

2021-22 WILSON CHINA FELLOWSHIP

Is Rights Advocacy Civil Society in China Dead? How the United States Should Navigate People-to-People Exchange in a New Era

Diana Fu is an Associate Professor in Political Science and the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto and a 2021-22 Wilson China Fellow



Abstract

Since Xi Jinping took power in 2012, advocacy-oriented civil society—those that press for rights associated with liberal democracies—in China has been placed under immense pressure. Based on synthesizing publicly available media articles and reports, this essay assesses whether rights advocacy civil society in China is effectively “dead” under the Xi Administration (2012-2022) and if and where opportunities still exist for people-to-people exchange. The essay argues that a key to analyzing the party-state’s response to advocacy civil society is to disaggregate two facets of threat: mobilizational and ideological. The former refers to civil society’s potential to threaten social stability through collective action while the latter refers to their ideas and values that threaten orthodoxy. In both Mainland China and in Hong Kong, rights advocacy organizations and networks have been amputated, but they are not “dead” in the sense of being permanently demolished. At the same time, the party-state has been actively re-molding educational and cultural institutions to ensure that the future generation of youth—a key pillar of civil society will be pro-CCP in their ideologies. Despite these developments, the essay identifies key issue-areas, actors, and institutions through which U.S. policymakers, U.S. civil society, and educational institutions can continue to engage with Chinese counterparts in a tense period and beyond.

Implications and Key Takeaways

For U.S. Policymakers:

- Foster a policy environment where civil society dialogue is actively encouraged as Track 2 diplomacy. Start with re-booting educational exchange programs with China such as the Fulbright Program and the Peace Corps.
- Strategically reframe programs to substitute “democracy promotion” rhetoric with substantive, non-ideological language such as “civic engagement” and “capacity bridging.”

- Hold congressional hearings on the status and development of civil society in Mainland China and in Hong Kong via the Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC).
- Create an exit option for Hong Kong activists to seek accelerated asylum the United States.
- Support and dialogue with civil society activists from Mainland China residing in the diaspora community in the United States; expand funding and support for independent Chinese media outlets reaching the Chinese diaspora.

For U.S. Civil Society Actors and INGOS:

- U.S. foundations and philanthropic organizations should support and fund programs that facilitate youth-led exchange from Mainland China and Hong Kong to the United States and vice versa.
- Continue to share best practices among the donor community about adaptive strategies in authoritarian states as well as encourage best practices sharing between Chinese civil society organizations and INGOS.

For U.S. and Other Educational Institutions:

- Support academics and administrators in universities to receive scholars and students from Hong Kong and Mainland China who may no longer be able to teach or study in their home institutions.
- Educate administrators and faculty on understanding and responding to the 2020 Hong Kong National Security Law and its impacts on teaching and research in and on China.

Introduction: Advocacy-Oriented Civil Society in China

For decades, the United States has sought to promote gradual societal change in the People's Republic of China from within by supporting grassroots civil society. The hope was that by building the capacity of change agents in China, the United States could help to diversify and increase the number of social groups within China calling for accountable governance, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights. This policy towards Chinese civil society needs recalibration in a new era of "cooperative competition" between the United States and China.¹

Since Xi Jinping took power in 2012, advocacy-oriented civil society in China has been placed under immense pressure. Media outside of China has reported the series of campaigns under Xi Jinping against organizations and activists that has decimated this sector of civil society. At the same time, the party-state has moved very swiftly to control Hong Kong civil society, following the passing of the National Security Law on June 30th, 2020.

Based on synthesizing publicly available media articles and reports, this essay assesses whether advocacy civil society in China is effectively "dead" under the first two terms of the Xi Administration (2012-2022), with limited opportunity for foreign engagement with this sector. It takes a comparative lens to answer this question, analyzing civil society developments in Mainland China as well as in Hong Kong. Specifically, the essay focuses on *advocacy-oriented* civil society groups that press for the civil/political rights normally associated with a democracy: freedom of speech, association, press, and others.² These groups are the most threatening types to the party-state because they adopt mobilizational tactics and espouse values that run counter to that of the party-state's orthodoxy. As such, they can be seen by the party-state as the extreme end of the pole of the civil society sector.

A comparison of civil society transformations in Mainland China and in Hong Kong is timely for policymakers who seek to engage grassroots change-makers in China. In particular, the essay casts a spotlight on youth-led civil society because the younger generation are the future citizens and leaders shaping civic engagement norms for decades to come. Therefore, any long-term civil society engagement strategy must consider recent patterns of youth mobilization, as well as the constraints and opportunities that this generation faces in a regime that sees Western-inspired civil society as deeply threatening.

In a nutshell, the essay argues that in both Mainland China and Hong Kong, rights-advocacy organizations and networks have been *amputated*, but that they are not “dead” in the sense of being permanently demolished. Despite repression, advocacy networks continue to spring up, even if they cannot be sustained. At the same time, the party-state has been actively *re-molding* a key pillar of civil society—educational institutions and their affiliates—in order to ensure that future civil society networks will espouse pro-Communist Party ideologies and norms of civic engagement. The key to analyzing the party-state’s response to youth-led civil society is to disaggregate two facets of threat: *mobilizational* and *ideological*.

Two Facets of Threat: Mobilizational and Ideological

“The U.S. has long been engaging in infiltration and subversion and instigating “color revolution” in sovereign countries through so-called “NGOs” such as government agencies like USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy.”

—China Foreign Ministry Spokesperson³

The Xi administration adopted a three-pronged approach to governing civil society in Mainland China that consisted of a). cracking down on rights-advocacy organizations that are predicated upon “Western values” of individual rights; b). expanding regulatory control over domestic organizations; and c). deepening party control over all civil society groups.⁴ These three prongs combined have resulted in an expansion of the party-state’s control over a certain sector of state-led civil society: domestic organizations registered under the 2016 Charity Law and international organizations registered under the 2017 Overseas NGO Law.⁵ It has also meant a series of campaigns against grassroots civil society that has left the sector inert, if not dead. This has included targeting and disbanding human rights lawyers, labor organizations, feminist activists, religious leaders, Marxist student groups, and LGBTQ groups.

Extensive media coverage in the West of the new regulations on civil society, accompanied by the repression campaigns, has led to the correct perception that the advocacy sector of civil society in Mainland China has been

severely hampered. Taking a snapshot of civil society in 2017, scholars found that although the number of Chinese foundations increased, along with a rise in domestic philanthropy, advocacy groups including labour NGOs were being politically repressed and financially squeezed out of existence.⁶ In other words, there appeared to be a marked expansion of a registered and regulated sector of civil society organizations regulated by the party-state alongside the decimation of the advocacy sector which are unregistered or were registered as commercial entities.

To understand why a crackdown on advocacy civil society has occurred to this extent and its timing, it is important to disaggregate the facets of threat that the party-state sees: *mobilizational* and *ideological*. The first facet has to do with civil society groups' potential capacity to amass human, financial, and moral resources in order to stage contentious collective action, thus forming an oppositional force against the state. The second, ideological facet has to do with deep-seated, and longer-term influences around citizens' political values and interpretations of social issues. It is this latter sphere which the Party under Xi Jinping's leadership has sought to re-establish control.

The Chinese government has long regarded a certain sector of advocacy-oriented civil society—the panoply of activists and organizations advocating for liberal rights within China's borders—to be an *ideological threat* to its ruling legitimacy. In response to the Biden administration's Summit for Democracy, Beijing has recently reiterated its narrative that Western support for Chinese civil society is nothing but a front to undermine the stability of the Chinese Communist Party's rule. The Chinese government asserts that Western involvement, from academics to non-profit NGOs, is responsible for fomenting unrest in Hong Kong⁷ and in Xinjiang.⁸ These assertions are part of a long-standing fear on the part of the Chinese Communist Party that Western influences would infiltrate China via civil society and teach domestic actors to advocate for democracy reforms much like it did during the “color revolutions” that swept Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the early 2000s.⁹ For this reason, successive administrations from Hu Jintao (2002-2012) to Xi Jinping (2012-present), has regarded this advocacy-oriented sector of civil society with deep suspicion and have sought to tame it.

The Party's view of civil society as an ideological threat was clearly expressed in a communique circulated in April 2013, early in the Xi administration.

Later leaked, the communique, otherwise known as Document Number 9, was unequivocal in listing civil society as a threat in the ideological sphere, along with constitutional democracy, neo-liberalism, freedom of the press, and universal values of freedom, democracy, and human rights. Specifically, the document characterizes civil society as “a socio-political theory that originated in the West” which holds individual rights as “paramount.” Consequently, this ideological threat then merges with a mobilizational threat in that civil society has been used as to “squeeze the Party out of leadership of the masses at the local level...to the point that their advocacy is becoming a serious form of political opposition.” The Party’s understanding of civil society as both an ideological and a mobilizational threat explains why the Xi administration made it a priority to repress advocacy-oriented civil society organizations.

It is this long-seated belief in the ideological threat of Western-influenced civil society taking root in China that has driven the party-state to use coercion and regulatory control to repress the advocacy sector. While media headlines have focused on the mobilizing power of the civil society groups, including their role in demonstrations, strikes, and protests, the ideological threat posed by a certain sector of civil society has been a thorn on the side of the party-state.

Amputating Youth-led Networks in Mainland China

The Xi administration’s ideological battle against rights-advocacy civil society is most clearly demonstrated in its targeting of youth-led civil society organizations advocating for labor and gender rights. Ideological control of the youth is of paramount importance to the Party, which has stepped up patriotic education at all levels. As part of this broader effort at ideological control, the Party has particularly targeted youth-led organizations, including but not limited to neo-Marxist groups in 2018 and LGBTQ groups in 2021. Notably, both types of organizations were spearheaded by of university-age students, limited in terms of organizational size, and deviated from the Party’s ideologies. In the case of LGBTQ groups, the threat emanated from what the party-state sees as “Western-influenced” gender norms, whereas for the Marxist student groups, the threat stemmed from their deviation from the Party’s orthodox socialism.

Case Study: LGBTQ Groups

The crackdown on LGBTQ student groups online in 2021 presents a case study of how the party-state under Xi has dealt with youth-led advocacy networks that are part of transnational movements. In July 2021, the party-state shut down more than a dozen WeChat accounts of LGBTQ student groups at Chinese universities, including both Tsinghua and Peking universities.¹⁰ No explanation was given by either WeChat's parent company, Tencent, or the Chinese government. The closures come as public acceptance in China of the LGBTQ community is growing, albeit amidst a strong conservative voice claiming that LGBTQ identities are at odds with Chinese values and are unpatriotic.¹¹

Prior to 2021, the Xi administration had already targeted a number of gender rights advocacy groups, viewing them as domestic extensions of a transnational #MeToo movement.¹² To the party-state, these groups posed a mobilizational threat in terms of being able to organize performance-based activism that entailed staging small-scale, off-line protests which generated captivating photos that then were circulated online. Via popularizing the terminology of #MeToo in China and supporting individual women who filed sexual harassment lawsuits, these civil society networks were seen by the party-state to be a conduit through which Western social movements took hold in Mainland China. In fact, these groups did have linkages to international groups and to transnational movements.¹³ Many were receiving funding from foreign funders, a resource that was restricted following the enactment of the Overseas NGO Law in 2017.¹⁴

Besides a mobilizational threat due to their linkages to contentious transnational movements, these groups also posed an ideological threat to the party-state because they espoused "Western" gender norms that directly counter the traditional gender norms that the Xi administration has been propagating. These groups advocated for a range of issues including anti-sexual harassment, combating gender-based employment discrimination, and social recognition of diverse gender identities.

On its surface, some of these issues such as sexual harassment align with the agenda of the party-state, which has made revisions to the civil code in 2020 and is currently reviewing revisions to the 1992 Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests.¹⁵ But below the surface, these groups' advocacy

for acceptance of diverse gender identities and non-traditional views of marriage and gender roles runs counter to the traditional gender norms that the party-state has been advocating, particularly under the Xi administration.

These clashing of ideologies around gender have direct consequences of domestic governance in China. In order to encourage women to have more children in the lead up to the passage of the three-child policy in 2021, the party-state launched a campaign to reinforce traditional family values.¹⁶ This includes stepped up propaganda for working women to return home (*huigui jiating*), accompanied by the launch of “New Era Women’s Schools” by local Women’s Federation chapters,¹⁷ and the targeting of “effeminate” men. These measures evidence that not only is the party-state actively countering “Western influences,” but it is also investing enormously in shaping the ideologies and everyday behaviors of the younger generation. Such concerted campaigns not only to *repress* civil society advocacy groups but also to *supplant* Western values around gender rights is something that policymakers ought to take into account.

Case Study: Marxist Student Groups (2018)

The Party-state’s crackdown of Marxist student groups in 2018 is illustrative of its reaction to youth-led civil society groups who do not demonstrably have linkages to a transnational movement. Although the size of Marxist student groups was minuscule—about fifty student-activists who took collective action alongside workers—these groups posed considerable ideological, as well as mobilizational, threats to the Party-state. Students belonging to these Marxist groups across elite universities in China were part of a new leftist group (*xinzuo*) that were deeply critical of the Party’s vision of socialism with Chinese characteristics which led to wealth and class disparity between the elites and the working class.¹⁸

Positioning themselves in the lineage of the Maoist left (*Maozuo*), these students directly challenged to the party-state through both their mobilization and through their ideologies. On the one hand, the student groups posed a limited mobilizational threat by taking collective action in support of demonstrating workers. In the summer of 2018, a few dozen students from Marxist groups went to southern China in support of workers at a welding factory who wanted to form an independent union, which is banned in China. Sporting

t-shirts that with the logo, “Solidarity is Power,” the students demanded that the workers of a welding factory operated by the company Jasic be granted the right to form their own union, among other claims. Their collection action did not advance very far, as the police raided the apartment of the student activists, detained a number of them, and disappeared the student leaders. Notably, the local police alleged that the workers were instigated by foreign NGOs.¹⁹ In the subsequent months, the police went further to uproot the very mobilizing structures—the Marxist groups—on campuses to ensure that they did not resurface to organize collective action.²⁰

In addition to the mobilization-threat that these groups posed, however, was a less observable yet *implicit* ideological threat to the party-state’s orthodoxy: socialism with Chinese characteristics. The students ideologically challenged the Party by implicitly alleging that the local state was not fulfilling its commitment to being a Party for the proletariat. In an open letter to Xi Jinping himself, student leader Yue Xin (who was disappeared in 2018 and released in 2020), repeatedly urged the Xi himself to see that the students were, in fact, motivated by a genuine commitment to Marxism. She repeatedly underscored that their group was not influenced by foreign forces: “We are *not a foreign force* [emphasis added], nor a student revolution, nor do we make any other political demands. All we want is to fight for justice for the Jasic workers.” She attempted to refute claims that the Marxist reading groups were working at the direction of foreign powers: “Implying that we study Marxism only at the behest of foreign power is tantamount to accusing the Party itself of being an external force. It’s like saying by pursuing fairness and injustice, fighting against evil groups, the Party is actually engaging in reactionism.”²¹

Yet, despite the student activists’ outward affirmation of their alignment with the Party’s Marxism, they nevertheless implicitly challenged the Party by pointing out that it was not allowing the workers—the vanguard of the Party—to form their own independent union. In doing so, these student-led civil society groups challenged the Party for not going far enough in protecting the interest of its base, the Chinese working class. In response, the Party not only harshly punished the student leaders through disappearing them and uprooting the Marxist student groups nation-wide; it also sought to conduct “thought work” (*sixiang gongzuo*) by circulating taped confessions by the student leaders to university students.²²

The case of the Marxist student groups provides a vivid illustration of a recent advocacy civil society group under the Xi administration that posed both mobilizational and ideological threats to the Party. Unlike other labor NGOs that had existed under the Hu administration and were shuttered in 2015,²³ the Marxist student groups were not financially supported by Western NGOs, nor were they explicitly tied to a transnational movement. The Party-state's repression of these student groups suggests that civil society groups with foreign support are not the only ones to be shuttered under the Xi administration. Rather, even civil society groups that nominally align with "socialism with Chinese characteristics" can be targeted because of their deviation from party orthodoxy. In addition, the Marxist students' show of solidarity with workers symbolically conjured the tenuous worker-student alliances formed during the 1989 Tiananmen Democracy Movement, which threatened the party-state's hold on power.

The party-state's governance of two different youth-led networks bears lessons for policymakers and actors outside of China seeking to engage advocacy civil society. Policymakers should understand that advocacy-oriented civil society groups pose two different types of threats to the party-state: mobilization and ideological. The Party has sought to address mobilizational threat with repression in the form of closures, arrests, and restricting foreign funding. It has sought to address ideological threats through educational and propaganda campaigns to supplant "Western" ideas such as the protection of individual liberties with its own infusion of ideologies via patriotic education and thought work. Generation Z—those born in the 90s and later—is where these efforts are most directly targeted towards. Hence, policymakers should view the targeting of rights-based advocacy groups in China as a slice of a more comprehensive agenda to re-establish the Party's ideological control over society, writ large.

Amputating and Remolding Civil Society in Hong Kong

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, the party-state is the midst of both amputating and remolding pro-democratic civil society. In the aftermath of waves of pro-democracy movements in Hong Kong between 2019 and 2020, which prompted the passage of the 2020 National Security Law (NSL),²⁴ the party-

state has moved swiftly to dismantle the mature, inter-connected networks and actors that served as the backbone of the pro-democracy movement. Unlike the advocacy networks in Mainland China which had always been weak and dependent on foreign support, Hong Kong possessed dense and variegated civil society groups from student/labor unions, independent media, to pro-democracy NGOs and businesses.

A number of these Hong Kong have been under assault following the National Security Law, culminating in a massive and rapid restructuring of Hong Kong civil society. According to the Economist, approximately 60 pro-democracy grassroots organizations have closed in the wake of the Law.²⁵ Based on media articles in both international media outlets and in local Hong Kong media before several closed,²⁶ this report found 73 shuttered civil society groups and divides them into several categories, including human rights/pro-democracy groups; trade/professional unions; think tanks and others; media outlets; and student/education groups; and cultural organizations. Among them, the closure of independent media outlets including *Apple Daily*, *Citizen News*, and *Stand News*, poses a particular challenge for keeping apprised of local civil society developments, as *Stand News* had previously kept a public record of civil society closures (see Table 1).

The impact of the NSL goes far beyond the seventy-three groups that have either disbanded or been shuttered. The initial wave of closures has had a ripple effect on Hong Kong civil society and activists alike. While some of these groups were forcibly shuttered, others were disbanded and/or relocated in response to the imminent political threat posed by the NSL and by the changes in political life, writ large. Hong Kong's security chief warned that even those groups that disbanded—such as the Professional Teachers Union (PTU) and the Civil Human Rights Front—organizers could still be investigated and held legally liable for having challenged “the red line of the ‘one country, two systems’ principle and the city’s constitutional order.”²⁷ In addition, Hong Kong Watch became the first foreign organization to be threatened under the National Security Law in March 2022.²⁸

Despite the articulation of a “red line”, however, there is still a great deal of uncertainty on the part of civil society actors about which actions would be interpreted as crossing the line. Hong Kong academics have cautioned that the chilling effects of civil society closures extend beyond the most radical

TABLE 1: Civil Society Groups Closed in Hong Kong (73)

Organization Type	Count
Unions (student/trade/professional associations)	27
Human rights advocacy	17
Pro-democracy political parties	15
Media Outlets	10
Religious organizations	4
Means of Closure	
Disbanded (self-announcement due to threat)	62
Shuttered (closed with force/coercion)	11
Timeline of Closure	
0-1 year after NSL (Jul. 2020-Jul. 2021)	38
1-1.5 years after NSL (Aug. 21-Feb. 2022)	35
Crimes Charged	
Subversion (threatening national security)	47
Secession (promoting HK independence)	27
Other (social stability; anti-patriotic education; financial)	27
Terrorism	22
Collusion (with foreign forces)	14
Unknown	13
Time of Group Formation	
2019 to 2021	22
2014 to 2018	27
2000 to 2013	12
Prior to 2000	9
Unknown Society	3
Total Groups Closed (July 2020-Jan 2022)	73

groups, since more moderate groups have also disbanded due to uncertainty about where the political boundaries lie.²⁹ It is noteworthy that the CCP has used the same strategy of control in terms of leaving the boundaries ambiguous in Mainland China, leading civil society groups to self-censor their tactics and missions.

As in Mainland China, the party-state has targeted Hong Kong youth, who pose both a mobilizational and ideological threat to the Party's rule in the territory. The youth were at the forefront of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement and as such, the party-state recognizes the imminent importance of re-molding youth-led civil society. In fact, the Party newspaper called student unions in Hong Kong a "malignant tumor," who were perpetuating a "black energy force" through their calls for a continued revolution.³⁰

In response, the Hong Kong government, at the behest of the Party, has launched a concerted crackdown of youth-led groups through both severing mobilizational vehicles and introducing patriotic education. While the first set of responses focus on *dismantling existing civil society groups*, the second set of control tools aim to remold civil society in Hong Kong, starting with the youth. Targets a mobilizational threat, while the second addresses an ideological threat.

To sever mobilizational vehicles, the party-state targeted student unions, which provided leadership and organizational resources for Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement. Following the implementation of the NSL, university administrations severed ties with student unions for fear that they would be held liable for the activities of these unions. The first union to disband following the passage of the NSL was the Chinese University's (CUHK) student union in October of 2021. The union had been in operation for five decades and its leadership decided to disband rather than comply with the University's demand for it to register with government agencies.³¹ As of January 2022, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Students' Union (HKPUSU) is still in operation, albeit not under the auspices of the University, which publicly denounced any ties to the union.³²

As in Mainland China, however, the party-state has also been attuned to addressing the underlying ideological threat—ideas about norms of political participation and expectations for individual liberties that Hong Kong youth have been taught in through the education system. At a core level, the

party-state's "thought work" (*sixiang gongzuo*) entails inserting education on the NSL into K-12 educational curriculum. Days after the passage of the NSL on June 2020, the Education Bureau ordered schools to remove books that could "possibly violate" the Law.³³ In February 2021, the Bureau issued a circular that all heads of primary schools and secondary schools in Hong Kong.³⁴ The circular includes instructions on how to integrate knowledge about the National Security Law into the existing curriculum, including an audio picture book instructing primary children to respect the Chinese national flag and anthem.³⁵ In November 2021, The Bureau also set aside the Quality Education Fund, valued at (HK\$ 300,000 or US\$ 38,000), to subsidize K-12 schools programmes on national identity and security, as well as media/information literacy.³⁶

Curriculum changes at primary and secondary levels are not restricted to the NSL narrowly. Rather, national security is a theme that has been embedded into a range of fifteen subject areas, including but not limited to history, geography, economics, health studies, as well as science, biology, and chemistry, among others.³⁷ For example, the geography curriculum highlights China's territorial claims to the South China Sea. The curriculum on trade and economics stresses the close economic ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland, as well as the importance of national security to maintaining Hong Kong's economic stability and business environment. Others, such as the Life and Society curriculum, teach directly about the NSL, including the four types of activities that threaten national security: secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign forces. It also situates national security within several other "securities," including territorial, economic, resource, military, and overseas interests. All of these are meant to serve as "the guidelines for the implementation of national security education at primary and secondary schools."³⁸

In addition to changes to the formal curriculum, the Ministry of Education also recommends additional learning activities inside and outside the classroom to supplement national security education. These include game activities, project learning, competitions, visits and tours, as well as exchanges with students in Mainland China. These visits would include tours to historical landmarks such as the Opium War Museum in Guangdong province, aimed to "cultivate students' concept of the state, national identity, and sense of

responsibility to our country and our people.”³⁹ These activities, combined with the integration of national security into the formal curriculum, is part and parcel of the party-state’s longer-term plans to do “thought work” on Hong Kong youth, aimed to re-shape their understanding of Hong Kong’s relationship to the Mainland China, and to cultivate new civic norms.

At the university level, the party-state has also tightened the reins on universities in numerous forms that have been extensively documented in the media. These include pressuring faculty to self-censor and punishing those who do not comply; the introduction of national security courses; increased surveillance of students and teachers; banning materials from libraries; and forced removal of offending symbols on campuses, among other measures. As a result of these measures, there is an atmosphere of increased self-censorship in Hong Kong university classrooms, as faculty are afraid of being reported on for teaching politically sensitive topics such as civil disobedience and democracy.⁴⁰ Mandatory courses on the National Security Law have been implemented in Hong Kong universities, in accordance with the National Security Law itself which has stipulations on the education of national security (articles 9 and 10).⁴¹ According to an exclusive Reuters report, at four of the city’s publicly funding universities have made lectures and seminars on national security a graduation requirement.⁴² Moreover, Hong Kong universities have been encouraged to contribute to the innovation hubs in the Greater Bay Area, an integrated economic zone.⁴³

Apart from university institutions, cultural institutions are also sites for learning about politics and society that have been targeted by the authorities. On this front, the party-state has also removed and censored artistic, cultural, and other learning materials that symbolically challenge its power in Hong Kong. Besides scrubbing the “democracy wall” of posters, Hong Kong University ordered the “Pillar of Shame” statute commemorating victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Democracy Movement to be removed.⁴⁴ This was one of at least two other visual critiques of the CCP’s response to the Tiananmen Democracy Movement, including the “Goddess of Democracy” statute at the Chinese University (CHUK) and a relief sculpture at Lingnan University. The fact that these sculptures were on university campuses and had served as backdrops to the pro-democracy protests posed a symbolic threat to the party-state. As accompaniment, the Hong Kong Public library was also ordered to

remove banned material from its library systems, including more than 100 titles about the pro-democracy movement.⁴⁵ Other cultural institutions, such as Hong Kong's flagship M+ Museum, and projects supported by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC), along with films, have been subject to censorship.⁴⁶

In short, as this section has documented, the party-state has not only swiftly *amputated* much of Hong Kong's pro-democracy civil society groups; it also invested in *remoulding* Hong Kong's civil society, including its education system. This dual-pronged approach has resulted in not a completely dismantled civil society in Hong Kong, but a one which may eventually resemble that of civil society in Mainland China, with most organizations tethered to the Party and constrained in their agendas and funding sources. Institutions of learning, whether they be schools or cultural/educational organizations are key pillars of civil society as they inculcate civic norms in future generations. As such, they have been key targets of the remoulding of Hong Kong's civil society. The degree to which the party-state succeeds in teaching "habits of the heart" that resemble participation Mainland China is yet unknown.

The campaign to win the hearts and minds of Hong Kong's youth is one that has direct implications for fate of civil society in the territory. Policymakers in the United States or elsewhere seeking to engage Hong Kong civil society should recognize that the National Security Law has a wide-reaching impact far beyond the shuttering of pro-democracy organizations. Civil society, including institutions of higher learning, are important organizations that imbue the younger generation with norms of participation. Whereas civic education in Hong Kong previously taught "habits" that fostered democratic citizenship, including civil disobedience, public deliberation, and critical thinking, these habits are quickly being eroded as institutions of learning are being pressured to change.

Leveraging Civil Society in U.S.-China Relations

Thus far, this essay has focused on advocacy organizations which are considered more politically sensitive by the Chinese government due to their alignment with liberal democratic values. However, such advocacy organizations are not the only sector of civil society that is active in improving the socio-

economic conditions of ordinary people in China. Nor are they the most promising bridges for engaging in Track 2 diplomacy—dialogue between civil society and other non-governmental actors that may advance or complement official Track 1 diplomacy, especially in politically tense times.

This section broadens the scope to consider which civil society groups and issue areas are more conducive to advancing Track 2 diplomacy in a political moment where the United States and China are competing in multiple arenas, and where China is no longer seeking to “join tracks with the world,” as it did in the 2000s under the Hu-Wen administration. Building upon a 2021 Carter Center report,⁴⁷ this essay argues that despite the closures of political opportunities for advocacy groups in Mainland China and Hong Kong, there remains opportunities for engaging a vast sector of Chinese civil society organizations that are officially registered under the 2016 Charity Law. These organizations, working on a range of social issues from environmental to health to poverty alleviation, are closely tethered to the Chinese party-state through the regulatory mechanisms but nevertheless work on common-ground issues that may facilitate people-to-people exchange.

More obvious common ground areas for the United States and China to cooperate on include the environment/climate change and global health. On the first issue area, Biden and Xi reached an agreement to cooperate on combating climate change at closing of the Nov. 2021 COP26 Climate Summit, sending a positive signal for cooperation between civil societies on this common issue. Indeed, recent research shows that INGOs working on the environment, along with a host of other more palatable issues, are able to register in greater numbers under the 2017 Overseas NGO Law.⁴⁸

Yet, even in within this green zone, not all INGOs engaged in environmental advocacy have been able to officially register in China under the 2017 Foreign NGO Law.⁴⁹ For example, Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), which was the first foreign conservation organization invited to operate in China, was able to register a representative office in mainland China under the law. Its successful registration likely has, in part, to do with its long history in the country, having set up its Hong Kong office in 1981 and its Beijing office in 1991, as well as with its less confrontational approaches to conservation. In contrast, Greenpeace China, which had previously operated in the country in grey zones, like many other INGOS, has thus far not registered a

representative office but is instead operating on temporary activity permits.⁵⁰ This is despite the organization having had a collaborative relationship with local governments throughout the 2000s.⁵¹ While there are many factors that may explain the divergent fates of these two environmental NGOs in China, they illustrate that civil society cooperation on the environment is not a given under the 2017 INGO Law.

Nonetheless, registering an INGO in China is not the only way to engage in civil society dialogues, nor is the environment the only common ground sector for mutual exchange. Public health, poverty alleviation, NGO capacity-building, economic inequality, and China's own aid footprint outside of its borders that are ripe areas for civil society dialogue with foreign counterparts. In particular, poverty alleviation is an issue area where China has had a proven track record of commitment, albeit through authoritarian campaign-style politics. As a cornerstone of development agendas everywhere, tackling poverty is a common-ground issue area that has potential for further civil society engagement.

Policy Recommendations

Given both the regulatory and political pressures under the Xi administration, how should different stakeholders in the United States and in other countries engage with Chinese civil society? It is important to recognize that although the advocacy sector of civil society in China is difficult to support directly, given political restrictions, this sector is not the only one that engaged in social change on the ground in China and in the countries where the PRC is itself a major donor. In fact, INGOs operating in Mainland China have continued to work with Chinese counterparts to develop the China's domestic philanthropic sector's capacity, as well as assisting countries in the Global South where China has a growing investment and aid footprint.⁵² In addition, while some foreign organizations are no longer able to operate legally in PRC and others have opened offices in Taiwan, the space for engagement has not completely closed.⁵³

The following recommendations are directed at the major stakeholders in the United States. The party-state views foreign support for Chinese domestic civil society as threatening, regardless of whether it is from the United States

or another liberal democratic government. Therefore, these recommendations may also be applicable to U.S. allies and counterpart organizations in Australia, Canada, EU, UK, and New Zealand.

For U.S. Policymakers:

- **Foster a policy environment where civil society dialogue is actively encouraged as Track 2 diplomacy. Start with re-booting educational exchange programs with China such as the Fulbright Program and the Peace Corps.**

Civil society exchanges can be facilitated by creating a conducive policy environment in the United States where politics can obstruct people-to-people exchange with China, under concerns over national security and in retaliation to the Chinese government.

One pathway to this is rebooting educational exchange programs. Under the Trump administration, an executive order terminated the Fulbright Program in China and in Hong Kong in 2020. A recent amendment sponsored by Rep. Rick Larson to the America COMPETES Act of 2022 (H.R. 4521) would restore the Fulbright program.⁵⁴ The Peace Corps also pulled out of its operations in China in 2020, a decision praised by Senator Rick Scott.⁵⁵ To the extent that the Chinese government is still receptive to American Program that send youth to do exchange, programs like the Fulbright and Peace Corps, as well as other similar programs, should be rebooted. They are conduits for civil society exchange between the two countries, which are even more necessary in a time of tense bilateral relations.

Another pathway to encouraging Track 2 diplomacy is to provide increased opportunities for researchers, practitioners, and community leaders in the diaspora to be integrated into the policy community in the United States. Recognizing that in the current climate, Chinese civil society counterparts face high barriers to exchanging with their foreign counterparts, the United States should set an example of Track 2 diplomacy by integrating civil society leaders in the Chinese diaspora into policy discussions domestically, especially ones pertaining to U.S.-China relations.

- **Strategically reframe programs to substitute “democracy promotion” rhetoric with substantive, non-ideological language such as “civic engagement” and “capacity bridging”**

Following the U.S.-led Summit for Democracy in late 2021, the Biden administration announced the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal, which would provide up to \$424.4 million towards expanding the U.S. government’s initiative to “defend, sustain, and grow democratic resilience with like-minded governmental and non-governmental partners in five areas.” Under area III, “bolstering democratic reformers,” the initiative pledges to empower marginalized groups and support reform-minded leaders in civil society.⁵⁶

To the extent that this presidential initiative supports activists and organizations operating in and outside of China, a strategy reframing of the programs to substitute democracy promotion rhetoric with non-ideological language such as “civic engagement” and “capacity bridging.” In contrast to capacity building, capacity *bridging* recognizes that there are mutual learning opportunities for U.S. and Chinese civil societies.⁵⁷ Although any initiatives directly supported by the U.S. government is likely to be seen as hostile by the current Chinese government, regardless of how it is labeled, a strategic reframing may provide change makers in China (including reform minded officials) to receive further U.S. government support if political opportunities arise in the future.

- **Hold congressional hearings on the status and development of civil society in Mainland China and in Hong Kong via the Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC).**

CECC regularly holds hearings on a range of issues pertinent to civil society in China and hears testimony from rights activists and political dissidents.⁵⁸ Many of these hearings coincide with major political events or anniversaries in China. It is recommended that CECC also holds a series of hearings on civil society, writ large. By hearing from a range of actors engaged in long-term work of civil society development in China, including INGO representatives, Chinese philanthropy groups, and academics in the diaspora, US policymakers would gain a long-term perspective on the diversity of change agents operating in China.

- **Create an exit option for Hong Kong activists to seek accelerated asylum in the United States.**

The Hong Kong Safe Harbor Act (S. 4110; H.R. 7415) as well as the Hong Kong People's Freedom and Choice Act (HR 8428) promise to prioritize Hongkongers in consideration for refugee status or asylum, along with other immigration-related provisions. Passing such acts would create an exit option for civil society activists in Hong Kong to the United States.

- **Support and dialogue with civil society activists from Mainland China residing in the diaspora community in the United States; expand funding and support for independent Chinese media outlets reaching the Chinese diaspora.**

Rights activists living abroad are increasingly being targeted by transnational repression, where rights activists in the global diaspora are targeted and threatened by forces within their origin country.⁵⁹ In light of this, the U.S. government and other civil society organizations should devise strategies to support and dialogue with activists in the Chinese diaspora who may be subject to transnational repression.

In parallel, the U.S. government should expand funding and support for independent Chinese language media outlets that provide bilingual news and analysis, such as the China Digital Times. Such independent media outlets are much too small to replace WeChat, with its pervasive usage by the diaspora in the United States despite security issues.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, smaller news platforms can still provide alternative sources of information that can reach various sectors of the diaspora community.

For U.S. Civil Society Actors and INGOS:

- **U.S. foundations and philanthropic organizations should support and fund programs that facilitate youth-led exchange from China to the United States and vice versa.**

In addition to the civil society actors identified above, exchanges between

youth groups are particularly meaningful, as this generation will become the future arbiters of bilateral relations. Beyond study abroad exchanges, short-term visits of young people to the United States to learn about civic engagement and civil society participation. Conversely, American youth can also benefit from participation Chinese civil society organizations' projects in China, particularly those that tackle poverty alleviation and rural education.⁶¹ Such mutual exchanges outside of the formal education programs can facilitate deeper understandings of differences in civic engagement norms. These topical exchanges, taking place outside of formal study, should be structured in a way as to ensure students on both sides are directly engaging with each other.

To the extent that direct youth exchange programs may not be feasible in the current political climate, exchanges with Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong diaspora youth populations should be encouraged along the lines of themes such as addressing environmental challenges, urban/rural inequalities, social disparity, and anti-Asian hate.

- **Continue to share best practices among the donor community about adaptive strategies in authoritarian states; encourage best practices sharing between Chinese civil society organizations and INGOs.**

Foreign foundations and others should think about adaptive strategies as a long-term, ongoing game. Rather than hoping that the Chinese government would reverse or significantly revise the law, foreign organizations should continue to share best practices behind closed doors about adaptive strategies on how to operate under authoritarian environments. Recognizing that there are idiosyncrasies in the treatment of any particular INGO by Chinese authorities, information-sharing can nevertheless yield creative solutions to shared problems. In parallel, exchanges between Chinese civil society organizations and INGOs should be encouraged to share best practices and experiences on work related to issue-areas.

For U.S. Educational Institutions:

- **Support academics and administrators in universities to receive scholars and students from Hong Kong and Mainland China who**

may no longer be able to teach or study in their home institutions.

- **Educate administrators and faculty on understanding and responding to the 2020 Hong Kong National Security Law and its impacts on teaching and research in and on China.**

To the extent that safeguarding academic freedom rests on the shoulders of universities, it is recommended that administrators create pathways for the university to receive scholars from Hong Kong and Mainland China who are no longer able to work in their home institutions. Doing so would create an academic “safety net” for scholars under duress and would also enrich the campus and intellectual life of Western academia.

In addition, universities should encourage self-study for administrators and faculty on understanding and responding to the 2020 Hong Kong National Security Law. A best practices memo for teaching on China put out by U.S.-based public intellectuals, as well as a statement by the Association of Asian Studies offer a starting point for thinking about creative ways to teach China in the context of the 2020 National Security Law.⁶² The American Council for Learned Societies has also published a 2021 report on Chinese Studies in North America that offers insights and data on how to balance security concerns while keeping anti-Asian racism and biases in check.⁶³

Recognizing that there are multiple and situation-specific ways to respond to the challenges posed by the National Security Law, a top-down prescription by university administrators on how to respond is *not* recommended. However, university administrators should, in the minimum, educate themselves and the faculty on the possible challenges posed by the Law, and be prepared to respond in the event of Law-related incidents that arise. Educational institutions are an indispensable part of civil society and as such, are sites for contestation over political values. Safeguarding academic freedom is therefore a cornerstone of upholding democratic values.

The views expressed are the author's alone, and do not represent the views of the U.S. Government or the Wilson Center.

Notes

- 1 Ying Fu, "Cooperative Competition is Possible Between China and the United States," *New York Times*, November 24, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/24/opinion/china-us-biden.html>
- 2 It excludes an assessment of an expansive sector of social organizations that are legally registered and continue to collaborate with local states across Mainland China, which have been the subject of other policy reports.
- 3 Wenbin Wang, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin's Regular Press Conference on December 2, 2021," December 2, 2021, Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in New York. http://newyork.china-consulate.org/eng/fyrth/202112/t20211202_10461360.htm.
- 4 See Diana Fu and Emil Dirks, "Xi Jinping Style Control and Civil Society Responses," *China Leadership Monitor*, September 1, 2021. <https://www.prcleader.org/fu-and-dirks>
- 5 See Holly Snape et al, "How Are NGOs in China Faring Under the New Law?," *ChinaFile*, September 27, 2017. <https://archive.is/hJMMN>; Shawn Shieh, "Remaking China's Civil Society in the Xi Jinping Era," *ChinaFile*, August 2, 2018. <https://archive.is/5RWsU>
- 6 See Jessica Teets, "The Rise of Foundations: Hope for Grassroots Civil Society in China?" *Made in China*, March 26, 2017, Issue 1, 20-38.; Ivan Franceschini, "Meet the State Security: Chinese Labor Activists and Their Controllers," *Made in China*, March 26, 2017, Issue 1, 20-38.
- 7 The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, "Report by the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN," August 22, 2019. <http://chnun.chinamission.org.cn/eng/gyzg/ssysz/201908/P020210901023271159579.pdf>
- 8 China Daily, "Things to Know about All the Lies on Xinjiang: How Have They Come About?" *China Daily*, April 30, 2021. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202104/30/WS608b4036a31024ad0babb623.html>
- 9 Scholars have debated the degree to which the color revolutions were driven by structural factors such as authoritarian weakness as opposed to agency-based factors which would include Western support for civil society in Eastern Europe. See *Journal of Democracy* Issue, "Debating the Color Revolutions." 2009, 20:1.
- 10 For a list of 18 LGBTQ groups shuttered, see <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/chinese/667957.html>; Shawn Yuen, "LGBTQ in China Lament 'Dark Day' After Social Media Crackdown," *Al Jazeera*, July 13, 2021. <https://archive.is/MW3Ew>
- 11 Yut Yiu Cheung, "China's WeChat Deletes Dozens of LGBTQ+ Student, NGO Accounts," *Radio Free Asia*, July 7, 2021. <https://archive.is/M96Ve>; The Economist, "How Nationalism Is Making Life Harder for Gay People in China," *The Economist*, July 17, 2021. <https://archive.is/AGyCM>
- 12 Repression of LGBTQ groups prior to 2021 included the cancellation of Shanghai's Pride Festival in 2020 and the closure of a number of gender studies centers and organizations, including one at Beijing Forestry University (closed in 2019); the Guangzhou Gender and Sexuality Education Centre (closed in Dec. 2018); *Feminist Voices* (closed in Mar. 2018), and the Beijing Zhongze Women's Legal Counseling and Service Center (closed in 2016).
- 13 Shen Lu, "Red Vs Are After China's Queer Community," *Protocol*, July 13, 2021. <https://archive.is/h8PgR>

- 14 Ausma Bernot, "China's Forced Invisibility of LGBTQ Communities on Social Media," *The Interpreter*, July 9, 2021. <https://archive.is/PfqWC>. On the 2017 Foreign NGO Law, see <https://archive.is/AP1az>
- 15 Darius Longarion, Changhao Wei, and Yixin (Claire) Ren, "China's Lawmakers Take More (Cautious) Steps Against Workplace Sexual Harassment," *The Diplomat*, January 21, 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/chinas-lawmakers-take-more-cautious-steps-against-workplace-sexual-harassment/>
- 16 People's Daily, "Chinese President Stresses Familial Virtues," *People's Daily online*, December 13, 2016. <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/1213/c90000-9153950.html>
- 17 Emily Rauhala, "Chinese College Teaching Women to be 'Perfect' in the Xi Jinping Era," *South China Morning Post*, July 2, 2018. https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2153428/chinese-college-teaching-women-be-perfect-xi?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article&campaign=2153428.
- 18 Jenny Chan, "A Precarious Worker-Student Alliance in Xi's China," *The China Review*, 2020, 20:1, 165-190.
- 19 J. Hernandez, "China's Leaders Confront an Unlikely Foe: Ardent Young Communists," *The New York Times*, September 28, 2018. <https://archive.is/hOHD7>
- 20 Jenny Chan, "A Precarious Worker-Student Alliance in Xi's China," *The China Review*, 2020, 20:1, 165-190.
- 21 Josh Rudolph, "Detained Activist Yue Xin on the Jasic Workers," *China Digital Times*, August 24, 2018. <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2018/08/no-one-can-resist-the-tides-of-history-detained-activist-yue-xin-on-the-jasic-workers/>
- 22 J. Hernandez, "China Using Taped Confessions to Intimidate Young Communists, Students Say," *The New York Times*, January 21, 2019. <https://archive.is/FOTWn>
- 23 Diana Fu, "Disguised Collective Action in China," *Comparative Political Studies*, 2017-03, 50:4, 499-527.
- 24 Amnesty International, "Hong Kong's National Security Law: 10 Things You need to Know," Amnesty International, July 17, 2020. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/hong-kong-national-security-law-10-things-you-need-to-know/>
- 25 The Economist, "China Crushes Hong Kong's Independent News Outlets," *The Economist*, January 8, 2022. <https://www.economist.com/china/2022/01/08/china-crushes-hong-kongs-independent-news-outlets>; other sources suggest a similar number of 59 closed civil society groups or at a minimum over 50 groups: Rhoda Kwan, "Explainer: Over 50 Groups Disband-How Hong Kong's Pro-Democracy Forces Crumbled," *Hong Kong Free Press*, November 28, 2021. <https://hongkongfp.com/2021/11/28/explainer-over-50-groups-gone-in-11-months-how-hong-kongs-pro-democracy-forces-crumbled/>
- 26 Local Hong Kong news consulted included *Apple Daily* (closed June 24, 2021); *Citizen News* (closed Jan. 4, 2022); *HK01 News*; *Hong Kong Free Press*; *Ming Pao Weekly*; *Stand News* (closed in Dec. 2021); *The Standard*; and LIHKG.com (a popular online forum).
- 27 Lilian Cheng, "Fresh Wave of Hong Kong Unions, Civil Society Groups Disband over Fears of Vague 'Red Lines' under National Security Law," *South China Morning Post*, July 3, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3139713/fresh-wave-hong-kong-unions-civil-society-groups-disband>

- 28 UK-based watchdog Hong Kong Watch says that Hong Kong's Security Bureau has threatened its founder with prison and fines for allegedly breaching the city's national security law. Local authorities have accused the group of interference and said the law applies worldwide.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Yuan Shi, "Remove the 'Tumor' from the Student Union of the Hong Kong University, Return Peace to Campus," *The People's Daily*, April, 18, 2021. <https://wap.peopleapp.com/article/6180392/6083351>
- 31 The Standard, "Former CUHK Student Union President among Four Arrested for Inciting Blank Votes," *The Standard*, December 15, 2021. <https://www.thestandard.com.hk/breaking-news/section/4/184551/Former-CUHK-student-union-president-among-four-arrested-for-inciting-blank-votes>
- 32 Student Organizations and Societies, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, <https://www.polyu.edu.hk/en/sao/student-development-unit/student-organisations-support/student-organisations-and-societies/>
- 33 Chan Ho-him, "National Security Law: Hong Kong Schools Told to Remove Books that Might Fall Foul of the Legislation," *South China Morning Post*, July 6, 2020. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education/article/3092043/national-security-law-hong-kong-schools-told-remove-books>
- 34 Government of the HKSAR, Education Bureau, "National Security Education in School Curriculum-Implementation Mode and Learning and Teaching Resources," February 4, 2021. <https://applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EDBC/EDBC21002E.pdf>
- 35 FTV HSNPS, "Things to Know About National Security (video book)," YouTube, April 13, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKeSzH0OFwk>
- 36 William Yiu, "Subsidized Hong Kong Schools Eligible for up to HK\$300,000 in New Government Funding to Boost National Education," *South China Morning Post*, November 16, 2021. https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education/article/3156241/subsidised-hong-kong-schools-eligible-hk300000-new?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3156241
- 37 For the fifteen subject areas, see the Chinese version of the website. "National Security Education Curriculum Framework." <https://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/curriculum-development/kla/pshe/national-security-education/index.html>.
- 38 The Government of HKSAR, Education Bureau, Curriculum Framework of National Security Education in Hong Kong, May 2021. <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/pshe/national-security-education/index.html>
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 The Economist, "Academics in Hong Kong Suffer Curbs on Their Freedoms," *The Economist*, July 24, 2021. <https://www.economist.com/china/2021/07/21/academics-in-hong-kong-suffer-curbs-on-their-freedoms>
- 41 For insight on how the NSL suppresses academic freedom in Hong Kong and in the diaspora, see Shui-Yin Sharon Yam, "Fear in the Classroom- How Hong Kong's National Security Law Suppresses Academic and Intellectual Freedom," *Made in China (Journal)*, October 21, 2020. <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2020/10/21/fear-in-the-classroom-how-hong-kongs-national-security-law-suppresses-academic-and-intellectual-freedom/>

- 42 Jessie Pang and Sara Cheng, “Exclusive New Hong Kong University Classes set out Dangers of Breaking Security Law,” *Reuters*, November 5, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/exclusive-new-hong-kong-university-classes-set-out-dangers-breaking-security-law-2021-11-05/>
- 43 Chris Lau, “Beijing Official Calls on Hong Kong Universities to Play a More Active Role in Greater Bay Area Development,” *South China Morning Post*, October 28, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education/article/3154009/beijing-official-tells-hong-kong-universities-play-more>
- 44 Mike Ives, “Hong Kong Removes Status that Memorialized Tiananmen Victims,” *The New York Times*, December 23, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/23/world/asia/hong-kong-tiananmen-statue.html>
- 45 Cheng Yut Yiu and Gigi Lee, “Hong Kong Libraries Remove Books for ‘Violating’ National Security Law,” *Radio Free Asia*, November 24, 2021. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/books-11242021093901.html>
- 46 See 2021 Human Rights Watch Report, “Dismantling a Free Society: Hong Kong One Year After the National Security Law,” Human Rights Watch, June 25, 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/feature/2021/06/25/dismantling-free-society/hong-kong-one-year-after-national-security-law>
- 47 “Carter Center Issues Report Addressing U.S.-China Relations,” The Carter Center, February 23, 2021. <https://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/2021/china-022221.html>
- 48 Plantan, Elizabeth, “Not All NGOs are Treated Equally: Selectivity in Civil Society Management in China and Russia.” *Comparative Politics*, August 4, 2021.
- 49 For data on the number of registered INGOS in China (2017-2022), see Jessica Batke, “Visually Understanding the Data on Foreign NGO Representative Offices and Temporary Activities,” *China File*, March 7, 2022. <https://www.chinafile.com/ngo/analysis/visually-understanding-data-foreign-ngo-representative-offices-and-temporary-activities>.
- 50 Gabriel Corsetti, “Temporary Activities: The New Normal for International NGOs in China?” *China Development Brief*, May 14, 2019. <https://chinadevelopmentbrief.org/reports/temporary-activities-the-new-normal-for-international-ngos-in-china/>
- 51 For a study of Greenpeace’s collaborative relationship with local governments in the 2000s, see Jessica Teets, *Civil Society under Authoritarianism: The China Model* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- 52 See for example, the Ford Foundation’s China in the world portfolio.
- 53 For example, the National Democratic Institute and the Republican International Institute both announced the opening of Taiwan offices in fall 2020, coinciding with China’s sanctioning of leaders in these organizations.
- 54 “Larsen: America Competes Act Enhances U.S. Global Leadership, Boosts U.S. Manufacturing and Jobs,” Rep. Rick Larsen (WA-02), February 4, 2022. <https://larsen.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2599>
- 55 Rick Scott Florida’s U.S. Senator, “Sen. Rick Scott: House Democrats’ Plan to Resurrect Peace Corps Programs in Communist China is Despicable,” Rick Scott Florida’s U.S. Senator, July 15, 2020. <https://www.rickscott.senate.gov/2020/7/sen-rick-scott-house-democrats-plan-resurrect-peace-corps-programs-communist-china-despicable>

- 56 For example, the state department will be providing up to \$10 million for Lifeline: Embattled CSOs Assistance Fund to support advocacy organizations under threat around the world.
- 57 See definition of “capacity bridging” as proposed by the AHA Center, an indigenous-led collaborative research center in Canada: AHA Centre, “Capacity Bridging,” AHA Centre, Version 2, June 4, 2018. https://www.ahacentre.ca/uploads/9/6/4/2/96422574/capacity_bridging_-_finaljune_2018.pdf
- 58 See Hearings, Congressional-Executive Commission on China. <https://www.cecc.gov/events/hearings>
- 59 On transnational repression, see 2021 Freedom House report. Freedom House, “Out of Sight, Not out of Reach: Understanding Transnational Repression,” Freedom House, February 3, 2021. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/transnational-repression>; On digital transnational repression, see report from the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto. Miles Kenyon, “Digital Transnational Repression Explained,” The Citizen Lab, University of Toronto, March 1, 2022. <https://citizenlab.ca/2022/03/digital-transnational-repression-explained/>
- 60 As of 2020, when Trump attempted to remove WeChat from app stores, the app had 19 million active daily users in the United States. David Shepardson, “U.S. Judge Halts Trump Administration’s Order to Remove WeChat from App Stores,” *Reuters*, September 20, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-wechat-idUSKCN26B0IY>; a 2020 report by the Citizen Lab found that WeChat surveils both images and files shared on the platform by non-China registered users. Such data is then used to train censorship algorithms for China-registered WeChat users. Miles Kenyon, “WeChat Surveillance Explained,” The Citizen Lab, University of Toronto, May 7, 2020. <https://citizenlab.ca/2020/05/wechat-surveillance-explained/>
- 61 For example, the Beijing Lide Future Student Charity Foundation, registered with the Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau, has run a “Teach for China” program since 2008 for young Chinese people. There may be opportunity for partnering with Chinese charities to allow American youth to participate in projects like Teach for China.
- 62 China File, “How to Teach China This Fall,” *China File*, August 20, 2020. <https://www.chinafile.com/reporting-opinion/viewpoint/how-teach-china-fall/>; AAS Board of Directors, “Association for Asian Studies Statement Regarding Remote Teaching, Online Scholarship, Safety, and Academic Freedom,” Association of Asian Studies, July 23, 2020. <https://www.asianstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/20200723-AAS-statement-regarding-online-meeting-software-and-academic-freedom.pdf>
- 63 American Council of Learned Societies, “China Studies in North America: A Report on Survey Research by the Luce/ACLS Advisory Groups 2021,” American Council of Learned Societies, May 31, 2021. <https://www.acls.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/China-Studies-in-North-American-Report.pdf>

