

Party faithful: How China spies

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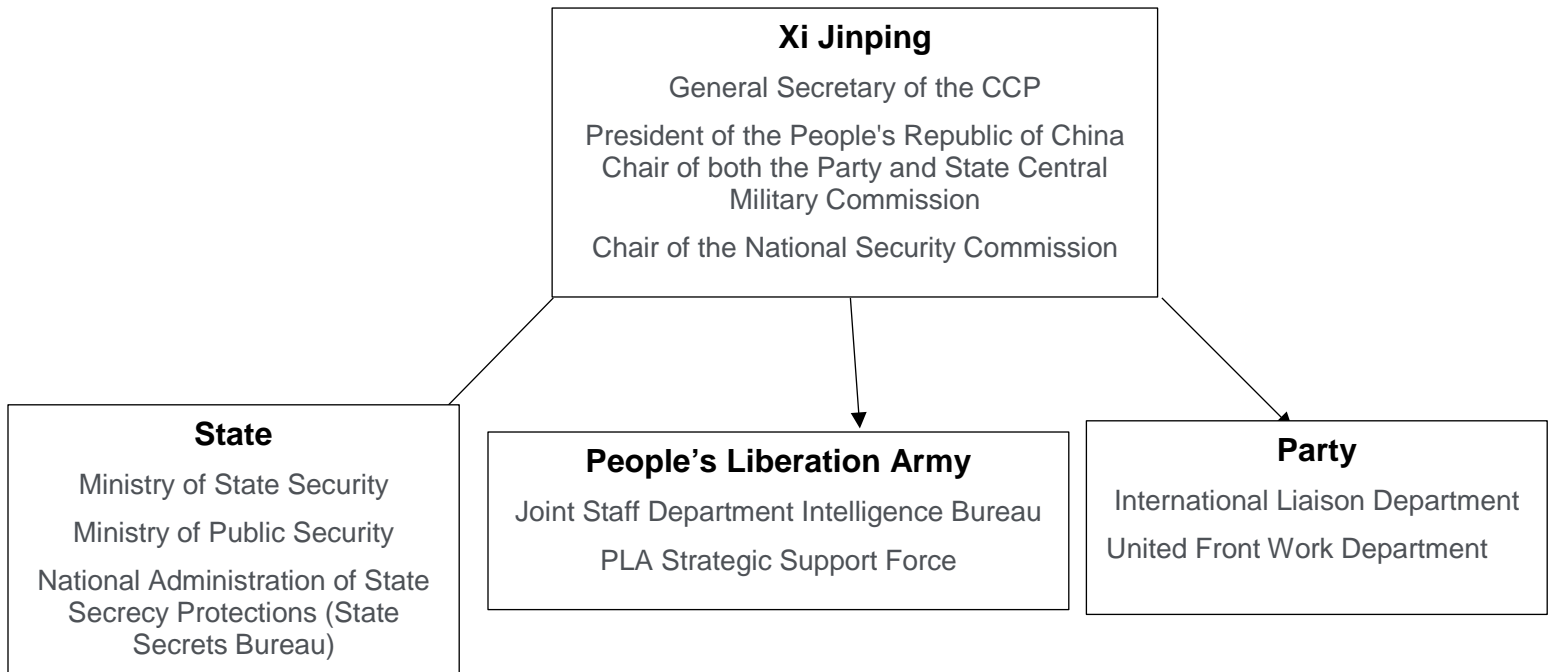


Figure 1: China's Party-State-Military intelligence organisations

All the major—and many of the minor—powers of the world run spy agencies, and they use these as a tool of their foreign and defence policy. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government has an extensive spy network - it has the [world's largest number of personnel engaged in intelligence-gathering, counter-intelligence and espionage](#) – but its approach to these activities is inherently different to that of other states. The PRC has separate intelligence units that belong to the party, state and military – and the core task of all of them is to maintain CCP rule. This is a defining divergence from the intelligence agencies in liberal democracies, whose purpose is not to support one political party or political leader but to focus on national security. This distinction, along with the CCP's broad approach to covert activities, which makes extensive use of assets, disinformation, 'useful idiots' and proxies, makes its foreign spying and political interference very challenging for traditional counter-intelligence measures to address.

Decades of post-Cold War complacency, of arrogance about the superiority of liberal democracies over communist systems, as well as cutbacks in the public sector, has left the foreign targets of CCP espionage unaware and unprepared. After 9/11, many Western intelligence agencies almost exclusively focused on counter-terrorism. NATO states have

also been focused on the threat from Russia. Most foreign CCP targets have only recently begun to address concerns about China's covert activities.

Yet the resources and expertise capable of assessing and addressing Chinese espionage is alarmingly thin across the Five-Eyes-and-partners intelligence agencies. China conducts in-depth country-by-country studies of its foreign adversaries, even down to the level of the political attitude of China Watchers. However, among the targets of this analysis, basic knowledge about the organisational structure of the CCP intelligence system is still lacking. US Secretary of State, and former head of the CIA, Mike Pompeo inadvertently revealed this problem in a telling error he made in a February 2020 speech. Pompeo told US governors that the Chinese People's Association For Friendship and Foreign Countries ([中国人民对外友好协会](#), CPAFFC, commonly known as the Friendship Association, or Youxie) which had compiled dossiers on them and assessed their attitudes to China "is the [public face of the Chinese Communist Party's official foreign influence agency](#), the United Front Work Department". Pompeo made some important points in the speech about China's political interference activities in the US, but he was wrong on the Friendship Association's supervising body. The Friendship Association has three "mothers-in-law" (to use the parlance of the CCP system), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (which *is* affiliated with the United Front Work Department), and the CCP International Liaison Department. The Friendship Association, *does* engage in united front work, as [all CCP organs do, as do all CCP members](#), but it is not "the public face of the United Front Work Department".

Veteran Jesuit China Watcher Father László Ladány once remarked that the CCP was based on a "[triple foundation](#)": ideology, the power of the Party, and the secret police. In essence he was paraphrasing Mao Zedong, 毛泽东, who championed the CCP's three [magic weapons](#): CCP ideological discipline, the CCP military, and the CCP's underground work—what it calls united front work. The CCP early on recognised the necessity of intelligence and espionage in achieving its political agenda. Mao and other revolutionary leaders of the CCP honed their asymmetric warfare skills during the decades of the Chinese civil war and then the PRC's international isolation from 1949-1971. Mao also used the Party-State intelligence agencies in his inner-party struggle for dominance.

As the PRC's global ambitions have increased, so has the significance of its intelligence activities to the contest for global power. The Covid-19 pandemic has strengthened the relative hard power of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Yet a report by a [PRC intelligence sector think tank](#) has warned that the CCP government's attempt to cover up the early stages of the epidemic and corner global supplies of PPE has made China politically weak and risks global pushback on their policies and agenda. The Xi government has tried to seize control of the global narrative on Covid-19, and has tightly censored information about the situation in China, while also aggressively promoting disinformation internationally. The Chinese military has taken advantage of the weakness of other states to assert its position in the South China Sea, India, and Taiwan with shows of force. China's cyber-attacks against Taiwan and other vulnerable states have also increased. China's political interference against various foreign governments' activities have become increasingly [brazen](#). And the government has used [economic coercion](#) to

intimidate states like Australia who have spoken up for Taiwan at the WHO, or asked for an international inquiry into the origins of Covid-19. China's multiple intelligence agencies have a role in all these actions.

The Party-State-Military-Market nexus

While there is a plethora of books and material on Moscow's and Washington's intelligence agencies, little is known – at least publicly - about the many organisations involved in the CCP's intelligence-gathering, surveillance and espionage. This helps keep their activities in foreign countries under the radar, and assists in plausible deniability. For anyone interested in contemporary geopolitics, not understanding the CCP and how it rules China is akin to being unable to read and write. CCP literacy requires learning the "ABCs" of CCP spy agencies.

The Xi government's covert operations draw on the resources of the CCP, the state, the PLA, and the private sector in China, as well as Chinese companies abroad, what I call the [Party-State-Military-Market nexus](#). The most infamous example of these relationships is the company [Huawei](#) Technologies, which has extremely close links to the PLA and the Chinese Ministry of State Security, while its ownership structure via employee trade union membership puts it squarely within the CCP United Front Work Department.

China has a vast number of personnel engaged in [intelligence-gathering, counter-surveillance, and espionage](#), and has [more professional intelligence agents operating overseas](#) than any other country, from sleeper agents (沉底鱼) to those sent abroad for short missions. CCP espionage frequently uses the cover of journalism, academia, business, government-to-government exchanges, and [CCP officials' group "study tours" abroad](#). Think tank partnerships, city-to-city "friendship" links (which are run by the aforementioned Chinese People's Association For Friendship and Foreign Countries), and academic conferences are also utilised, as are proxy [diaspora](#) organisations. CCP intelligence operations have also always [cooperated with secret societies, triads](#), and criminal gangs. Indeed, the doyen of China Watchers, Pierre Ryckmans observed that the CCP "[is in essence a secret society](#)". In its methods and mentality it presents a striking resemblance to an underworld mob".

China's National Intelligence Law (2017) requires all Chinese citizens and companies, as well as foreigners and foreign companies operating in China, to provide access, cooperation, and support for China's intelligence-gathering activities. In the PRC, like the Soviet Union, the legal system is a means to control the population via "rule by law" (依法治国) rather than rule of law. The new National Intelligence Law simply codifies existing practices. CCP intelligence agencies have historically used tactics of [blackmail](#) and other forms of coercion to develop asset relationships, as well as [bribery](#), exploiting individual egotism, and other [psychological weaknesses](#). [Ideology is much less a motivator](#) for cooperation than might be supposed.

It is very important when discussing CCP intelligence agencies' significant use of civilian assets and proxies to understand that the majority of PRC citizens and the Chinese diaspora are the victims of CCP control efforts. Those participating in CCP espionage are a tiny percentage of the overall population. It is also important to make a clear distinction between the CCP government; China as a nation; and the Chinese people. Do not lump them all together as “the Chinese”—as some politicians and journalists tend to do. Misspeaking in this way only plays into [CCP narratives](#) which shut down discussion on matters of concern to do with CCP policies by labelling them as “xenophobia” (排外主义), “(racial) prejudice” (偏见), “anti-China” (反华), “demonising China” (中国的妖魔化), “China threat” (中国威胁论), “Cold War thinking” (冷战思想), and “McCarthyism” (麦卡锡主义).

China's broad use of non-professional assets for intelligence work and espionage has often been described as a “mosaic” collection approach, while some use the term “a thousand grains of sand”. However, Peter Mattis, a leading author on China's intelligence services, has warned that over-use of these concepts risks implicating a vast amount of China-connected activity that may or may not be related to espionage or the CCP government's objectives, and that it also under-estimates the activities of China's professional spies—who are numerous even without the help of civilian assets.

Xi's power

Unlike other international spying agencies, the Chinese intelligence organisations are highly politicised and indoctrinated. Their loyalty is to the CCP, and individual leaders within the CCP, not Chinese society. PRC intelligence agencies are tasked with monitoring the Chinese population as much as they are with monitoring the outside world. Intelligence personnel are almost always CCP members, as with any sensitive position in China. Understanding CCP intelligence organisations' agenda necessitates engaging with the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist, and now also Xi-ist, inspired world view that they operate within. This is not hard to locate, promoting the CCP political message is a key task of the PRC media, the so-called “tongue and throat” (喉舌) of the Party. [It is not possible to understand the CCP and their policies unless you read their documents](#), preferably in the original Chinese. Why this is still so rare in China-watching is very surprising.

The CCP groups all government agencies and societal activities within policy groupings, in Chinese known as the *xitong* 系统. The State intelligence agencies are part of the politics and law policy grouping (政法系统) under the leadership of Guo Shengkun 郭声琨, who is not a member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC). This means Guo ultimately reports to Xi Jinping, as Xi leads the Central National Security Commission (中央国家安全委员会), which oversees all the agencies within China's intelligence sector as well as many others with a national security function (国家安全系统). The leader of the politics and law *xitong* in the Hu Jintao era, Zhou Yongkang 周永康, was on the PBSC, but was accused of plotting a coup just before Xi became General Secretary in 2012. Guo's lower status likely reflects this history. [Guo is affiliated with the Jiang Zemin faction](#)

within the CCP, which has many senior leaders placed throughout China's security organisations.

The PLA is the CCP's military, not a State military. It has parallel structures to CCP organs such as propaganda and organisation. PLA intelligence organisations are under the direct leadership of Xi, as he heads the Central Military Commission. External-facing intelligence agencies are part of the foreign affairs policy grouping (外事系统) also led by Xi, as head of the [Central Foreign Affairs Commission](#), which is one office-two-nameplates with the National Security Commission. As General Secretary of the CCP, Xi also supervises CCP organisations with an intelligence function such as the Central United Front Work Department and the International Liaison Department.

Xi is the most powerful CCP leader in the past forty years, and the fact that since coming to power in 2012 he has steadily been able to place his people at the top of all the core intelligence agencies, as well as over the [propaganda and thought work xitong](#) is a sign of his political strength. However, it is not a guarantee of absolute control of the security agencies, who have been seeded from top to bottom by the allies of Xi's rivals in the CCP, and in any case, by design, operate by their own rules. Yet no other senior CCP leader has had this much control over all the security agencies since Mao.

Xi had early exposure to both the CCP and military intelligence systems in his first job after graduating from Qinghua University. From (1979-1982) Xi was private secretary to Geng Biao, who led the CCP International Liaison Department (1970-1979), and was Secretary General of the CCP Central Military Commission (1979-1981) and Minister of National Defence (1981-1983). Today, Xi's position at the top of multiple intelligence-related policy groupings means that there is a much higher level of policy coordination and policy prioritisation on covert activities than ever before. Previously responsibilities were more divided and central leadership decision-making was made by consensus. In the Mao, Deng, Jiang, and Hu eras, there was a considerable degree of stove-piping and institutional and factional rivalries among the CCP's spy agencies. Xi has instituted major reforms, which have helped consolidating his own power. One of the big changes was the establishment of the Central National Security Commission (CNSC). At the first meeting of the CNSC in 2014, Xi stated that China faces three great threats: invasion, subversion, and division. The Xi administration uses intelligence collection, counter-intelligence and espionage to counter these threats, which are both domestic and external. The CCP's [concept of national security has significantly changed](#) under Xi. It now incorporates the security of all aspects of China's political, social and economic life, including its culture, science and technology, ecology, resources, and nuclear capabilities.

The agencies

There is some over-lap between the various *xitong*, such as the multiple agencies that oversee the Friendship Association, which is in both the foreign affairs *xitong* and the united front work *xitong*. Intelligence operatives are often transferred between roles within Party and State intelligence agencies, though the military agencies tend to be more separate, as is the case with [propaganda and disinformation](#) activities.

The means for coordinating the entities engaged in intelligence and espionage is [common throughout the CCP-led political system](#): they are under a unified leadership, coordinated, but working across a range of sectors (统一领导，分口管理，分级负责，协调配合). Below I highlight some of the functions and leadership of China's main intelligence agencies.

The **Ministry of State Security** (国家安全部, MSS) is a government ministry under the State Council tasked with national security and counter-intelligence. The current Minister of State Security is Chen Wenqing 陈文清, who was formerly in the Ministry of Public Security, then in 2012 after the 18th Party Congress, he became a deputy-secretary in the CCP's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI). Xi Jinping has used CCDI for an ongoing anti-corruption campaign that has helped diminish his Party rivals and built the Xi faction. In 2015, Chen was appointed Party Secretary of MSS, and in 2016 he was appointed Minister of State Security as well.

Since 2016, MSS has been divided into two core agencies: the National Counterintelligence Agency and the National Intelligence Agency, but this does not appear to have altered the departmental arrangements. Modelled on the KGB, MSS is divided into various sections such as the International Intelligence Division; Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau Division; and the USA Division. Of particular note are its Counterintelligence Division, used for spying on foreigners in China; the External Security and Anti-Reconnaissance Division, which monitors Chinese students and scholars abroad; the Social Research Division, which conducts public opinion polls on the Chinese population; the Imaging Intelligence Division, which engages in hacking, and the Enterprises Division, which manages MSS front companies. The public face of MSS is the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICR)—the organisation which assessed the PRC as politically weak after Covid-19. CICR performs open source research and translation and CICR analysts meet with foreign academics and travel abroad as visiting fellows. The MSS has historically been more restricted than other agencies from sending agents outside China.

Since [2012](#), the **Ministry of Public Security**, China's domestic police agency, has also been tasked with national security issues such as dissent in China Mainland, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, as well as counter-intelligence activities. Guo Shengkun was head of MPS from 2012-2017; and the current leader is Zhao Kezhi 赵克志. Zhao is the Director of the National Anti-Terrorism Leading Small Group. MSS also has representation on this leadership group. Zhao worked for many years with Xi Jinping's close friend [Li Zhanshu](#) 栗战书, who has been on the PBSC since the 19th Party Congress in 2017, and since 2013 has been director of the Office of the National Security Committee.

MPS monitors the activities of the foreign population in China. They have vast archives which would be useful for counter-intelligence as well as for identifying potential assets.

[Every foreigner who visits China](#), whether for a short or long term stay, must register with the local Public Security Bureau (PSB), which maintains a nationwide database of foreigners' whereabouts in China. Few travellers would understand why their passports and visa status are checked when they register at a hotel. Even Airbnb hosts in China now comply with this requirement. If a foreigner rents an apartment or stays with a foreign or Chinese householder, they must be registered with a PSB within 24 hours in an urban area, or within 72 hours in a rural area. MPS also run the network of surveillance cameras throughout China, which combined with AI, are enabling supervision of the Chinese and foreign inhabitants of China to a level that exceeds that of Orwell's *1984*.

The **Joint Staff Department Intelligence Bureau of the PLA** (中央军委联合参谋部情报局), has been headed by Chen Guangjun 陈光军 since the 19th Party Congress in 2017. [Until 2015](#), this organisation was known as the PLA General Staff Department Intelligence Department, often referred to as the Second Department, 总参二局, or 2PLA. Its name was changed as part of Xi Jinping's shake-up of the PLA leadership and organisational structure. The JSD Intelligence Bureau absorbed the intelligence bureaus of the army, navy, airforce and rocket force into [one organisation](#). It focuses on intelligence activities which support [strategic decision-making](#).

Chen Guangjun has been a beneficiary of Xi's purge of the PLA. From 2009 until 2017, Chen was head of the [intelligence bureau of what was then the Second Artillery Force](#) (now the PLA Rocket Force). Chen is a deputy director of the National Counterterrorism Leading Small Group, and has a seat on the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group, the Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group, as well as the Hong Kong and Macau Leading Small Group. He is chairman of the China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CIISS), which is a front organisation of the JSD Intelligence Bureau. CIISS co-organises the PLA's annual united front event for foreign militaries and security analysts, the Xiangshan Forum, and issues a weekly intelligence report on foreign military activities.

SIGINT is a crucial part of intelligence work. Since 2015, PLA SIGINT has been under the command of a new division of the PLA, known as the **Strategic Support Force** (SSF), 中国人民解放军战略支援部队. SSF incorporates what was formerly known as the Third Department (总参三局 3PLA) and Fourth Department (总参四局 4PLA), and also some of the activities of 2PLA. It reports to the Central Military Commission. SFS duties include technical reconnaissance, cyber intelligence, electronic warfare and offensive cyber operations, as well psychological and political warfare. SFS is led by Gao Jin 高津, who was formerly the head of the PLA Military Academy. Gao, like Chen Guangjun of the JSD Intelligence Bureau, is one of Xi's "[young guard](#)" who benefited from the purge of the PLA senior leadership from 2013 to 2017.

Xi Jinping has frequently said that China must prepare for war. The restructuring of the PLA has taken it from being a land-based defensive force to one optimised for warfare. The reorganisation of military intelligence is a crucial part of this. PLA espionage activities have been used in political interference activities and help siphon off foreign scientific and economic intelligence to modernise the Chinese military and weaken adversaries. The

creation of the Strategic Support Force brings these activities into one agency and indicates the importance the Xi government places on cyber, psychological and political warfare. The PLA had long been the government's primary foreign intelligence provider because MSS had political restrictions placed on its overseas intelligence collection in 1985. The restructuring appears to direct PLA intelligence efforts at combat-related activities, while the MSS is now emerging as a [full-spectrum intelligence agency](#). Nonetheless, it would take decades to build up the level of intelligence assets and agents the PLA has abroad.

The PLA has been a leading beneficiary of talent-scouting initiatives such as the Thousand Talents Program, which has poured billions of dollars into drawing in tens of thousands of foreign specialists to China and sends thousands of PRC scientists overseas to access the latest civil- and military-use technology and expertise. In March 2015, the Xi government promoted the merger of civil-military relations in order to expand China's defence sector and improve its technology. The PLA obtains foreign technology by developing international academic links, investing in foreign companies, espionage, hacking and elite capture. It has helped the PLA acquire a variety of innovative technologies such as next-generation fighter jets, advanced missile systems and foundational technologies such as artificial intelligence.

The PLA Institute of International Relations at Nanjing is under the command of the JSD Intelligence Bureau and trains defence attachés and sleeper agents. The PLA has taken advantage of the growth of international education to send its agents abroad via academic exchanges and graduate study, as well as immigration. There are PLA veterans associations in [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [New Zealand](#) and the [United Kingdom](#). A member of the PLA cannot go overseas without official permission, and even after someone retires from active duties they could be restricted from travelling abroad for up to five years. The PLA dispatches undercover [agents](#) to work in companies such as China Everbright Group, a state-owned financial conglomerate, and the Bank of China. The PLA also uses their united front "people's diplomacy" organisation, the China Association for International Friendly Contact, as a cover for intelligence work abroad and for asset meetings with foreigners in China. Former PLA personnel often have a [prominent role](#) in united front organisations abroad.

PLA military intelligence staff and students who travel abroad commonly disguise the name of their PLA university or employer and use that of another organisation. New Zealand has a high-profile example of this: National Party MP Jian Yang 杨建, who is a former PLA captain, a CCP member, and a masters graduate and former staff member of the PLA Luoyang Foreign Language Institute, and who also studied and taught at the PLA-Air Force Engineering University for his undergraduate degree. Both the universities train personnel for signals intelligence. Yang gave a false declaration of his background on his application for New Zealand permanent residency and citizenship, omitting the names of his two former PLA universities and falsely claimed he had attended Luoyang University. While enrolled in his masters and doctoral studies at the Australian National University, Yang founded the China Students and Scholars Association (a CCP united front organisation for managing Chinese students) Canberra branch and led it for many

years, then later had a high-profile role in united front work activities among Overseas Chinese in New Zealand.

Since 2015, the CCP's **International Liaison Department** (ILD) has been headed by Song Tao 宋涛, [a close associate of Xi Jinping](#). The ILD is the CCP's foreign ministry and has representatives in many of China's embassies. Its powers and influence have greatly increased in the Xi era. The ILD is tasked with gathering intelligence on foreign politicians and political parties, and developing asset relations with them. The ILD's front organisation, the China Association for International Understanding, is focused on co-opting prominent foreign politicians. The ILD nurtures relations with foreign political parties and former senior foreign politicians as bridges to current governments, offering them access to the CCP leadership for business opportunities and vanity projects in return for supporting China's policies, providing inside information, or at the very least, keeping silent on critical issues. In 2017, the ILD hosted the [World Political Parties Dialogue](#), attended by 120 political parties, including representatives from the US Republican Party and Japan's LDP.

The foreign intelligence role of the **CCP's United Front Work Department** (UFWD), is often over-looked, yet [intelligence gathering and running assets](#) is one of its core activities. Since the 19th Party Congress in 2017, the UFWD has been headed by Xi associate, You Quan 尤权. Unlike his immediate predecessors, You is only on the CCP Central Committee, not the Politburo. The United Front Work Department is the CCP's core subversion organ. Xi-era united front work activities fall within [four key categories](#): efforts to control the overseas Chinese diaspora and utilise them as agents of Chinese foreign policy; efforts to coopt foreigners to support and promote CCP's foreign policy goals; a global, multi-platform, strategic communication strategy aimed at promoting China's agenda; and the China-centered economic and strategic bloc known as the Belt and Road Initiative.

In the shadow of Lenin

To understand CCP spy craft it helps to read Lenin. In 1920, Lenin wrote:

The more powerful enemy can be vanquished only by exerting the utmost effort, and most thoroughly, carefully, attentively and skilfully making use without fail of every, even the smallest, 'rift' among the enemies, of every antagonism of interest among the bourgeoisie of the various countries and among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries, and also by taking advantage of every, even the smallest, opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional.

The CCP's primary united front targets have shifted as its foreign policy has evolved. United front work targeted Japan during WWII and was crucial during the Chinese Civil War from 1947 to 1949. CCP sleeper agents within the KMT government, provided crucial intelligence and helped turn the war for the Chinese communists. When China entered

the Korean War in 1950, the USA—referred to by the CCP as 美帝, the American imperialists—was promoted as the new government's chief enemy. The standard Chinese phrase for the Korea War is still 抗美援朝 “attack America, save Korea”.

Following the Sino-Soviet split in 1961, China was also at odds with the Soviet Union. By the end of the decade this prompted Mao to seek a temporary alliance with the US. Thus began the era of the Strategic Triangle, in which the USA and its partners aligned with China against the Soviet Union, which was formalised in meetings between US Secretary of State Kissinger and the CCP leadership from 1969-1972.

The end of the Cold War in Eastern Europe, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, removed the justification for the Strategic Triangle — and even [Kissinger admitted this in his 2011 book *On China*](#). In internal speeches in 1989 to both CCP personnel and foreign leaders, Deng Xiaoping depicted the April-June 1989 student protest movement as an effort by the United States to bring down the CCP political system. From Xi and other CCP leader's perspectives, the US has continually engaged in subversion and division, by supporting democracy activities within China, through its espionage activities, and by providing military support to Taiwan. The Xi government has repeatedly warned its citizens to prepare for war.

The US is once again China's chief enemy and the main target of espionage and other covert activities. In February 2020, FBI Director Christopher Wray, said, “[no country poses a greater threat than Communist China](#).” The CCP government targets the US's partners and allies such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK, in order to split them away from the US, to weaken them individually, as well as to weaken the power of the US itself.

How to defend against CCP espionage and interference

In our current era of hybrid warfare and great power contention, for the small and medium powers like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, raw military strength may no longer be as significant to state security as strong cyber-defence capabilities, national resilience, and unity. Many foreign governments are now facing up to the impact of CCP covert activities on the integrity of their political systems, and making a correction in relations with China.

Governments should engage with China on matters such as trade where it is possible to do so constructively, but it is crucial they avoid trade dependency. They must set good boundaries in the relationship and pass new laws to address the CCP's espionage and [political interference activities](#). A united front against the united front is quietly forming among [like-minded states](#), with new [agreements on supply chains and essential goods](#), and [partnership on technology policies such as 5G](#) and the [supply of strategic materials](#).

Many governments are in the process of investigating CCP covert activity within their countries and [adopting a plan to counteract it](#). Some have [released findings](#) publicly. Governments such as Australia and New Zealand have updated legislation on electoral

financing, protocols around conflicts of interest for past and former members of central and local government, and foreign sales of strategic infrastructure and land. The next big challenge is for these governments to establish a genuine and positive relationship with their ethnic Chinese populations and support them to become resilient and autonomous from CCP attempts to control them and utilise them in espionage.

National security is a matter of concern for every citizen. Our political leaders must be confident to [speak frankly](#) about the risks, as well as the opportunities, of relations with the Party-State-Military-Market nexus. An informed society is the means to engage in total defence. More public information about CCP espionage and political interference activities will help individuals, political leaders and government agencies make better choices on China-related activities. For example, individual politicians and governments should distinguish between genuine ethnic community activities and CCP united front work via proxies.

The foreign targets of CCP espionage and political interference must make a long term investment in capacities to help deal with the challenges China under Xi Jinping poses. In 2017, at the 19th Party Congress, Xi Jinping made himself President for life. His control over China's intelligence agencies gives him more power than any other leader since Mao Zedong. Few international intelligence agencies have many Chinese-speaking specialists, let alone those who are specialists on the CCP Party-State-Military-Market nexus. Intelligence agencies must increase their numbers of Chinese-speaking staff and develop in-depth and thorough understanding of CCP government organisations and mind set. At the same time, knowledge of CCP intelligence agencies should be a standard feature of the workplace education of politicians, diplomats and other public servants. People in these roles – as well as the public – should be informed about the ABCs of MSS and other CCP spy agencies, and their names and activities should be just as familiar as the CIA or the KGB.

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