

On the Role of Organized Crime and Related Substate Actors in Chinese Political Warfare Against Taiwan

中國大陸對臺政治作戰中關於組織犯罪
及次級政府組織的角色

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Abstract

As the world begins to recognize the threat that Chinese political warfare poses to institutions worldwide, interest in Taiwan's experience with efforts by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to penetrate, erode, or bypass its democratic firewall has grown commensurately. However, although much attention has been paid to traditional instruments of political warfare, from dis/misinformation to corrosive capital, one element in the CCP's "sharp power" toolkit has tended to be understudied or ignored altogether: the reliance on the Chinese party-state apparatus on crime syndicates, or "triads," and their substate affiliates for the advancement of the CCP's political objectives vis-à-vis Taiwan. The lack of research on the subject is the result, on the one hand, of the challenge posed in studying activities which lie at the intersection of criminal activity and political

work, and on the other due to the paucity of open source information about the individuals and organizations involved in these operations. The linkage between criminal activity and political work is oftentimes difficult to prove absent declassified intelligence from law enforcement agencies, and furthermore confers deniability to its perpetrators stemming from the gray zone that lies at the heart of politicized organized crime. Research is also handicapped by the fact that poring into the activities of crime syndicates can result in threats to one's personal safety. This paper draws from years of research into this subject to demonstrate that the CCP is indeed using organized crime and related substate entities to conduct and facilitate political work in Taiwan, and proposes a number of theories to explain why such organizations have yet to be the object of a nationwide crackdown by law enforcement and intelligence agencies in Taiwan.

Keywords: Triads, Proxies, Political Warfare, United Front, CCP

Origins of Chinese Triads and Related Groups in Taiwan

Although the relationship between the Chinese rulers and secret societies, triads, and other substate actors goes back millennia, this paper concerns itself with the past decade, a period during which CCP political warfare, in all its iterations, intensified substantially due to recognition by Beijing that “peaceful unification” on its terms was unachievable.

A few words are nevertheless necessary to explain how and why triads have had the ability to play a role in the CCP’s campaign against Taiwan. Soon after its victory in the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the CCP made a one-time “offer” to criminal organizations across China, which basically said *collaborate with us or die*. The crime syndicates that agreed to the terms of this “offer” were allowed to prosper, but as part of the deal they had to develop a symbiotic relationship with the party-state apparatus, providing local assistance whenever “muscle” was needed to intimidate civil society or would-be opponents of CCP rule. Thugs for hire also provided deniability to the CCP in cases where the use of traditional law enforcement, the People’s Armed Police (PAP), the Ministry of State Security (MSS) or the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), risked undermining the legitimacy of the party with society.¹ The symbiotic relationship between the CCP and crime syndicates was nothing new. In fact, for all intents and purposes the communist regime replicated the types of agreement that had existed between criminal organizations like 14K and the Green Gang — organizations that had harassed the CCP — and the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT), which fled across the

¹ Lynette H. Ong, “Thugs and Outsourcing of State Repression in China,” *The China Journal*, No. 80 (2018), <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/696156>.

Taiwan Strait after its defeat in the Civil War.² After relocating to Taiwan, the KMT and the security apparatus continued to rely on organized crime when it did not want to dirty its hands, such as over the assassination of Henry Liu in Daly City, California, in 1984.³

“Mainlander” crime syndicates began operating in Taiwan from 1945, following the defeat of Japan in World War II and the transfer of KMT personnel to Taiwan. Two principal triads still operating today and whose activities are the object of this paper, emerged during that period, namely, the Bamboo Union and the Four Seas Gang. During that same period, “mainlander” triads often clashed with underground groups composed of native Taiwanese, or beshengren. Over the years, triads engaged in a variety of illegal activities, such as extortion, debt collection, kidnapping, drug and gun trafficking, prostitution, and underground gambling. Triad members also became involved in more legitimate activity, including construction, garbage collection, and trade in gravel. Others, meanwhile, entered politics, usually as legislators.⁴ The gradual opening of exchanges between Taiwan and China that started in the 1980s also facilitated the activities of crime syndicates on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. During that period, a number of Chinese citizens who later on would play a role within pro-CCP substate organizations in Taiwan relocated to Taiwan, some of them through marriage to Republic of China (ROC) nationals.

The political uses of criminal organizations serving the CCP agenda also flourished in Hong Kong in the lead-up to and following Retrocession

² Martin Purbrick, “Patriotic Chinese Triads and Secret Chinese Societies: From the Imperial Dynasties, to Nationalism and Communism,” *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 50, Issue 3 (2019), pp. 307-308.

³ David E. Kaplan, *Fires of the Dragon: Politics, Murder, and the Kuomintang* (New York: Scribner, 1992), pp. 368-371, 373, 375, 387, 423, 434-436.

⁴ Ko-lin Chin, *Heidao Organized Crime, Business, and Politics in Taiwan* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).

in 1997. As in the Chinese mainland, triads in Hong Kong developed a symbiotic relationship with local CCP United Front Work cadres. As incidents would show decades later, during the unrest in Hong Kong in 2019, “patriotic triads” recruited after the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989 also provided plausible deniability to CCP authorities when it was decided that pro-democracy protesters needed to be taught a violent lesson.⁵ Such incidents made clear the relationship that, by then, existed between the central government in Beijing, pro-CCP Hong Kong legislators, the Hong Kong Police Force, and organized crime. In the years leading up to the unrest in 2019, suspected triad members were also involved in various physical attacks on journalists, editors, and media moguls who were critical of Beijing or supported the pro-democracy movement in the former British territory.⁶

The Ma Ying-jeou administration (2008-2016) provided newfound opportunities for substate elements to interact with each other across the Taiwan Strait. Despite the much greater opportunities for contact and infiltration created during this period of rapprochement, the Ma administration did not ensure a commensurate investment in the state’s ability to monitor and counter possible UFW activity in Taiwan. Instead, manpower within the security intelligence apparatus remained stagnant, while intelligence agencies were reportedly ordered to cease their intelligence collection efforts in China. The CCP used this opening to

⁵ Erin Handley and Iris Zhao, “What are the triads behind the violent attacks in Hong Kong?” (July 25, 2019), *ABC News*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-25/what-are-triads-and-were-they-involved-in-attacks-in-hong-kong/11341726>.

⁶ Jonathan Kaiman, “Stabbed Hong Kong ex-editor says attacker set out to kill him” (March 11, 2014), *the Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/11/stabbed-hong-kong-editor-kevin-lau-chun-to-attacker-kill>. See also, “Attacks on Hong Kong news outlets must be prosecuted” (July 3, 2013), *Committee to Protect Journalists*, <https://cpj.org/2013/07/attacks-on-hong-kong-media-outlets-must-be-prosecu/>.

deepen the underground work that it had successfully carried out in Hong Kong,⁷ thus creating the conditions for ramped up political warfare activity should such measures be deemed necessary in future. The Sunflower Movement occupation of the Legislative Yuan (LY) in 2014 confirmed to an already frustrated CCP leadership that the Ma administration would not — or could not — initiate political talks about Taiwan's status above the heads of the Taiwanese people. Consequently, political warfare work, which had already been occurring alongside rapprochement (and before it, during the Chen Shui-bian [2000-2008] administration), intensified. The 2016 election of Tsai Ing-wen and her Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) capture, for the first time in Taiwan's democratic history, of a majority of seats in the LY, only exacerbated the need, in Beijing's eyes, for a sustained campaign of political warfare aimed at weakening, discrediting, and bypassing Taiwan's democratic institutions.⁸ With that decision, criminal organizations and related substate groups were also called upon to redouble their efforts in Taiwan.

The Triad-Political Nexus

Since the democratization of Taiwan, a number of individuals affiliated with criminal organizations have entered politics, often as elected legislators. One of the most prominent of those is Lo Fu-chu, the leader of the Celestial Alliance (天道盟), Taiwan's third principal, albeit more nativist, triad. Despite spending more than three years in prison following Operation

⁷ Christine Loh, *Underground Front: The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

⁸ See chapter 2 in J. Michael Cole, *Cross-Strait Relations Since 2016: The End of the Illusion* (London: Routledge, 2020); and chapter 5 in J. Michael Cole, *Convergence or Conflict in the Taiwan Strait: The Illusion of Peace* (London: Routledge, 2016).

Cleansweep, a nationwide crackdown on organized crime in 1984, Lo was elected to the legislature in 1996 as an independent candidate. Most triad members who involved themselves in politics, however, were not ideologically inclined to serve as proxies for the CCP, and the majority of them used their political powers to enrich themselves. During the same period, the Four Seas Gang also focused primarily on building up legitimate business enterprises,⁹ although as we will see below, some of its members would occasionally become involved in incidents related to cross-Strait politics.

The Bamboo Union stands alone as the crime syndicate in Taiwan whose activities have dovetailed with, and often served the interests of, the CCP and its ideological proxies in the country. Working in conjunction with the China Unification Promotion Party (CUPP, 中華統一促進黨), the Bamboo Union has been involved in various activities that, due to their political implications, transcend the traditional *raison d'être* of criminal organizations. In recent years, a symbiotic relationship has developed between the Bamboo Union and the CUPP. Like other triads, however, the Bamboo Union did not start out as an instrument of the CCP. Its involvement in cross-Strait politics on the side of the CCP coincided with the emergence of Chang An-le (aka “White Wolf”), himself a former head of the Bamboo Union who created the CUPP in 2005 while in exile in China. Before being deported by the US back to Taiwan in 1995, Chang had served more than a decade at Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary in the United States on drug trafficking charges. He was also indirectly involved in the 1984 assassination of Henry Liu by suspected

⁹ J. Michael Cole, “Calmer waters: Taiwan’s Four Seas gang diversifies,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* (2010), pp. 44-47.

Bamboo Union members.¹⁰ Described as the “brain” of the Bamboo Union, Chang is believed to have been recruited by the CCP after he fled to China following Operation Chih-ping, another nationwide crackdown on organized crime, in 1996.¹¹ Before returning to Taiwan in June 2013, where he was immediately detained at Taipei (Songshan) International Airport, Chang is said to have built a close relationship with the “princelings” aristocracy and began to involve himself in cross-Strait issues. Among his closest associations in China, which Chang claims was facilitated by an elder cousin who had stayed behind after 1949, was Hu Shiyong, the son of former CCP propaganda chief and vehement anti-reformist Hu Qiaomu, who is reportedly a member of CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping’s “close circle.”¹²

The Bamboo Union and CUPP as instruments of intimidation

Even before his return to Taiwan, Chang, by then a former Bamboo Union boss, orchestrated activities against Taiwan independence groups and other individuals regarded as enemies of the CCP. The most prominent example of his far reach was his announcement that he was mobilizing his “followers” in Taiwan to protest a visit by the Tibetan Spiritual Leader the Dalai Lama in 2009 in the wake of the devastating Typhoon Morakot.¹³ There was little doubt then, as there is none today, that Chang’s “followers” belong to the Bamboo Union. Despite the underworld threat to the Dalai

¹⁰ Kaplan, *Fires of the Dragon*, pp. 444-448.

¹¹ Chin, *Heijin*, 37-38.

¹² John Garnaut, “Hungry like the wolf” (July 12, 2014), *《Sydney Morning Herald》*, <https://www.smh.com.au/world/hungry-like-the-wolf-20140707-3bh7j.html>.

¹³ 「綠營質疑 馬政府縱容黑道威脅達賴」(2009年9月2日), *《自由時報》*, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/331984>。

Lama, the Ma administration refused to arrange a special security detail for the visiting figure. In another high-profile incident the same year, Chang arranged for his followers to provide protection and pick up Kuo Kuan-ying, a vitriolic and pro-unification employee of the then-Government Information Office at Taiwan's representative office in Toronto, Canada, who was recalled after revelations that he had penned, under the pen name Fan Lan-chin, highly disparaging articles about the Taiwanese. Upon his arrival at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, 20 black-clad individuals led the discredited Kuo to the terminal exit, where he was picked up by a vehicle belonging to the pro-unification Grand Chinese Taxi Association (大中華出租車司機聯誼會, or 大中華 for short).¹⁴ The Association is believed to be a “chapter” of the CUPP and recruits drivers who are of similar (i.e., pro-unification) ideology.¹⁵

Soon after his brief detention and release on bail in June 2013, Chang actively promoted “one country, two systems,” the formula for “reunification” proposed by Beijing. The CUPP even distributed a pamphlet, adorned with the yellow-and-blue party logo, which sought to explain why the formula was a suitable framework for Taiwan. Accompanied by his thugs, Chang made occasional appearances on TV talk shows to promote his ideology, and soon thereafter began opening CUPP service offices around the country, including in Tainan, the heartland of Taiwanese independence. Due to the statute of limitations on the crimes for which he had been placed on Taiwan's most-wanted list in 1996, Chang was free to operate and to engage in politics. His CUPP was officially

¹⁴ 「郭高姿態返國 綠批囂張」, (2009年4月1日), 《自由時報》, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/292055>。

¹⁵ 「郭高姿態返國 綠批囂張」(2008年4月28日), 《大公報》, <http://news.sina.com/tw/chinane ws/101-101-101-104/2008-04-28/21022853842.html>。

registered as a political party, one of Taiwan's more than 300 parties.

During the period of rapprochement between the Ma administration and the CCP, the CUPP/Bamboo Union also provided security to KMT officials and high-level Chinese visitors, and deployed its members to intimidate members of civil society who were mobilizing in protest. In early November 2013, Chang threatened to deploy thousands of his followers to protect Ma and other KMT officials amid a shoe-throwing campaign of protests spearheaded by a self-help group for laid-off workers. Neither the KMT nor law enforcement authorities said anything about Chang's "offer"). As the threat failed to deter the protesters, who were planning a mass rally in Taichung, where the KMT party congress was held, Chang changed course and offered money to the protesters in exchange for their abandoning the planned activities. On two occasions, one of the protest organizers, a young woman, was called into an office for "discussions" with Chang's people. Although that tactic also failed and the protest went ahead, there is reason to believe that the implicit intimidation led the organizers to cancel certain planned activities.

Later that month, members of Chang's group routinely turned up at the many protests coordinated by civic organizations — including the Black Island Youth Alliance, created to oppose a controversial Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement (CSSTA) — during a visit by then-Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) Chairman Chen Deming.¹⁶ Once again, the presence of such individuals intimidated the protesters and made them fear for their personal safety, thus undermining their democratic right to hold protests. This was followed, in late

¹⁶ 王立柔，「對陳德銘高喊反服貿 學生遭員警『鎖喉』」（2013年11月26日），《新頭殼》，<https://newtalk.tw/news/view/2013-11-26/42269>。

February 2014, by another threat by Chang, this time after a group of pro-independence activists angered with recent government policy decisions felled a bronze statue of Sun Yat-sen at a park in Tainan. During a press conference the following day, Chang retaliated by threatening “war” against Taiwanese independence groups, including the World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI), a pro-independence organization that had nothing to do with the statue incident (the Alliance of Referendum for Taiwan was responsible). The next day, Chang showed up at the park bearing flowers and vowed to “take action” against then-Tainan Mayor William Lai Ching-te of the DPP, who also had nothing to do with the toppling of the statue, if he failed to apologize within two weeks and ensure it is restored.¹⁷ A scuffle ensued, involving members of the Alliance and Chang’s black-clad and tattooed followers.

Chang’s CUPP and Bamboo Union members also mobilized to threaten activists during the Sunflower Movement occupation of the Legislative Yuan in March and April 2014, held in protest over the CSSTA. On April 1, the CUPP organized a rally outside the Legislative Yuan, vowing to “retake parliament” from the Sunflower activists. Only a sizable deployment of riot police, which cordoned off Chang’s hundreds of followers, prevented what could have become a bloodbath at the legislature. Nevertheless, the protest was marred by isolated instances of physical assault.¹⁸ The following month, Chang’s CUPP co-organized a “New May Fourth Movement” rally on Ketagalan Boulevard in Taipei in support of the police force, which had been “overworked” as a result of the Sunflower Movement. Participants, many of them elderly, were seen sporting a white T-shirt provided by the

¹⁷ 「張安樂嗆賴清德：兩週內復原孫文銅像」，(2014年2月25日)，《自由時報》，<https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/paper/757205>。

¹⁸ Author’s on-site observations, April 1, 2014.

CUPP, although interviews on-site revealed that most of them, who had been bussed in from Longtan, Taoyuan County, did not appear to know why they were at the rally. It emerged that they had been offered a free tour of Taipei and a lunchbox. Collection boxes were set up at the event for donations.¹⁹ It is difficult not to regard the May 4 rally, in support of the police force and opposed to anti-CCP civil society, as a precedent for similar events that were organized, a few years later, by pro-Beijing legislators in Hong Kong during the unrest in 2019.²⁰

The Bamboo Union/CUPP again deployed to threaten civil society in July 2015. This time, the mobilization occurred during a brief occupation of the Ministry of Education building in Taipei over proposed changes to school curricula, seen by critics as a rewriting of history by pro-CCP academics favoring a Sino-centric curriculum. Several dozen Bamboo Union/CUPP members gathered on the other side of the street, facing off against primary- and high-school-aged students.

Chang's party and triad followers have also organized protests targeting events at which US officials from the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) were present, both in Taipei and Kaohsiung. In one incident, coinciding with the inauguration of the new AIT complex in Taipei, CUPP protesters called on "evil Americans to get out of Taiwan!"²¹ Although there was no violence, the "welcoming committee" certainly reflected the CPP's view that the US should not "interfere with China's internal affairs."

¹⁹ Author's on-site observations, May 4, 2014.

²⁰ Kanis Leung, "Thousands rally in support of Hong Kong's embattled police force, as extradition bill unrest rumbles on" (August 3, 2019), *South China Morning Post*, <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3021321/thousands-rally-support-hong-kongs-embattled-police-force>.

²¹ 「AIT 新館落成 統促黨集結抗議『美利堅邪惡集團滾出臺灣』」, (2018 年 6 月 12 日), 《自由時報》, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/2455147>。

The CUPP has also organized protests outside the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association over the dispute between Japan and China over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai islets and other historical grievances stemming from World War II.²² The CUPP has held protests outside DPP headquarters. In one instance, it held a large rally outside the party headquarters two days prior to Tsai Ing-wen's first inauguration, calling on the future administration to recognize the so-called "1992 consensus."²³ In one instance, a CUPP protests outside the DPP building involved dozens of CUPP members dressed up as Japanese Imperial Army soldiers — a not-too-subtle reference to Beijing's view of the party as being driven by a "Japanese colonial mindset." The protesters attempted to penetrate the building but were blocked by police.²⁴

In several of the CUPP protests held over the years, there is reason to believe that a number of the individuals involved belonged either to the Bamboo Union triad, or to smaller, more local criminal groups known as *jiaotou* (literally: corner heads). For many of them, financial gain rather than outright pro-unification or pro-CCP ideology appears to have served as motivation for mobilization. In other words, for a price, they will willingly take part in protests of a political nature, and will even agree to engage in intimidation and violence if asked to do so.

In late September 2019, CUPP member Hu Chih-wei and Dachen Nostalgia Culture Association (大陳島鄉情文化促進會) member Chen Yu-ta were arrested following an incident in which Hong Kong democracy activist Denise Ho was splattered with red paint at a rally in Taipei.

²² Kensaku Ihara, "Pro-China groups could undermine Japan-Taiwan ties" (July 23, 2017), *《Nikkei Asia》*, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Pro-China-groups-could-undermine-Japan-Taiwan-ties>.

²³ Author's on-site observations, May 18, 2016.

²⁴ Author's on-site observations, August 5, 2015.

Prosecutors determined that a total of nine individuals were involved in the plot.²⁵ (While anti-independence and pro-KMT, the Dachen Nostalgia Culture Association, which was established as a hometown association for people that trace their ancestry to a region in Zhejiang, is not known to be directly affiliated with the CCP.)

In April 2020, Causeway Bay Books manager and CCP critic Lam Wing-kei — who relocated to Taiwan after his bookstore was closed in Hong Kong — was the victim of a similar paint attack on his store in Taipei. Two individuals, surnamed Tseng and Cheng, were subsequently arrested in Kaohsiung in connection with the case. Two other suspects were also involved as lookouts and were seen fleeing with the two assailants in a taxi (a third suspect was eventually detained).²⁶ A few days after the incident, an individual left a comment on the Mainland Affairs Council's official Facebook page warning Lam: "This was only a first warning to you. We have many brothers in Taipei" (「這只是我們對你的第一次警告，我們在臺北的兄弟很多」).²⁷ The Facebook profile of the individual, one "Jonathan Gao," showed that he was a member of the Concentric Patriotism Alliance (中華愛國同心會), the CUPP, and the Hongmen 21 Sea Friendship Association (洪門二一海聯誼總會員工).²⁸ Also known as the "Heaven and Earth Society" (天地會), Hongmen is a secret organization created during the Qing Dynasty. It later developed various underground

²⁵ 「潑漆何韻詩首腦陳友達 設 3 組行動組還有截殺點」(2019 年 10 月 1 日),《自由時報》, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/2932362>。

²⁶ 「前香港銅鑼灣書店長遭潑漆案 2 嫌高雄落網 1 嫌在逃」(2020 年 4 月 22 日),《聯合報》, <https://udn.com/news/story/7320/4509786>。

²⁷ 「【銅鑼灣書店】疑統促黨員在臉書恐嚇林榮基 陸委會：絕不寬貸」(2020 年 4 月 23 日),《蘋果日報》, <https://tw.appledaily.com/politics/20200423/3AZTEQBMXZEUIGZHLNAIS2ZM YE/>。

²⁸ 「林榮基遭潑漆嫌犯落網 自稱統促黨成員囂張恐嚇：我們兄弟很多」(2020 年 4 月 23 日),《自由時報》, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/3142855>。

organizations and spread throughout Asia.

Early in the morning of August 28, 2020, in Linkou, New Taipei City, Internet celebrity and gym owner Holger Chen was shot three times at close range as he was entering his vehicle. Two of the three bullets hit their target, causing leg and arm injuries. An outspoken supporter of President Tsai and the Taiwanese military, Chen was also involved in an “anti-red media” movement organized by New Power Party legislator Huang Kuo-chang in 2019. His outspoken support for a Taiwanese identity also caused controversy in 2018, leading Chinese kickboxer Lian Yuxuan to challenge him to a fight. Around that time, Chen also came to the attention of criminal organizations and the CUPP.²⁹ Following initial beliefs that potential disputes over his gym empire or online retail efforts had led to the attempt on Chen’s life, it later emerged that the 23-year-old shooter, Liu Cheng-hao, was affiliated with the Baohe Association (寶和堂), one of eight “churches,” or factions, of the Bamboo Union.³⁰ The investigation also revealed that Liu was associated with a middleman named Shih Jun-ji, who surveilled the location before Chen was shot. Surveillance and communication records also demonstrate that Shih ordered Liu to carry out the hit on Chen. A total of 10 Bamboo Union members were subsequently taken in for interrogation by the Taipei and New Taipei City Prosecutor’s Office. A sum of NT\$10 million was reportedly transferred from China to Taiwan via businessmen and organized crime organizations to “buy” Chen’s murder.³¹

²⁹ 「諷批張安樂 館長成統促黨眼中釘」(2020年10月9日),《自由時報》, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/society/paper/1404860>。

³⁰ 「『竹聯幫寶和會』10人遭逮!館長26字狠嗆:遊戲結束」(2020年10月8日),《三立新聞網》, <https://www.setn.com/News.aspx?NewsID=827535>。

³¹ 「獨/反共惹禍?知情曝館長遭中國買凶」(2020年10月8日),《三立新聞網》, <https://tw.news.yahoo.com/獨-反共惹禍-知情曝館長遭中國買凶-120029563.html>。

In October 2020, a suspect was apprehended following an attack on the Aegis restaurant in Taipei, in which an individual threw a bucket of fecal matter at the cashier counter and kitchen.³² One employee, of Hong Kong origin, was also splashed with the substance. Opened in April and founded by Hong Kong lawyer Daniel Wong Kwok-tung, Aegis seeks to provide employment for residents of Hong Kong who have fled the Special Administrative Region following the 2019 anti-extradition law protests. The suspect, surnamed Mo, told police that he had received NT\$15,000 from three individuals to perpetrate the attack. Two other suspects, both in their 20s, were subsequently detained, including a 24-year-old man surnamed Lee, who has emerged as the main suspect in the case. Lee, a member of the Bei Lien (“North Union”) gang (北聯幫), is said to have been given NT\$30,000 by “the puppet master” to orchestrate the attack.³³ In November 2019, the leaders of various triads from Taiwan and Hong Kong — including the head of the Bei Lien gang — attended the 70th anniversary party in Taipei of Bamboo Union boss Huang Shao-tsen, aka “Mo Mo.”³⁴ The CUPP’s Chang was also present at the event. While circumstantial, this nevertheless demonstrates the potential for collaboration between the main pro-CCP triads and more local gangs, which the former has employed over the years to conduct low-level operations such as security and intimidation.

The attacks against Denise Ho and the Aegis restaurant were not the only instances of assault by organized crime involving Hong Kong activists in Taiwan. In January 2017, gangsters assaulted Hong Kong pro-democracy

³² 「保護傘餐廳遭潑糞案幕後主嫌在逃 莫嫌羈押獲准【更新】」(2020年11月9日),《中央通訊社》, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/202010175009.aspx>。

³³ 「『保護傘』餐廳潑糞男收押 再逮3教唆犯」(2020年10月18日),《自由時報》, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/paper/1406781>。

³⁴ 「竹聯幫主『麼麼』70壽宴 港臺兩地社團大哥全到齊」(2019年11月21日),《CTWANT》, <https://www.ctwant.com/article/15074>。

lawmakers Edward Yiu, Nathan Law and Eddie Chu, as well as activist Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong after their arrival at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport. One of the individuals involved in the incident at Taoyuan Airport was Chang Wei, a son of the CUPP's Chang An-le.³⁵ It is also believed that members of the Four Seas Gang were involved in the altercation, a rare instance of participation in cross-Strait politics on the part of the Four Seas. The young Chang and other CUPP members were among the suspects arrested. The following day, protesters from the CUPP-affiliated Concentric Patriotism Alliance gathered outside the venue of a conference, organized by the New Power Party, at which the Hong Kong visitors were speaking. After their return to Hong Kong, the four were threatened by individuals who were believed to belong to pro-CCP triads in the Special Administrative Region.³⁶ The twin incidents suggest coordination between triads on both sides.

Chang Wei was also involved in an assault against young protesters during the “Sing! China: Shanghai-Taipei Music Festival” in September 2017 at National Taiwan University, a controversial event organized by the Taipei City Government, the Shanghai City Cross-Strait Cultural Exchange Promotion Association, the Shanghai Cultural Association, Shanghai Canxing Trading Co., Ltd., and Shanghai Voice of Dream Media Co.³⁷ On its website, the Shanghai City Cross-Strait Exchange Promotion Association calls for the “peaceful unification of the motherland.” Li

³⁵ Chiu Chun-fu, Cheng Shu-ting & Chu Pei-hsiung, “Police identify ‘White Wolf’ son in attack on HK group” (January 15, 2017), 《*Taipei Times*》, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2017/01/15/2003663125>.

³⁶ Danny Mok & Clifford Lo, “Nathan Law attacked at Hong Kong International Airport by pro-China protesters” (January 9, 2017), 《*South China Morning Post*》, <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2060446/nathan-law-attacked-hong-kong-international-airport-pro>.

³⁷ Jason Pan, “Prosecutors charge five CUPP members with assault” (December 2, 2017), 《*Taipei Times*》, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2017/12/02/2003683283>.

Wenhui, the “honorary chairman” of the association who came to Taiwan for the musical event, is the Taiwan Affairs Office’s director of the Shanghai Municipal People’s Government.

The willingness of triad groups to engage in political violence is all the more troubling given the Bamboo Union’s long history of arms trafficking in a country with strict gun laws. Over the years, several police raids have resulted in the discovery of arms caches involving the Bamboo Union (the Four Seas Gang is also regularly involved in such activities). In many such discoveries, CUPP paraphernalia was also seized at the scene. In 2018, the largest cache of firearms in a decade was seized in Keelung. The weapons, which originated in the Philippines and were transited via Hong Kong before arriving in Taiwan, consisted of 109 firearms, including Bushmaster XM15-E25s, Spike’s Tactical ST-15s, and a Striker-12 shotgun, as well as 12,378 rounds of ammunition.³⁸ One officer said of the arsenal, “You could set up an army with those!” Yeh Jiunn-rong, the Minister of the Interior at the time, said that if the guns had entered the Taiwanese market, “the consequences would have been disastrous.” The individuals arrested in the case were members of the Bamboo Union. The intersection of crime and politics, epitomized by the symbiotic relationship between the Bamboo Union and the CUPP, is of serious concern given that it gives the CCP the ability, should it decide to do so, to engage in large-scale political violence such as assassination, sabotage, plots against civilian infrastructure, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism. In more extreme scenarios, a well armed militia could be activated to launch attacks against various high-value targets prior to military action by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).

³⁸ 「10 年最大軍火走私總值 5 千萬 109 把中含『槍界勞斯萊斯』」(2018 年 5 月 5 日), 《ETtoday 新聞雲》, <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20180505/1163655.htm>。

Such activities are in-line with Beijing’s strategy to “Lebanonize” Taiwan.

Related political work by the CUPP

Despite being a registered political party that has fielded candidates in local elections, it is extremely unlikely that the CUPP, which claims to have 20,000 members nationwide, will ever see one of its own win in an election. Its strict adherence to “one country, two systems,” promotion of Beijing’s policies regarding Taiwan that are diametrically opposed to the policy preferences of the majority of Taiwanese, and image as a proxy of the CCP all ensure that Taiwanese voters will shun it at the voting booth. Nevertheless, the formation and registration of the CUPP as a party that plays the game of elections serves as a legitimizing tool, one that, under the law, confers certain rights and protections. The CUPP therefore represents a clear-cut case of an external authoritarian actor that exploits the permissiveness of a democratic system to undermine and erode its institutions.

Besides its involvement, in tandem with the Bamboo Union, in practices such as intimidation, interference, and assault, the CUPP has also engaged in a variety of activities that clearly meet the definition of “sharp power” or political warfare. Like the more threatening aspects of its behavior, all these activities are aimed at furthering the CCP’s political ambitions with regards to Taiwan.

Involvement with the National Association for the Promotion of China’s Peaceful Reunification

In addition to reporting on Chang An-le’s ties with CCP “princelings”

and Chang's claims that he has a close relationship with the State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) in Beijing, the participation of CUPP officials at events organized by the CCP is another demonstration of its role within China's United Front Work (UFW) activities in Taiwan. For example, there is video evidence placing senior CUPP cadres at a gathering in New York City in December 2017 organized by overseas Chinese institutions that are suspected of involvement UFW. CUPP chairman Chang Fu-tang, along with Yok Mu-ming (chairman of the pro-unification New Party) and Wang Ping-chung (also of the New Party), attended a "Cross-Strait Development Forum" (兩岸和平發展論壇) hosted by the National Association for the Promotion of China's Peaceful Reunification (全美中國和平統一促進聯合會). The forum was co-sponsored by the New York chapter of the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Unification (CCPPR, 紐約中國和平統一促進會) and the Federation of East American Chinese Associations (美東華人社團聯合總會), with involvement by the US-China Cultural Exchange Society (美國美中文化交流促進會).³⁹ Li Kexin, minister at the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., was also present at the event.

Targeting the grassroots

The CUPP has known chapters in Taipei, Miaoli, Pingtung, Yunlin, Chiayi and Tainan. In line with the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference's (CPPCC) "one generation and one stratum," the CUPP is targeting grassroots organizations and seeking to fill the vacuum left by a struggling KMT. To this end, the CUPP has played a role in the creation of the "Tainan Cross-Strait Exchange

³⁹ 「2017 年全美中國和平統一促進會年會暨海峽兩岸和平發展論壇」, 《Youtube》, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Nw8D9GSloU>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxADV1R5JrI>.

Promotion Association” (臺南市兩岸交流協會) and the “Cross-Strait Taiwan Guangdong Exchange Association” (臺粵交流協會), which prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on cross-Strait travel had reportedly seen a “steady stream” of Chinese officials on visits to Taiwan. The party now presents itself as a “go-between for China through village and ward chiefs, university students and young entrepreneurs, and has set up agricultural exchanges with China for representatives of Taiwanese farmers’ associations and agricultural production and marketing groups.”⁴⁰ As a go-between, the CUPP also predicates its help on Taiwanese businesspeople having the “right” ideology — that is, supporting unification.⁴¹

Youth recruitment

Then CUPP is a participant in a two-pronged strategy to influence what Beijing regards as the “naturally independence-leaning” generation. One pillar of this strategy, unveiled by CPPCC Chairman Yu Zhengsheng in March 2017, is known as the “three middles and the youth” (三中一青), and targets residents of central and southern Taiwan, middle- and low-income families, as well as small- and medium-sized enterprises. This accompanies early 2015’s “one generation and one stratum” (一代一線) strategy, this one targeting Taiwan’s youth and the grassroots.⁴² In an interview with Central People’s Broadcasting Station in February 2021, Chang said that one of his priorities was to recruit young people from central and southern

⁴⁰ “United Front Target Taiwan’s Grass Roots: Gangs, Temples, Business” (August 22, 2018), *Commonwealth Magazine*, <https://english.cw.com.tw/article/article.action?id=2083>.

⁴¹ Yimou Lee & James Pomfret, “Pro-China groups step up offensive to win over Taiwan” (June 26, 2019), *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-china-campaign-insight-idUSKCN1TR01H>.

⁴² 「大陸對台新政策 一代一線取代三中一青 陸委會曝可能下場」(2017年5月24日), 《中國時報》, <https://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20170524000115-260203?chdtv>。

parts of Taiwan, and to “turn them from green” — i.e., supporters of the DPP and/or Taiwan independence — “to red,” or pro-CCP. Such recruits, he added, would then assist the CCP in promoting “reunification” and sparking “an uprising.” In the same interview, Chang added that he was willing to die a martyr for the cause of “reunification.”⁴³ Reacting to the interview, Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council said Chang should be investigated for possible violations to the National Security Law, charges that could carry a sentence of up to seven years imprisonment.

Infiltration of temples

Reports in 2019 also indicate that Chang and his CUPP have successfully “infiltrated” as many as 30 temples in New Taipei City, Tainan, Changhua County and Yunlin County, among other places. This reportedly includes the Beigang Chaotian Temple in Yunlin County, regarded as one of the three principal Mazu temples in the world.⁴⁴ It is believed that the CUPP has exploited opaque regulations governing the financing and taxation of religious temples to increase its influence within those organizations and co-opt temple heads. Every year, religious temples are involved in cross-Strait ceremonies, symposia, and visits by temple members and officials. Some of the temples where the CUPP has spread its tentacles have promoted its candidates in local elections. Smaller, local temples are also known to have begun promoting “reunification” after visits to China. In one case witnessed by this author, immediately after the visit a

⁴³ 「張安樂自爆助統戰、吸收台青『由綠轉紅』」(2021年2月2日),《風傳媒》, <https://www.storm.mg/article/3446511>。

⁴⁴ 「【全文】白狼自稱中共共同路人 統促黨滲透 30 宮廟爆染紅危機」(2019年10月26日),《鏡週刊》, <https://www.mirrormedia.mg/story/20191022inv010/>。

local temple posted printouts of TAO notices of the visit and installed a TV by the main entrance, which throughout the day played content from China Central Television (CCTV). Local temples across Taiwan also often have a symbiotic relationship with local gangs, which suggests further efforts by the CUPP/Bamboo Union to potentially recruit more “muscle.”

Co-optation of Aboriginal communities

In recent years, Chang and the CUPP have also been involved in efforts to increase CCP influence within Taiwan’s Aboriginal communities. Chang has visited a number of tribes around the nation and has even participated in Harvest festivals, a role traditionally reserved for chiefs. In 2017, after participating in a ceremony in Hualien, Chang said that everybody in Taiwan is Chinese — Aborigines are also Chinese.⁴⁵ In what was dubbed “a United Front version of the Harvest festival,” Chang, in full Confucian attire, participated as a guest at a recent event in Hualien. Red banners, showcasing the CUPP as a co-sponsor of the ceremony, figured prominently.⁴⁶ With regards to Aboriginal communities, the CCP’s rigorous United Front Work aims primarily to (a) provide funding so as to increase its influence within those communities and (b) construct identity under the tent of “reunification.” Although the CCP has sought to influence within Aboriginal communities in Taiwan for the past two decades, its financing is believed to have become more direct. Chang’s CUPP is a logical source of such efforts on behalf of the CCP.

⁴⁵ 「原住民與以台制台」(2017年9月11日),《民報》, <https://www.peoplenews.tw/news/0dea247f-b2cb-4ea6-a30c-346357f7a941>。

⁴⁶ 「中共滲透原鄉統戰 招待出遊金援拉攏原住民」(2021年2月22日),《三立新聞網》, <https://www.setn.com/News.aspx?NewsID=900421>。

Suspected involvement in forging travel documents for CCP officials

In December 2019, Chang An-le and his son Chang Wei were both questioned by prosecutors amid an investigation into the activities of at least 30 travel agencies suspected of forging travel documents and itineraries to help Chinese officials travel to Taiwan under the guise of tourism. One of the agencies targeted for investigation was New Taipei City-based Huaxia Dadi Travel Service, operated by Chang Wei and Wang Shu-yin, Chang An-le's daughter in law, since 2010. According to investigators, between January 2017 and June 2019, between 2,000 and 5,000 individuals linked to the Chinese government entered Taiwan illegally. Among those were individuals linked to China's intelligence services as well as the United Front Work Department.⁴⁷ Using forged documents, the tour agencies reportedly obtained entry permits for package tours from the National Immigration Agency, a loophole which allowed them to circumvent background checks for individuals associated with the Chinese government. Chang An-le denied the allegations and claimed his son's business was legitimate and helping Taiwan's "miserable" travel industry.

CUPP sources of financing

Despite the CUPP's involvement in various incidents that have threatened social stability, violated national security laws or eroded Taiwan's democratic institutions, it is its financing sources that most often has been the target of the authorities. CUPP offices have been the

⁴⁷ 「張安樂之子旅行社遭搜索 媳婦 25 萬元交保」(2019 年 12 月 23 日),《中央通訊社》, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/asoc/201912170340.aspx>。

target of repeated raids in recent years as the government attempts to determine whether the party and its officials are receiving illegal funding from China. In August 2019, Chang and five other CUPP members were charged with receiving illicit political donations, embezzlement, tax evasion and forging financial documents. Some of the charges related to funds allegedly received from China. According to prosecutors, the CUPP made illegal gains of approximately NT\$36 million, violating the Political Donations Act, the Business Entity Accounting Act, the Banking Act and the Company Act.⁴⁸ Investigators also uncovered irregular money transfers from Strategic Sports Co, a sports apparel company operated by the Chang family in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, into Huaxia Dadi Travel Service accounts, as well as several instances of money transferred from the travel company into their personal accounts. The Changs have set up an entity known as the Taolue (“Strategy”) Group, with offices in Hong Kong and Dongguan, of which the aforementioned Strategic Sports Co is a subsidiary.⁴⁹ Taolue is suspected of receiving funding from Chinese officials via state-run entities in the PRC, money which may then be transferred to Taiwan to fund the CUPP’s political operations. Following a raid at his home in 2018, Chang admitted to receiving money from China, but denies that it comes from the CCP.

The CUPP also claims to be operating on a shoestring budget, which has raised questions given its activities and party list of approximately 20,000 members. Its official party donations are estimated at between NT\$1 million and NT\$2 million annually, with personnel expenses of

⁴⁸ Jason Pan, “Prosecutors charge ‘White Wolf,’ other CUPP members with illegal gains” (August 14, 2019), 《*Taipei Times*》, <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2019/08/14/2003720469>.

⁴⁹ 「追統促黨金源」張安樂中國公司 立委質疑中資挹注」(2017年9月30日), 《自由時報》, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/1139613>。

NT\$100,000. Besides potential illegal funding from China, another area of concern given the symbiotic relationship that exists between the CUPP and the Bamboo Union is the possibility that parts of the proceeds from the triad organization's criminal activities could be recycled for use by the CUPP for its political work on behalf of the CCP.

Although there is no incontrovertible evidence in open source that this is the case, examples from substate actors elsewhere suggest that this is more than a remote possibility. One example is the Lebanese Hezbollah, a militant group that also has entered party politics in Lebanon. Hezbollah is known to have used a share of the revenue generated by criminal activity — the sale of contraband cigarettes in North America⁵⁰ and criminal enterprises in Africa and Latin America's Tri-Border Area⁵¹ — to fund its operations, including, it is suspected, its militant wing. Besides being lucrative, such measures pose an additional jurisdictional challenge to law enforcement and intelligence agencies which can result in intelligence falling through the cracks (see the Challenges section below). The potential for overlapping criminal activity and political work in the CUPP-Bamboo Union relationship is one that warrants further scrutiny.

Other substate actors involved in CCP political warfare

In addition to the CUPP and Bamboo Union, Taiwan is host to a constantly progressing constellation of interlinked sub-state organizations, most of them at the association level, that are loosely involved in UFW on

⁵⁰ "18 Accused of Cigarette Smuggling to Fund Hezbollah" (July 22, 2000), *Associated Press*, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-jul-22-mn-57451-story.html>.

⁵¹ Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2013), pp. 80-85; 317-344.

behalf of the CCP.⁵² While those are beyond the scope of this paper, three other organizations deserve further discussion due to their recent activities and overlap with the CUPP.

New Party (新黨)

An ideological ally of the CUPP, the New Party came under scrutiny in 2018 when a number of members were accused of colluding with a Chinese spy ring in Taiwan known as “Star Fire Secret Unit” led by Zhou Hongxu. “Star Fire” was an attempt to recruit Taiwanese diplomats. In September 2017, Zhou, a Chinese student, was convicted of espionage and breaching the National Security Act, and was sentenced to 14 months (he was released in May 2018 after a successful appeal, though he was barred from leaving the country). In December 2017, New Party spokesman Wang Ping-chung, along with youth wing executives Ho Han-ting and Lin Ming-cheng, as well as a party accountant surnamed Tseng, also became the objects of attention by prosecutors in the case, and Wang was eventually named a defendant. Wang’s father, Wang Chin-pu, was also summoned for questioning.⁵³

Documents seized in the investigation against Wang Ping-chung showed

⁵² These include, but are not limited to: Groups include the Peace and Development Research Center (四川國際和平與發展研究中心), the National Society of Taiwan Studies (全國臺灣研究會), the China Painting Academy for Friendly Contact (中國友聯畫院), the Alliance for Unification of China (中國統一聯盟, 簡稱統盟), China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification (Taiwan) (CPPRC, 中國和平統一促進會 臺灣), the Chinese Democratic Progressive Party (中國民主進步黨), the Cross-Strait Integration Society (兩岸統合學), the Chinese Huangpu Four Seas Alliance Association (中華黃埔四海同心會), the China People’s Democratic Unification Association (中國全民主統一會), the Cross Strait Unification Association (海峽兩岸統一促進會), the Taiwan Cross Strait Peaceful Development Association (臺海兩岸和平發展研究會), the Taiwan One Country Two Systems Studies Association (臺灣一國兩制研究協會), the China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands (中國民間保衛釣魚台聯合會), and the Chinese Association for Political Party Liaison (中華政黨聯誼會).

⁵³ 「共謀案遭判刑 周泓旭另涉國安法被起訴」(2019年4月3日),《中央通訊社》, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/asoc/201904030078.aspx>。

he had been working with Chinese officials in 2013, before he had even met Zhou. In fact, Wang's troubling ties appear to have come to the attention of the national security apparatus when Ma Ying-jeou was still in office. Information seized in the raid showed the TAO had promised to provide Wang and Zhou as much as NT\$16 million annually for their operations in Taiwan.⁵⁴ Prosecutors said they had collected evidence that Wang had received money transfers from Chinese sources, and a note from him saying, that he would “work under the guidance and assistance of the CCP to help the forces working to achieve unification across the Taiwan Strait.”

Taiwan Red Party (中國臺灣紅黨 — 紅黨)

Other smaller proxies of the CCP in Taiwan, including the Taiwan Red Party (TRP), have surfaced since 2016. The TRP was launched in Taichung on March 25, 2017. In its declaration, the party states that it aims to “integrate the majority of Taiwanese farmers and fishermen.” Historically, those have been areas of Kuomintang KMT influence. In April 2019, the TRP co-sponsored an event in Taichung titled “2019 Peaceful Integration and Development Forum” (2019 和平統一融合發展論壇) under the slogan “Promote the 1992 Consensus, Support Peace, Support Unification” (「宣揚九二共識、支持和平、支持統一」). The United Front Work Department-linked China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification (Taiwan) (CPPRC, 中國和平統一促進會 (臺灣)), the China Peace Development Association (中華和平發展促進會) and the Taichung City Cross-Strait Business and Trade Association (臺中市兩岸商務經貿協會) were also involved in hosting the event, which was

⁵⁴ 「【住家遭搜索】王炳忠曾自曝『被抹黑』是陸生周泓旭線民」(2017年12月19日),《上報》, https://www.upmedia.mg/news_info.php?SerialNo=31486。

eventually cancelled.⁵⁵

Also in April 2019, it was revealed that the TRP had been actively recruiting young Taiwanese to attend a Communist Party school in China since at least May 2017, two months after the party's registration. The first advertisement for the party school was seen on the Taiwanese Chinese Heart (臺灣人中國心) Facebook page. The school in question was the Fujian Provincial Communist Party School — Taiwan Social Elite Class (中共黨校福建省委黨校臺灣社會菁英班).⁵⁶ Various pro-unification Facebook forums and social media apps provided the same cell phone number in Taiwan as the one used in the advertisements for the aforementioned “2019 Peaceful Integration and Development Forum” in Taichung. Among the qualifications for admission stated in the ad are “support for ‘one China’” and self-identification as a Chinese citizen. According to the ad, classes provide training on subjects such as Chinese law, Chinese economic theory, institutions, the Belt and Road Initiative, special economic zones, implementation, and practical experience sharing. Faculty comes from think tanks affiliated with the central leadership in Beijing. The online advertisement stated that the party school serves as an incubator of the central (Chinese) government, adding that the certificate can be used anywhere in the “Chinese mainland.” According to journalist Melissa Chan, “China’s ruling Communist Party’s 80 million members attend special [Party] schools to learn party ideology at facilities that serve

⁵⁵ 林毅隆, 「中評鏡頭：統派遊行取消 起點台中港空蕩蕩」(2019年4月13日), 《中國評論新聞網》, <http://hk.crntt.com/doc/1053/9/8/5/105398586.html?coluid=93&kindid=13691&docid=105398586>。

⁵⁶ J. Michael Cole, “Organizers of Aborted Pro-Unification Rally Recruiting Taiwanese for Communist Party School” (April 13, 2019), 《*Taiwan Sentinel*》, <https://sentinel.tw/recruiting-tw-ccp-party-school/>.

as a training ground for the next generation of Chinese leaders.”⁵⁷

Concentric Patriotism Alliance (中華愛國同心會)

A civic organization with a close relationship with the CUPP, the Concentric Patriotism Alliance (CPAROC) has a long history of violence against Taiwanese civil society and Falun Gong practitioners. Since its creation in 1993, the Alliance has often been the object of public complaints over harassment and physical aggression, earning its members the sobriquet “Communist thugs in Taiwan.”⁵⁸ One of the founding members of the organization is Zhang Xiuye, who was reportedly born in Shanghai and moved to Taiwan around 1993 after marrying a Taiwanese (i.e., Republic of China) national. Prior to moving to Taiwan, Zhang reportedly worked for an “unnamed NGO.” She and her husband divorced soon afterwards, and are said to have had two children together.

Zhang’s “boss,” Zhou Qinjun, is a regular presence at the Alliance rallies outside Taipei 101, Sun Sat-Sen Memorial Hall, and in Taipei’s Ximending shopping district. Zhou fled China in 1961. Besides heading the CPAROC, he is also chairman of the pro-unification China Democratic Progressive Party (CDPP). At some point, the CUPP’s Chang An-le was also listed as “honorary chairman” of the CDPP, while Zhang is its secretary-general. Zhou has been involved in various fora and meetings with pro-unification elements within the CCP, including the aforementioned CCPPR.⁵⁹ It is also believed that Zhou was invited to participate in a large

⁵⁷ Melissa Chan, “Inside a Chinese Communist Party School” (January 24, 2012), *《Al Jazeera》*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2012/1/24/inside-a-chinese-communist-party-school>.

⁵⁸ 「曝光同心會 中共指使在臺景點暴力滋事」(2013 年 10 月 30 日), *《聯合報》*, <http://city.udn.com/50257/5023725>。

⁵⁹ 「臺灣東南九省鄉親旅台聯誼總會訪問團」(2008 年 9 月 25 日), *《中國和平統一促進會》*, http://www.zhongguotongcuhui.org.cn/zt/cjh5/cujin/201211/t20121107_3355925.html。

cross-strait forum organized in 2012 or 2013.

People's Republic of China-flag-waiving members of the CPAROC gathered outside Taipei 101 often accepted small money donations from Chinese tourists. Reports also indicate that the Alliance paid individuals NT\$800 to NT\$900 per day to waive PRC flags at popular venues. Following a report aired on Al Jazeera in September 2018, in which Zhang tells her interviewers that it is legal for her organization to receive money from China-based Taiwanese businesspeople and that Zhou was receiving “special care” by the Chinese government, Chang An-le announced that the CUPP was cutting all links with the CPAROC.⁶⁰ The Alliance members’ “esoteric vision,” Chang said, “has been shortsighted, opportunist and counterproductive to the goal of achieving peaceful unification between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.” Whether the breakup was final remains to be seen. In 2019, Zhang and Zhou were charged with receiving around US\$62,000 in illegal donations from China destined for the CDPP.⁶¹

Members of the Alliance, as well as immigrant spouses from China, were also behind a controversy surrounding an illegal shrine to the CCP erected in Changhua County (it was demolished in September 2018). The same day, a spokesperson for the State Council’s TAO in Beijing accused the Tsai administration of “persecuting” the pro-unification camp in Taiwan.

⁶⁰ Sean Lin, “CUPP breaks ties with patriotism association” (September 16, 2018), *Taipei Times*, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2018/09/16/2003700515>.

⁶¹ Lawrence Chung, “Taiwan charges pro-Beijing politicians with accepting funds from Chinese mainland” (October 30, 2019), *South China Morning Post*, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3035425/taiwan-charges-pro-beijing-politicians-accepting-funds-chinese>.

Challenges and conclusions

As with other elements of the CCP's political warfare efforts against Taiwan, much of the political work carried out by the CUPP and its affiliates lies in the "gray zone" of the legal system, meaning that in many cases, it is difficult to summon articles of the law to dismantle networks and arrest individuals. Although recent changes to national security laws have made it easier to prosecute in some instances, and made sentences stiffer for offenders, the fact remains that those are insufficient to substantially erode the ability of substate actors to cause serious harm to Taiwanese society and its democratic institutions. Those groups, moreover, have successfully hijacked the democratic rhetoric to portray all attempts at curtailing their activities by the state as "authoritarian" overreach. Not without irony, when coming to the defense of such actors in Taiwan, the Chinese party-state apparatus has adopted similar criticism.

The reliance on crime syndicates to support, and as we have seen, to possibly help finance, pro-CCP political activity in Taiwan has added an extra layer of complexity to the problem. This lies in the fact that otherwise unconnected areas of activity — criminal and political — are in this case overlapping. The hybrid, or symbiotic, nature of this relationship is beneficial to both: criminal activity provides deniability to political actors, and in return the willingness of crime syndicates to participate in political work can create opportunities for enrichment, in Taiwan as well as in China. In other words, ideology does not need to be the principal motivator for gangsters to provide assistance to pro-CCP entities like the CUPP.

The symbiosis between triads and political actors like the Bamboo Union and the CUPP also exploits the blindspots that inherently arise from the different mandates that govern law enforcement and security

intelligence agencies. In other words, agencies that strictly monitor criminal behavior (extortion, gambling, prostitution, debt collection, bid rigging, drug trafficking, gun-running and so on) will not concern themselves with the political uses to which the proceeds from such activity may be put. Conversely, security intelligence agencies, whose principal mandate is to protect threats against national security of a political nature (espionage, cyberattacks and so on), may be overlooking the criminal efforts that underpin and facilitate political activity on behalf of an external actor. It is therefore easy to imagine that intelligence collected by the National Police Agency (NPA) and Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB) on the criminal side may not be entirely at the disposal of the counterparts on the security intelligence side, such as the Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau (MJIB) and the National Security Bureau (NSB). Besides institutional compartmentalization, competition between agencies may also result in the intentional refusal to share material with a “competing” agency, a problem that is certainly not limited to Taiwan. This, in turn, is compounded by the absence of an intelligence fusion center, akin to the UK’s Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC),⁶² whose function is to gather all the intelligence from within the national security apparatus, analyze the products and provide a threat assessment to the decision makers at the National Security Council (NSC) and the Presidential Office.

Finally, another variable which may weaken the state’s willingness and ability to truly crack down on organizations like the Bamboo Union and the CUPP is the fact that the very agencies that are collecting intelligence against them may face disincentives to take action for two principal

⁶² John Hughes-Wilson, *On Intelligence: The History of Espionage and the Secret World* (London: Constable, 2016), p. 269.

reasons. Firstly, as is often the case in counter-intelligence (CI), agencies are reluctant to proceed with arrest because they hope that, with additional time, they can further widen their net and thereby draw a fuller picture of the network under surveillance. Another reason, this one depending on the laws and regulations that govern source-handling by intelligence agencies, has to do with reliance on sources which have a criminal record. If, as appears to be the case with many of the entities discussed in this paper, Taiwan's best sources on what is going on in China and within the CCP are the very criminals who are engaging in or facilitating political work in Taiwan, then agencies such as the NSB may have every interest in the individuals concerned retaining their ability to operate freely. In other words, for those individuals to not find themselves behind bars. While the case can be made that such a tradeoff is necessary, the state must nevertheless carefully balance such pragmatic considerations with the existential threat that such entities pose to the state. In other words, source protection should not transcend national security.

Taiwan's experience with the symbiotic relationship between organized crime and pro-CCP substate actors should be of interest to other countries with a large Chinese diaspora and the presence of Chinese triads. The CCP's United Front strategy has made it clear that it will exploit all areas of activity to influence targeted societies. Since its creation, the CCP has made organized crime a tool in its arsenal, and it would be careless on the part of other societies to assume that the party would not made similar use of such resources abroad.