

**THE GLOBAL PRESENCE OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA:
EXTERNAL WORK**

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Executive Summary

1. The Communist Party of China (CPC) is becoming a *global force* that seeks to govern the globalisation of businesses, media, projects, workers, students and overseas Chinese. Its actions in the “grey zone” of international power are mostly less about interfering in other countries and more about extending the CPC’s organisational power to control Chinese actors residing abroad.
2. China’s global footprint has many different faces. In addition to foreign policy and diplomacy, China’s central and local governments use local government friendship ties, Confucius institutes, public diplomacy, research cooperation and exchange and talent recruitment programmes to gain influence in foreign countries.
3. The bulk of Chinese influence caters for overt diplomatic or fairly modest aims. Nevertheless, the extraterritorial extension of the Chinese party, nation and culture is potentially of greater significance than the attempts at surreptitiously interfering in society and politics of foreign countries.
4. The CPC’s (largely) overt work abroad comprises three separate components, namely “external work” (*duiwai gongzuo*), “united front work” (*tongyi zhanxian gongzuo*) and “party building work” (*dangjian gongzuo*).
5. Through its International Department, the CPC presents China as a world power with a proven alternative model of government which will establish a new world order free of Western dominance. The Party insists that China does not seek to spread autocracy or forge an alliance of autocratic countries against the democratic world, but merely offers an example for others to emulate.
6. Under Xi, the International Department promotes much less China’s specific foreign policy goals and more ambitiously, ways to cultivate support for China’s global role as a great power and its vision of the future world order, including the Belt and Road Initiative, Community with a Shared Future for Mankind and the Chinese Dream.

7. The International Department has now included economic and cultural factors. It not just engages foreign political parties, but also seeks to influence foreign public opinion, business elites, journalists and academics in “people-to-people exchanges” to promote China’s successful model of economic development.
8. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are targeted either directly by the Department’s participation in international events and conferences, or more indirectly through Chinese NGOs affiliated with the Department. The Department reportedly also supports and guides the work of other Chinese NGOs abroad, such as in Africa.
9. The International Department coordinates training courses, visits and other exchange events for partner parties abroad. This effort is not limited to countries ruled by an autocratic communist party like Vietnam and Laos, but also includes democracies or nominal democracies, such as Malaysia, South Africa, Fiji and Uganda.
10. It is essential to parse the foreign activities of the many different Chinese party, military and government agencies involved in foreign work, instead of assuming that these are fully coordinated or indeed work to a common agenda. Other great powers have built up similar agencies to project influence across the world, but whose agendas and methods do not necessarily always align.