which received millions in funding from the Chinese government, including from the TTP. These trade secrets cost several American companies over \$120 million in research and development.

“You’s Thousand Talents Program application and other evidence presented at trial showed that she intended to benefit not only Weihai Jinhong Group, but also the governments of China, the Chinese province of Shandong, the Chinese city of Weihai and the Chinese Communist Party,” said the Department of Justice in a press release about her case. You was sentenced to 14 years in prison, 3 years of supervised release, and a \$200,000 fine.

In March of 2022, Xiaoqing Zheng was sentenced to two years in prison for conspiring to commit economic espionage. Zheng, a former General Electric (GE) engineer for 10 years, had stolen GE’s designs for both ground-based and aviation turbines and given them to Chinese universities and companies.

“This is a case of textbook economic espio-

nage. Zheng exploited his position of trust, betrayed his employer and conspired with the government of China to steal innovative American technology,” said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division.

Another UFWD-managed source for espionage comes from its control of overseas Chinese student and scholar associations (CSSAs, 中華學生學者聯合會). “Numerous Chinese students and scholars associations, which are united front groups for Chinese international students, have been involved in suppressing academic freedom and mobilising students for nationalistic activities,” notes the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

Politico magazine once interviewed a former U.S. counterintelligence individual who spoke of a case where a CSSA-affiliated graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, “was working for the MSS, and reporting on the activities of other Chinese students on campus.”

Christine Fang, a Chinese national who was enrolled at California State University East Bay, was the president of the school’s Chinese Student Association. She left the



United States abruptly in 2015 due to an FBI investigation into her activities, which involved building relationships with American politicians, including romantic and sexual ones. U.S. officials told *Axios* that Fang was “focused on gathering political intelligence and conducting influence operations in the Bay Area.”

Manipulating the media

One of the stated goals of the UFWD is to further the CCP’s propaganda, and it also does this using a variety of methods. For instance, the UFWD operates the China News Service, a network of media outlets that disseminate the CCP’s media talking points to the Chinese diaspora.

Notable members of this network include *Qiaobao* (僑報), a Chinese-language newspaper in the United States, and the Pacific Media Group (太平洋传媒集团) based in Australia.

Recently, the CCP has also been discovered to be injecting UFWD-linked personnel into jobs at Western media outlets to manipulate narratives. An article series published in the *New York Times* reiterates many of the

CCP’s key propaganda talking points about Falun Gong—a religious minority that it has tried to exterminate for 26 years. The lead reporter on this series, Nicole Hong, is the daughter of a known UFWD operative who has previously participated in the CCP’s propaganda operations in the United States.

George Hong, or Hong Zhaohui, has been an honorary director of the WRSA. In 1995, he met with Zhang Weichao, the deputy director of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (a UFWD-affiliated organization that was subsumed into the UFWD in 2018) to speak about furthering Chinese language education in the United States. After the visit, 4,500 sets of the standardized textbooks used in China’s schools were sent to the United States. These textbooks were saturated with CCP propaganda, from false portrayals of the Japanese to glorifying accounts of the CCP’s own heroes.

For his dedication to his work for the Party, Hong was received twice in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing by former CCP head Jiang Zemin, and photographed with the leader.

These tasks and incentives match the pattern of how the UFWD works with mem-

bers of the Chinese diaspora, according to Yaqiu Wang, research director for China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan at Freedom House. “People join [the UFWD] for fellowship, out of a misplaced sense of patriotism,” Wang said. “People also join because it gets them a chance to be received by high-level Chinese officials when they return to China to visit, even including [the top leader.] They want this kind of prestige.”

In fact, Hong’s daughter uses several propaganda techniques in constructing her article series. Her portrayal of Falun Gong’s key beliefs relies on a series of straw men obtained by taking teachings out of context and by people who tried the practice and decided it was not a fit for them. There is not a single instance where a current practitioner or an expert in Asian religions is consulted. She massively downplays the brutality of the persecution—which human rights experts around the world have concurred includes forced organ harvesting—using a singular source who is employed by an academic department investigated by the Department of Justice for not disclosing CCP funds.

Perhaps most shocking of all, the source that appears to have pitched her the story is a potential school shooter identified by the



FBI. This potential shooter has repeatedly expressed a desire to “destroy” the Falun Gong movement, has made threats against two Falun Gong-affiliated religious schools, and is a self-described “sociopath.” After making these threats, he was arrested and is now facing two counts of illegal weapons possession.

Over a period of seven months, this potential shooter has made posts on social media detailing his tight collaboration with Hong’s daughter. To date, neither the *Times* nor Hong’s daughter have disputed his claims, raising concerns that this publicity will encourage the potential shooter’s violent tendencies and instigate an attempt on the Falun Gong schools.

Building an immune system to CCP influence

American officials have been sounding the alarm about the extent of the CCP’s influence operations in the United States and taking measures to mitigate the disruption it can cause to the U.S.

“Communist China is infiltrating United

States businesses, universities, and local and state governments. We cannot continue ignoring this threat,” said Secretary of State Marco Rubio, back when he was still a U.S. senator in 2024.

Representative John Moolenaar, Chairman of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, remarked that he was appalled by the depth of the CCP’s infiltration into the United States. “It is shocking—at the highest levels of state government. The Chinese Communist Party isn’t simply way over there. They are on our shores working to subvert the American experience,” he said.

“The Chinese Communist Party is a huge threat to America and a huge threat to our government. Does anyone disagree that as we speak, the Chinese Communist Party is trying to infiltrate our government, various government agencies, and our political system in general?” asked Representative Jamie Raskin during a House Oversight Committee meeting.

Most recently, Secretary Rubio made headlines when he announced on May 28 that he was going to begin revoking visas for Chinese national students who had known

CCP ties or were studying in sensitive fields. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security also revoked Harvard University’s Student and Exchange Visitor Program certification on May 22, citing concerns about Harvard’s links to the CCP and affiliated organizations. This order is currently being challenged in court.

In his Senate confirmation hearing for Secretary of State, Rubio emphasized the need to take immediate action and a whole-of-society approach against CCP infiltration.

“The Chinese believe the U.S. is in inevitable decline, and they are on the rise. And because of our own actions, a lot of that is true. If we don’t change course, we are going to live in a world where much of what matters to us in life—from our security to our health—will be dependent on whether the Chinese allow us to have it or not,” said Rubio.