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## Chinese Communist Party Infiltration of U.S. Pacific Islands: Protecting American National Security Through Defending Strategic Pacific Assets

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## Introduction

In 1984 when President Ronald Reagan visited Guam he said, “[Guam] may be nearly 9,000 miles from our nation’s capital, but it’s a real pleasure to know that we’re among fellow Americans... In times of crisis, few Americans have been more steadfast in the defense of our shared values and few have made more sacrifices to preserve them.”<sup>1</sup> Today, although to the everyday American it does not feel like it, the United States is in a crisis. This crisis is again testing Guam and the other American Pacific territories in their steadfast defense of our shared values, except this time, the enemy is unlike one the American Pacific territories have been up against before; it’s even fair to say that the United States is facing a reality no different. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has engaged in a fight for global hegemony, a race in which they must infiltrate and break down the United States in order to assume their hegemonic power. However, they have launched this campaign against the US using unrestricted warfare, a warfare tactic that employs the use of every-day technologies, wide-spread media, and economic investments in civilian infrastructure to influence and infiltrate American minds. At the forefront of the US’s physical line of defense against the CCP are the US’s Pacific territories, specifically the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. Although often overlooked on the world stage, these three well-inhabited, governed, and resourceful islands are pivotal to the US’s defense against the growing threat the CCP poses. The CCP’s seemingly covert actions have been reported since the early 2000s and are continuing to this day. If these measures of unrestricted warfare in the Pacific continue without action from the United States and allies, the CCP will have significant leverage on the United States as they inch closer, figuratively and literally, to grave and violent measures for hegemony.

The Chinese Communist Party’s goal of gaining global hegemony through the means of infiltrating Pacific Islands is evident in their illegal activity, information operations, and economic incentives; all of which yield grave implications for the United States. However, the United States can defend against this activity by engaging the US Intelligence Community’s unique capabilities to inform policy makers on how to defeat this enemy as they build a vital grand strategy. First, the Intelligence Community (IC) must understand exactly what China’s end goals are, specifically as they pertain to the Pacific region. Secondly, China’s means to achieve these goals and the ways they have already begun become central to the IC’s mission. Lastly, the Intelligence Community must analyze their own abilities to collect, analyze, and disseminate intelligence on this matter so that policymakers are properly informed when making decisions to act.

### **Section One: China’s Overall Goal: Ends & Background of the Pacific Islands Region**

The Chinese Communist Party has been eagerly awaiting the opportunity to operationalize their overarching plan for hegemonic usurpation. In 1949 when the CCP arose under the leadership of Mao Zedong, the party came together with a plan that reinvigorated an ancient Chinese theory called TianXia which translates to all under heaven. The CCP set out to make this ancient Chinese doctrine a modern reality; they wanted to rule all under heaven by being the true center of the universe in a divine way. Yet in geopolitical terms, this meant

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Remarks on Arrival at Guam International Airport in Agana,” Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, 2025, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-arrival-guam-international-airport-agana>.

accomplishing global hegemony and influencing the rest of the world with their doctrine and through their means. The CCP knew that there would be one significant challenge to accomplishing this goal, the world's current hegemonic superpower, the United States. Therefore, the CCP created a carefully crafted plan to dominate the world, which would take the nation 100 years if all went according to plan.<sup>2</sup> The CCP's plan ultimately centers on the deconstruction of the United States. One of the methods employed by the CCP to infiltrate and break the United States as part of their overall plan is to gain influence, if not control, of as many Pacific Islands as possible. This goal was outlined in the Chinese texts China-Pacific Island Countries Common Development Vision and China-Pacific Island Countries Five-Year Action Plan on Common Development (2022- 2026).<sup>3</sup> The CCP has without a doubt begun and is continuing with their Vision and Plan in the Pacific Islands region.

The Pacific Islands region is home to fourteen independent and freely associated countries, nine US islands/ territories, and seven territories owned by other countries.<sup>4</sup> While often overlooked for their small land masses and populations, the Pacific Islands are much more consequential within international affairs than their geographic statistics indicate. Former assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the US Department of State said, "Let's not look at [Pacific Island Countries] as small island countries. They are large ocean nations."<sup>5</sup> This statement mainly refers to the fact that the Pacific Islands region's total exclusive economic zones extend across 7.7 million square miles of ocean. Within these nearly eight million square miles are important fisheries, resources, and American military bases. The United States is in some capacity involved with three Pacific territories and six small islands beginning around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The three Pacific territories are Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Guam and American Samoa are organized but unincorporated territories while the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) are considered a commonwealth in political union with the United States. While Guam's citizens are considered American citizens, the inhabitants of American Samoa are not citizens by birth but considered US nationals and are able to freely travel to the United States.<sup>6</sup> All three of these American island chains played a strategic role in World War II during the American fight against Japan in the Pacific. After the US became directly involved in the war, specifically pushing back on the Japanese, the United States began an 'island hopping' plan to maintain control in the Pacific. This plan involved winning battles on Pacific Islands in order to build military bases as the United States pushed Japan back across the Pacific, eventually attacking Japan itself with atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. This island hopping plan took about three years with bloody, but ultimately victorious, battles in Midway, the Southern Solomon Islands, Tarawa, the Philippines, Guam, and eventually the modern day Japanese islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> G. G. Chang, *Plan Red* (Humanix Books, 2024), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Cleo Paskal, *Examining the Office of Insular Affairs' Role in Fostering Prosperity in the Pacific Territories and Addressing External Threats to Peace and Security*, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, March 5, 2025, <https://www.fdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/03-05-25-Paskal-Written-Testimony.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Frank J. West and Stephen Foster, "Pacific Islands," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Pacific-Islandsf>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S.- China Economic and Security Review Commission, "Staff Report: China in the Pacific Islands," accessed May 14, 2025, <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China-Pacific%20Islands%20Staff%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> "What Are US Territories?," *Asia Matters for America*, accessed May 14, 2025, <https://asiamattersforamerica.org/the-pacific/what-are-us-territories>.

<sup>7</sup> "Island Hopping and WW2 in the Pacific," *Students of History*, accessed May 14, 2025, <https://www.studentsofhistory.com/war-in-the-pacific>.

Guam was already an American territory during WWII having been annexed by the United States after the Spanish-American War. Until the 1950s, Guam was governed by naval officers, but an established government did not form until 1978 when Guam became self-governing but with a non-voting delegate representing Guam in the US House of Representatives. The Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands was a Spanish territory, sold to Germany after the Spanish-American War and, after WWI, was given as a League of Nations mandate to Japan which led to their 1944 occupation by the United States due to the fate of Japan in WWII. Through an internal vote, the CNMI decided to become a United States territory, as approved by Congress, which then fully implemented in 1986.<sup>8</sup> While American Samoa is a United States territory, its governmental structure differs from the other Pacific territories due to its larger population. The island maintains its own constitution and more political autonomy while still being able to represent its interests in the US legislative branch. Its delegate in the House of Representatives does have voting power. Today, within Micronesia are several United States naval and air force bases that the military regularly trains and operates at.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, in 2025 there are only 12 countries that have continued to diplomatically recognize Taiwan and 4 of them are Pacific Island nations: the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, and Tuvalu, showcasing their commitment to democratic principles<sup>10</sup>

The United States' interest in these territories is clear, and its commitment to the islands has remained evident through congressional representation and regular military activity on the bases they house. However, Beijing's interests in the Pacific Islands have heightened in the past two decades as evident in their financial, diplomatic, and informational activity in and directed towards the islands. A 2018 "Staff Report" by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission outlined the heightened Chinese engagement in the Pacific Islands. The Commission believes that China's engagement in the region is primarily driven by three areas: "(1) promoting its diplomatic and strategic priorities; (2) reducing Taiwan's international space; and (3) gaining access to raw materials and natural resources."<sup>11</sup> United States has focused on uncovering a fourth motive: Chinese access to these islands gives the CCP a strategic edge in their aggressive campaign against the United States.

Since the 1970s, China has been pursuing diplomatic relations with Pacific islands. First Fiji in 1975 and then Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Tonga followed throughout the 80s and 90s. Since the 2010s, diplomatic ties became economic with a major surge in influence through China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which was introduced to the Pacific in 2017.<sup>12</sup> According to the U.S.-China Economic Security Review Commission, "official Chinese government statements and policy documents include the Pacific Islands as part of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative—one component of BRI, unveiled by President Xi in 2013."<sup>13</sup> Through the

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<sup>8</sup> "What Are US Territories?" Asia Matters for America.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> U.S.- China Economic and Security Review Commission, "Staff Report."

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

BRI, the People's Republic of China (PRC) built a bridge in Fiji, sports stadiums in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu,<sup>14</sup> updated ports in independent Samoa, and more.<sup>15</sup>

In 2017, Chinese scientists started placing acoustic sensors near Guam and the island of Yap in Micronesia.<sup>16</sup> According to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Commission, their analysts believe these sensors can be used to monitor US submarine activity in the region which can “[enable] the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy greater flexibility and [expand] its ability to transit freely into the Pacific Islands region.”<sup>17</sup> Additionally, Joanne Wallis, a senior lecturer at the Strategic and Defense Studies Center at Australian National University, believes that “in addition to seeking naval access to the Pacific Islands region, China's strategic interests have centered on signals intelligence monitoring, including reportedly through its fishing fleets in the region.”<sup>18</sup> These capabilities have contributed greatly to enabling the PLA activities and influence within the Pacific.

On a defense note, a 2018 Australian newspaper rumored of a possible Chinese military base in the allied Pacific country Vanuatu. The Sydney Morning Herald cited the information as coming from “senior security officials.”<sup>19</sup> Less opaque is a Chinese defense goal referred to as China's second island chain. Dr. Yu, executive director of China's National Center for Oceania Studies at Sun Yat-sen University, stated that “The [Pacific Island] countries play a significant role in China's offshore defense strategy in the Pacific along with the further development of a blue water navy.... China's maritime great power dream will not be realized if the second island chain remains intact... Chinese writings on the strategic significance of the island chains reflect similar views on the importance of the island chains to China's security needs.”<sup>20</sup> The CCP's vision to control as many Pacific Islands proposes the possibility that the CCP wants to extend further than the confines of their hopeful second island chain. Infiltrating the American Pacific Islands is part of that plan and in many ways, has already begun.

## **Section Two: The CCP's Means & Ways: CCP Activity in the US Pacific Islands and Allies**

### CCP Means

In 2023, Governor Arnold I. Palacios of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) testified in an <sup>21</sup>Oversight Hearing of the US House Committee on Natural Resources. The Governor's bold words established his island's significance to Washington strongly resonated as part of this issue. He said, “The U.S. territories of the Northern Marianas, Guam, and American Samoa firmly anchor America's position in the Pacific, and together with the Freely Associated States, create a vast corridor of peace and security that spans nearly three

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<sup>14</sup> National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Success Stories of the Belt and Road Initiative in the Pacific Islands, People's Republic of China, 2021, [https://en.ndrc.gov.cn/news/mediarresources/202107/t20210727\\_1291826.html](https://en.ndrc.gov.cn/news/mediarresources/202107/t20210727_1291826.html).

<sup>15</sup> China Diplomatic Digest, “China and the ‘Pathway for the Development of Samoa,’” China Diplomatic Digest, January 22, 2024, <https://www.chinadiplomaticdigest.com/p/china-and-the-pathway-for-the-development>.

<sup>16</sup> U.S.- China Economic and Security Review Commission, “Staff Report.”

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

million square miles and connects to the seas of other allied nations.”<sup>22</sup> The American Pacific territories play a strategic role in American National Defense, yet Beijing seems to understand that better than Washington does, due to their consistent infiltration of the islands. The CCP’s desire for America’s Pacific Territories has been evident since the early 2000s. In 2008, Admiral Timothy Keating recalls a senior Chinese official proposing an idea to him, saying: “You take Hawaii east, we’ll take Hawaii west, we’ll share information, and we’ll save you all the trouble of deploying your naval forces west of Hawaii.”<sup>23</sup> Although his proposal is almost laughable in the eyes of the United States, even at a time when the United States was more than cordial with China, the statement embodies how Pacific control has been on the CCP’s radar far before the United States realized it. China’s economic efforts are evident in the cases of Pacific Islands, such as the Samoa and Vanuatu islands previously mentioned, but China’s approach to American territories has been secretive. The Foundation for Defense of Democracies writes “It’s not just PRC diplomats. The CCP and its proxies use a range of methods, including public and private loans, bribery, blackmail, coercion, investment, and influence, to advance their interests. This has included outright attempts at the destruction of a country if breaking it into pieces is seen as advantageous (this is consistent with PRC unrestricted and ‘disintegration’ warfare).”<sup>24</sup> Disintegration warfare is a critical and strategic part of China’s greater war theory known as unrestricted warfare. Unrestricted warfare can be explained as “any methods can be prepared for use, information is everywhere, the battlefield is everywhere, and that any technology might be combined with any other technology.”<sup>25</sup> Meaning, the war currently waged by CCP against the United States and islands in the Pacific is not one with tanks and missiles, but goes far beyond traditional military boundaries and instead uses everyday technologies, institutions, and infrastructures to impede on the minds and livelihood of their targets. In the case of the Pacific Islands, the CCP is using financial incentives, media warfare, illegal activity, and diplomatic leverage as a means to achieve their goal.

## CCP Ways

### CCP Unrestricted Warfare Efforts in CNMI

In CNMI, PRC nationals have been allowed to enter the commonwealth without visas since 2009, to encourage tourism and economic invigoration in their struggling economy. Also, in response to their economy, the islands allowed Chinese gambling networks to build a casino in their capital city of Saipan. Which at first was harmless and a boost to their struggling economy, the CNMI’s loose policies on foreign engagement and immigration made way for ill-intended economic activity of Chinese nationals to severely abuse these privileges.<sup>26</sup> At first, CNMI Governor Arnold Palacios reported in 2023 that “The Chinese casino on Saipan at its peak racked in billions of US dollars in monthly rolling chip volumes from just 16 VIP tables” but eventually, he went on to report that the casino “was fraught with controversy — from human

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<sup>22</sup> Eunice Kwon, “Oral Testimony of Governor Arnold I. Palacios Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands,” Office of CNMI Governor and Lt. Governor, August 24, 2023, <https://governor.gov.mp/news/oral-testimony-of-governor-arnold-i-palacios-commonwealth-of-the-northern-mariana-islands/>.

<sup>23</sup> Paskal, Examining the Office of Insular Affairs.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Liang Qiao and Xiangsui Wang, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999), 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> Paskal, Examining the Office of Insular Affairs.

trafficking to birth tourism, labor abuse, money laundering, and public corruption.”<sup>27</sup> In March of 2025, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies wrote a Congressional Testimony for the House Nature Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs about “Examining the Office of Insular Affairs’ Role in Fostering Prosperity in the Pacific Territories and Addressing External Threats to Peace and Security.” Author Cleo Paskal thoroughly analyzed the PRC’s linked activity in the United States’s three significant Pacific territories. In CNMI, she noted that in addition to what the Governor listed, “Chinese have been found traveling illegally to Guam by boat (and roaming on military installations), using the US postal service to distribute illegal drugs, selling illegal drugs, and buying United States driver’s licenses.”<sup>28</sup>

### CCP Unrestricted Warfare Efforts in Guam and the Ally, the Solomon Islands

In addition to Chinese nationals roaming American military bases in Guam, Guam has also been “the target of PRC-linked cyberattacks on its critical infrastructure, a serious security concern given the role of the American bases in defending the region.”<sup>29</sup> Circling back to the CCP’s use of unrestricted warfare, Guam is experiencing the information warfare component of this strategy. The CCP has been generating digital messages in social media and news outlets that are meant to create insecurity in the population that could lead to Guam’s citizens turning on the United States federal government. The CCP wants Guam to think that their American status puts them at the risk of a large-scale attack, specifically by the DF-26 ballistic missile that PRC media named the “Guam Killer.”<sup>30</sup> Guam is not the only victim of CCP information warfare. The Solomon Islands, although not an American territory, is a strong partner of Australia and the West and is experiencing the full extent of PRC information warfare. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute wrote an article in 2022 that “The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is attempting to influence public discourse in Solomon Islands through coordinated information operations that seek to spread false narratives and suppress information on a range of topics...In alignment with the CCP’s regional security objectives, those messages have a strong focus on undermining Solomon Islands’ existing partnerships with Australia and the US.”<sup>31</sup> The case of the Solomon Islands is relevant to Guam’s threat through how it showcases the extent of CCP capabilities that Guam must defend against. Guam’s Governor Leon Guerrero recognized this threat and took a strong and vital stance: “Some say that by allowing the U.S. military to base in Guam, we are making ourselves a target. That’s nonsense. We are a target because of geography. And I’d much prefer the U.S. military be here than the Chinese military.”<sup>32</sup>

### CCP Unrestricted Warfare Efforts in American Samoa

American Samoa has expressed worry about how their islands are being surrounded by the CCP through diplomatic ties with neighboring nations. Congresswoman Radewagen spoke at a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing in February 2025 saying “In the past two weeks,

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<sup>27</sup> Kwon, “Oral Testimony of Governor Palacios.”

<sup>28</sup> Paskal, Examining the Office of Insular Affairs.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Bec Johnson, Suppressing the Truth and Spreading Lies, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2022, <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/suppressing-truth-and-spreading-lies>.

<sup>32</sup> Paskal, Examining the Office of Insular Affairs.

independent Samoa and the Cook Islands have signed deals with the PRC. With Kiribati to the north, independent Samoa to the [west] and Cook Islands to our east, my home district of American Samoa is now surrounded on three sides by China-friendly nations.”<sup>33</sup> The nature of the relationship between independent Samoa and China is even more concerning. With the signing of their new visa waiver agreement, unvetted Chinese citizens are allowed to freely travel to the nation already ridden with PRC-related crime. Due to the vicinity of Samoa and American Samoa, American Samoa is worried about their own island meeting a similar crime related fate.

### CCP Unrestricted Warfare Efforts in Palau, an American Ally

Palau is a small island country in the Pacific that used to be a US administered territory but became independent in 1944. Despite gaining independence from the United States, Palau is a strong ally of the West and maintains formal association with the States through welcoming state services, using the US dollar, hosting American troops, and Palau citizens also sustain the right of unrestricted entry into the United States. Palau’s strong relationship with the United States and their unwavering support for Taiwan’s sovereignty has made them a target of the CCP.<sup>34</sup> Like the CCP’s efforts in the Solomon Islands and their successful campaign in the Pacific island Kiribati which is now led by a pro-China government, Palau was also being infiltrated by the PRC, but in a different way. According to the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Organization, Palau had hundreds of Chinese nationals running illegal online gambling operations from leased apartments in Palau cities that operated unknown to their government for some time.<sup>35</sup> In 2018, Palau citizens noticed an uptick in Chinese nationals on the island, except, unlike the typical tourist in Palau enjoying their beautiful sites, these Chinese tourists stayed inside, getting food delivered and even exploiting small prostitution networks on the island. The small Palau law enforcement began an investigation into the strange tourists and was eventually overwhelmed in 2019 when they raided three apartment buildings which led to 165 arrests of what they believed to be “low-paid workers who had been brought in to staff illegal online gambling operations, targeting customers back in China.”<sup>36</sup> The small apartments were littered with bunk beds, modern laptops, mobile phones, and packaged food to sustain the workers without needing to leave the apartment. Due to the asymmetric size of the detainees to law enforcement agents in Palau, the Chinese gamblers were deported to China without extensive questioning. But the investigation continued nonetheless, leading government investigators down a trail of financial records. The forensic accounting revealed that these groups were being financed by a Chinese national living in Palau named Tian Hang. But the most disturbing detail is that Hang is one of Palau’s most powerful citizens with connections to Palau presidents and leaders. While maintaining relations with Palau policy makers, he is also heavily

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<sup>33</sup> House Foreign Affairs Committee Republicans, *The USAID Betrayal*, YouTube video, February 13, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5Rsw0n30sk>.

<sup>34</sup> Island Times, “Pacific Gambit: Inside the Chinese Communist Party and Triad Push into Palau,” *Island Times*, December 16, 2022, <https://islandtimes.org/hed-pacific-gambit-inside-the-chinese-communist-party-and-triad-push-into-palau/>.

<sup>35</sup> Bernadette Carreon, Aubrey Belford, and Martin Young, “Pacific Gambit: Inside the Chinese Communist Party and Triad Push into Palau,” *Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project*, December 12, 2022, accessed [insert access date], <https://www.occrp.org/en/investigation/pacific-gambit-inside-the-chinese-communist-party-and-triad-push-into-palau>.

<sup>36</sup> Island Times, “Pacific Gambit.”

involved in CCP Pacific influence campaigns. Palau's *Island Times* wrote, "according to Chinese media reports, he headed the Palau Overseas Chinese Federation, a body aimed at organizing Chinese expatriates in the Pacific nation under the CCP umbrella."<sup>37</sup> Tian even attended a September 2019 event for Chinese diaspora leaders in Beijing's Great Hall of the People to celebrate 70 years of Communist Party rule."<sup>38</sup> This case in Palau is just another example of the growing trend all over the Pacific Islands and even Southeast Asia. An expert in China's overseas criminal networks at the United States Institute for Peace, Jason Tower, said that "Chinese organized crime groups are moving into countries with weak governance in order to build illicit business empires and launder money, often through businesses similar to those popping up in Palau, like casinos and cryptocurrency schemes... By offshoring their criminal activities, they avoid Beijing's ire and show their usefulness to the CCP through corrupting local elites."<sup>39</sup> Washington D.C. must be weary of this activity in order to defend their territories.

### Section Three: The Bigger Picture

With all of this evidence, it's important to note that what the CCP is doing in the Pacific Islands is simply a small piece of a bigger strategy. As mentioned in *Section One: China's Overall Goal: Ends & Background of the Pacific Islands Region* when explaining the history of China's TianXia goal, the CCP's threat is far greater than simply what is happening in the Pacific, and the United States did not realize their ambitions until after Washington directly handed them the leverage they needed to pursue it. It's recorded that on former President Nixon's deathbed, he recalled his foreign policies on opening and engaging with China to fuel their early rise as having "created a Frankenstein."<sup>40</sup> The naive Nixon administration bought into "the Chinese mantra that a prosperous China would be a peaceful China and, therefore, it was incumbent on the United States to hasten the advent of prosperity as soon as possible."<sup>41</sup> Despite Nixon musing on his monstrous creation, the proceeding executives continued feeding into China's rise, single-handedly building China into the economic power we currently fear most. After years of Chinese diplomacy from former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to former President Clinton's action allowing China into the World Trade Organization, the United States acted as a catalyst in building its own enemy. It was in 1949, far before our aid, that the CCP took the ancient Chinese TianXia concept in a literal sense through the rise of Mao Zedong in the aftermath of the Chinese civil war and invasion. The ambitious plan went widely unknown to the West for years due to the CCP's commitment to *tao guang yang hui* which means hide your strength, bide your time.<sup>42</sup> The threat to US National Security has not changed since Mao drafted his plans at the beginning of his reign. It's only now that the threat has become more immediate, due to the damaging effects of warfare the CCP has already engaged in.

Unlike the past century of modern warfare, the CCP is not only fighting through kinetic means. The CCP is employing warfare through economic, drug, technological, informational, psychological, media, cyber, proxy, biological, chemical, cultural, ideological, and space. It's

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<sup>37</sup> Carreon, Belford, and Young, "Pacific Gambit."

<sup>38</sup> *Island Times*, "Pacific Gambit."

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Congress, Congressional Record (Bound Edition), vol. 146, pt. 6 (2000), "Vote Against PNTR," accessed 2015, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CRECB-2000-pt6/html/CRECB-2000-pt6-Pg8555-5.htm>.

<sup>41</sup> June Teufel Dreyer, "The Historic US Opening to China: A Retrospective," *The Epoch Times*, February 25, 2022, <https://www.theepochtimes.com/opinion/the-historic-us-opening-to-chinaa-retrospective-4301600>.

<sup>42</sup> Chang, *Plan Red*, 24.

clear that the nature of the CCP's campaign against the United States goes far beyond military measures. The strategic component of the CCP's means to an end goal is a CCP organization called the United Front.<sup>43</sup> The United Front operates through a network designated to influence and align an array of domestic and international groups with the CCP's goals. This web of CCP espionage organizations focus their operations on engaging with Western academia, business leaders, cultural institutions, scientific innovators, political leaders, economic initiatives, and more.<sup>44</sup> Through a blend of overt and soft power initiatives, the United Front has and is continuing to influence American public opinion and policy decisions without firing a single bullet. The United Front, the forefront of the Chinese threat to American civilian infrastructure and public opinion, is the prime example of the CCP's use of unrestricted warfare. Unrestricted warfare on a broader scale is the new era of warfare that goes far beyond traditional military boundaries and instead embraces new forms of wreaking havoc on a nation that our modern world has yet to draft a framework on, or even fully grasp, how to defend against. In observing the events of the Gulf War, two Colonels in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) formally recognized this new age of warfare. Through understanding the concepts in *Unrestricted Warfare* by Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, US intelligence can formulate what the United Front is doing: not only employing these modern military alternatives to war but strategically combining the efforts and outcomes of the asymmetric means to work towards one common goal. Additionally, the threat is exacerbated by the targets of the United Front being everyday civilians. More so, the weapons being used by the United Front to target civilians are everyday technologies and institutions. As society advances, warfare advances as well. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui write,

“The appearance of new-concept weapons will definitely elevate future warfare to a level which is hard for the common people – or even military men - to imagine. Then the second thing we have to say should be: The new concept of weapons will cause ordinary people and military men alike to be greatly astonished at the fact that commonplace things that are close to them can also become weapons with which to engage in war.”<sup>45</sup>

#### Section Four: US Implications and Intelligence Recommendations

With China's goals and specifically their actions against the US in the Pacific region, the US government is called into action. In a statement by Cleo Paskal, “This time, it's not Marines who are needed to liberate CNMI and give it a chance to come out of the darkness, it's forensic accountants, FBI agents, special investigators and others who can shine a light on corruption—the fuel that drives PRC expansion. And others are needed who will help it rebuild its economy in a viable way, creating resilience against the next attacks. And there will be more attacks. You

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<sup>43</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party. *Unrestricted Warfare: CCP Influence in the U.S. University System*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2024. <https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/uf-101-memo-final-pdf-version.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Chang, Plan Red, 43.

<sup>45</sup> Qiao and Wang, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 26. <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Publications/Books/charting-a-course/Article/1026958/chapter-1-american-grand-strategy/>.

just need to look at a map to see why.”<sup>46</sup> This statement from the Defense of Democracies is not exclusive to CNMI but to Guam and American Samoa as well. The intelligence requirement in all three American Pacific territories is clear: without US action, the implications of PRC influence and control of the Pacific Islands are extensive. The first implication is one suggested by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission which believes that this crisis in the Pacific could threaten the current agreement the United States has with Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.<sup>47</sup> Implications for the US also include the possible erosion of US influence in the region leading to a weakened American military presence, and opening a path for the PLA. Secondly, through China’s BRI efforts, the Pacific islands will likely feel they owe Beijing, causing them to side with Beijing if war breaks out.<sup>48</sup>

The bottom line is that this threat is predicted to continue through how the PRC is not positioned to give up influencing the US Pacific Islands through economic investments, distortion, psychological manipulation, diplomatic relations with surrounding islands, and more. In response, it’s recommended that the US Intelligence Community (IC) leverages the maritime knowledge and collection capabilities of Naval and Coast Guard Intelligence to expand the IC’s understanding of this threat to inform policymakers. The Navy and Coast Guard can use the expertise of other intelligence agencies in their effort, with intelligence sharing facilitated by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the US Department of Treasury can use forensic accounting to trace Chinese economic investments, specifically when they are suspected to be connected to illegal activity. The Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) Human Intelligence (HUMINT) would be helpful in collecting on Chinese nationals working in the governments of American Pacific Islands and discovering their intentions. National Security Agency’s (NSA) Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) should use its unique capabilities with collecting on threats to undersea cables. This will assess the United States strengths and weaknesses in United States undersea cable networks within the Pacific which is necessary due to the sensitivity of its unique infrastructure sitting below a region with growing conflict. The Department of State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) would be effective in collecting on the diplomatic relations China is making with nations in the Pacific as they surround Taiwan and American Territories, as expressed in American Samoa’s Congresswoman Radewagen’s concerns at the February 2025 House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing.<sup>49</sup>

Overall, the CCP’s threat to Pacific Islands only further exemplifies Washington’s need for a grand strategy on how to defend against CCP aggression. These intelligence efforts will inform this grand strategy with accuracy and urgency as policymakers pursue the defense of the nation. A grand strategy can be defined as “the use of all instruments of national power to secure the state.”<sup>50</sup> This strategy would “retain its longevity through transcending the security pronouncements of political parties or individual administrations”<sup>51</sup> and “shows great persistence

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<sup>46</sup> Cleo Paskal, “Northern Mariana: Time to Close China’s Backdoor into the U.S.,” Foundation for Defense of Democracies, September 3, 2023, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/09/03/northern-mariana-time-to-close-chinas-backdoor-into-the-u-s/>.

<sup>47</sup> U.S.- China Economic and Security Review Commission, “Staff Report.”

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> House Foreign Affairs Committee Republicans, The USAID Betrayal, YouTube video, February 13, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5Rsw0n30sk>.

<sup>50</sup> Richard D. Hooker Jr., “Chapter 1: American Grand Strategy,” in *Charting a Course: Strategic Choices for a New Administration*, National Defense University Press, 2016,

<sup>51</sup> Hooker Jr., “American Grand Strategy.”

over time, orienting on those things deemed most important - those interests for which virtually any administration will spend, legislate, threaten, or fight to defend.”<sup>52</sup> Senator Tom Cotton in a 2021 report titled *Beat China* began to lay out what this multi-faceted approach to a grand strategy for defeating the CCP may look like. While it would take many minds from all over the political spectrum and professionals in everything from entertainment to geology, the U.S. could begin with “targeted decoupling”<sup>53</sup> which would decrease the US’s reliance on China to slow their growth, maintain technological advancement, and preserve the US dollar. Examples of targeted decoupling include “diversify[ing] foreign sources of rare earths to reduce reliance on China”<sup>54</sup> and “clos[ing] American artificial intelligence research and development (R&D) centers in China, as well as Chinese artificial intelligence R&D centers in the United States.”<sup>55</sup> These are just two examples of hundreds of initiatives that would need to take place in unison with one another for a grand strategy to be fully launched and effective.

The China Economic & Strategy Initiative (CESI) when addressing what it will take to defeat the CCP writes that “Re-posturing the US for this cold war will not be easy and will require sacrifice on a national and an individual level. The president will need to exercise strong leadership to develop and initiate the required economic strategy, and successors will need to act with courage to maintain the course in what will likely be a generation-long struggle. The president should endeavor always to remind Congress, business leaders, and the press that the costs of delayed, insufficiently bold actions against Beijing’s economic aggression are even higher for the United States than the disruptions caused by timely, effective policies.”<sup>56</sup> They go on to say, “The American way of life must be protected, and the U.S. must be ready to deploy a strategy to protect it.”<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusion

The CCP’s intent in the Pacific is no longer just speculated. Their ways are many, and their means are silently violent. Former FBI director Christopher Wray said last year that “The PRC [People’s Republic of China] has made it clear that it considers every sector that makes our society run as fair game in its bid to dominate on the world stage, and that its plan is to land low blows against civilian infrastructure to try to induce panic and break America’s will to resist.”<sup>58</sup> From titling the PLA DF-26 ballistic missile the Guam Killer and broadcasting it on social media to illegal gambling operations in CNMI and encircling American Samoa with CCP allies, the CCP’s aggression in American Pacific Islands is no longer an issue policymakers can ignore. The United States needs a grand strategy to defeat the CCP and the Intelligence Community will

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<sup>52</sup> Hooker Jr., “American Grand Strategy.”

<sup>53</sup> Tom Cotton, *Beat China: Targeted Decoupling and the Economic Long War*. Washington, DC: Office of Senator Tom Cotton, February 2021, 7, PDF file, [https://www.cotton.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/210216\\_1700\\_China%20Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.cotton.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/210216_1700_China%20Report_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>56</sup> Center for Emerging Strategies and Innovations (CESI), “[FULL REPORT] Defeating the CCP: A Running Start,” *Cesionline.org*, November 12, 2024, <https://cesionline.org/2024/11/12/defeating-the-ccp-a-running-start-report/>.

<sup>57</sup> CESI, “Defeating the CCP.”

<sup>58</sup> Christopher Wray, “Wray: Chinese Government Poses ‘Broad and Unrelenting’ Threat to U.S. Critical Infrastructure,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, April 18, 2024, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/chinese-government-poses-broad-and-unrelenting-threat-to-u-s-critical-infrastructure-fbi-director-says>.

play a large part through leveraging their unique collection and analysis capabilities to drive this strategy and the decisions that policymakers and military leaders will make. While CCP activity in American Pacific Islands is only one example of China's greater ambition, defending US owned and affiliated Pacific Islands, our most vital border against China, is protecting national security and the balance of nations for decades to come.

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