

Report Cites Concerns about Chinese Influence on American Institutions

WASHINGTON—Scholars from the [Hoover Institution](#) and other organizations today issued a report that examines China’s efforts to influence US institutions and calls for protecting American values, norms, and laws from such interference, while also warning against “demonizing” any group of people.

According to the 192-page document, which was unveiled today (Nov. 29) at a Hoover DC press event, China is attempting on a wide scale to manipulate state and local governments, universities, think tanks, media, corporations, and the Chinese American community. (Click [here](#) to read the report, titled “Chinese Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance.”)

The document was produced by researchers convened by the Hoover Institution and the [Asia Society’s Center on US-China Relations](#), along with support from [The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands](#). The working group included leading China scholars who researched the issue for more than a year and a half. Project cochairs are [Larry Diamond](#), senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, and [Orville Schell](#), the Arthur Ross Director at Asia Society Center on US-China Relations.

The objective of the Chinese entities is to promote sympathetic views of China, especially its government, policies, society and culture, the report concludes. The work is described as a “summons to greater awareness of the challenges our country faces and greater vigilance in defending our institutions,” and explicitly not intended to cause unfairness or recklessness towards any group of Americans.

On this point, Diamond and Schell wrote in the afterword, “At the same time that we fortify ourselves against harmful outside interference, we must also be mindful to do no harm. In particular, we must guard against having this report used unfairly to cast aspersions on Chinese, whether

Chinese American immigrants who have become (or are becoming) United States citizens, Chinese students, Chinese businesspeople, or other kinds of Chinese visitors, whose contributions to America's progress over the past century have been enormous.”

The report's findings include the following:

- The **Chinese Communist party-state** leverages a broad range of party, state, and non-state actors to advance its influence-seeking objectives, and in recent years it has significantly accelerated both its investment and the intensity of these efforts.
- In **American federal and state politics**, China seeks to identify and cultivate rising politicians. Chinese entities employ prominent lobbying and public relations firms and cooperate with influential civil society groups.
- On **American university campuses**, Confucius Institutes provide the Chinese government access to US student bodies, and Chinese Students and Scholars Associations sometimes report on their compatriots on American campuses and put pressure on American universities that host events deemed politically offensive to China.
- At **think tanks**, researchers, scholars, and other staffers report regular attempts by Chinese diplomats and other intermediaries to influence their activities within the United States. China has also begun to establish its own network of US think tanks.
- In **business**, China is using its companies to advance strategic objectives abroad, gaining political influence and access to critical infrastructure and technology. China has made foreign companies' continued access to its domestic market conditional on their compliance with Beijing's stance on Taiwan and Tibet.
- In the **technology sector**, China is engaged in a multifaceted effort to misappropriate technologies it deems critical to its economic and military success. Beyond economic espionage, theft, and the forced technology transfers that are required of many joint venture partnerships, China also captures much valuable new technology

through its investments in US high-tech companies and by exploiting the openness of the American economy.

- In the American **media**, China has all but eliminated independent Chinese-language media outlets that once served Chinese American communities. It has co-opted existing Chinese-language outlets and established its own new media outlets.

Policy principles

Looking to the future, the scholars offer a set of policy principles for guiding American relationships with Chinese entities. These include:

- promoting greater **transparency** of financial and other relationships that with Chinese entities which may be subject to improper influence;
- promoting the **integrity** of American institutions; and
- seeking greater **reciprocity** for American institutions to operate in China to an extent commensurate with Chinese institutions' ability to operate in the United States.

For example, the report urges that the US media should undertake careful, fact-based investigative reporting of Chinese influence activities, and it should enhance its knowledge base for undertaking responsible reporting. Also, Congress should perform its constitutional role by continuing to investigate, report on, and recommend appropriate action concerning Chinese influence activities in the United States.

However, the report should not be viewed as an invitation to a McCarthy era-like reaction against Chinese in America, the researchers noted.

“We reiterate: it is absolutely crucial that whatever measures are taken to counteract harmful forms of Chinese influence seeking not end up demonizing any group of Americans, or even visitors to America, in ways that are unfair or reckless,” wrote Diamond and Schell.

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