China’s United Front Work in the Xi Jinping era – institutional developments and activities

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ABSTRACT
[Background] To make China a superpower, Xi Jinping has provided the United Front Work (UFW) with large-scale resources to secure China’s domestic stability and global outreach of its national power. [Purpose] This article investigates why and how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Xi administration has been vigorously trying to co-opt politically non-communist forces at home and abroad by means of the UFW. The above analysis also sheds light on the characteristics of Xi’s political thought, leadership style as well as his idea of political strategy for the “Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation (zhonghua minzu weida fuxing).” [Main Argument] In foreign activities, China’s influence through developing various UFW institutional settings has been strengthened. However, its construction of human network which contributes to CCP’s political aims and its maintenance of information flow bases have been mostly made up of personal efforts in the long-term activity of the UFW. [Conclusions] It is true that the democratic regimes need to adopt a cautious approach toward China’s foreign influence, but to identify activities of the UFW in their homeland is not so much difficult because they are usually patterned in most cases. Then, in the research on the UFW, Xi Jinping’s political conservativeness has again become highlighted. The basic orientation of his political thinking is not the reform and innovation of the regime, but the revival of ‘good tradition’ and renovation of the CCP.

KEYWORDS
The Chinese Communist Party (CCP); Xi Jinping; the United Front Work (UFW); the Overseas Chinese policy

1. Introduction

This article examines why and how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been intensively trying to approach politically non-communist forces and co-opt them at home and abroad, by means of policy called the Unite Front Work (UFW; tongyi zhanxian gongzuo) under the Xi Jinping regime.¹

In recent discussion on international politics, Sharp Power theory has been becoming heated. In 2017, Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig of the National Endowment for Democracy published some related papers, in which they insisted that authoritarian regimes like China and Russia have used their official media and...
given the financial support to educational institutions in the abroad, especially in the democratic countries to realize their national interests with nondemocratic way such as propaganda, manipulation of the public opinion, harassment to critical discourses against them and so forth. As a result, new threat to the liberal international order has been emerging in the today’s international community.²

However, in the academic circles of Chinese politics, CCP’s political influence similarly kind of Sharp Power has been well known as the name of the UFW that is policy of political inclusion and repression toward various groups except CCP.³ Activities of the UFW is classified into two types. One is those in the domestic (guonei tongzhan) and the other in the abroad (haiwai tongzhan). In recent scholarly works, Anne-Marie Brady closely analyzed China’s foreign political influence through the UFW in New Zealand as a case study and appeals to resist it.⁴

On the importance of the UFW, Mao Zedong in 1939 pointed out that the Party, the armed struggle and the UFW as the three Magic Weapons that CCP could triumph over the enemies in the Chinese revolution.⁵ And Xi Jinping, who undoubtedly have shared the part of Mao’s political thought, claimed as well that the UFW has been the valuable political heritage that brings about the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation and that CCP should use effectively this great treasure.⁶

With considering these arguments, the chief object of this research is to describe the concrete picture about the UFW focused mainly on its institutional settings and organizational machines of the UFW International activities (UFWIA) and their development after Xi Jinping’s inauguration of CCP General Secretary in 2012. And then, through these investigations, the characteristics of Xi’s political thought, leadership style and his political strategy will also be referred.

2. Main interest of Xi Jinping in the UF policy

To begin addressing the UFW in the present-day, the top leader’s opinion should be identified. Xi authority has been vigorously pursuing innovation of the UFW after his inauguration of the CCP General Secretary in 2012. The reason is his political concern as follows.

First, it should be referred that his crisis consciousness of the maintenance of CCP rule confronting huge social change by globalization and IT revolution. For this, the regime has prevented mass democratic movement and its ideology from spreading. In his recently published materials, he emphatically rejected the western liberal democracy, while admitting difficulty in keeping the one-party system.⁷ One of the most essential tasks for that, Xi said, is controlling public opinion, especially in cyberspace. CCP must grasp political hegemony by winning the wordy warfare, facing political ideology or religious beliefs from miscellaneous unfavorable forces from the inside or outside China.⁸ As discussed in the next part, internet control of the UFW has been more

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²Walker and Ludwig, “Meaning of Sharp Power”; Walker, “What Is Sharp Power?”; National Endowment for Democracy, Sharp Power, 8–25.

³Suzuki, Rule and Power, chapters 4–5; Groot, Managing Transitions.

⁴Brady, “Magic Weapons.”

⁵Mao, “Gongchandangren Fakanci,” 74.

⁶Party Literature Research Center, Xi Jinping Guanyu Shehui Zhuyi, 25.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 195; Xi, Zhiguo Lizheng, Di Er, 327–8.
emphasized in Xi era than in Hu Jintao era. In the perception of party officials, China’s exercising influence as Sharp Power, target for public opinion in foreign countries, is the equivalent to intrigue of hostile states which hope CCP’s regime change through peaceful means (heping yangbian).

Second, regarding the relationship with the outside world, Xi has to manage the political centrifugal forces in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. It is well known that political identity different from Mainland China has been prevailed in Taiwan and request for state independence is firmly rooted in a part of Taiwan society. The Sunflower movement in 2014, big protest movement has occurred by a lot of Taiwanese students who had opposed Kuomintang authority of the day over the economic agreement with Beijing government.

Similarly, popular sentiment of anti-central government has been growing in Hong Kong. Although more than 20 years have passed since the return to China from the U.K., antipathy of native local residents toward Beijing has been becoming more fiercely because of strengthening political control of CCP and social influence like population inflow from China Proper. Such dissatisfaction was clearly shown by large-scale protest demonstration against central government in 2014 as the same year as in Taiwan, which was called the Umbrella Movement. To these defiant attitudes, Xi asked to observe the principle of One Country, Two Systems (yiguo liangzhi) with the threat of using coercive force. At the same time, he has requested need for guiding popular opinion, arbitrating interest conflicts and realizing consensus building over hot issues. In so doing, political co-optation and conciliation of the UF policy is expected to be operative.

Third, in Xi’s view, Chinese foreign strategy, mainly focused on the Belt Road Initiative (BRI; yidai yilu), should be facilitated more effective by the UFW. As one of the major powers in today’s world, Xi believes, China must improve its diplomatic capability of rule-making, agenda-setting, and propaganda the international community for the purpose of enhancing its influence on the global governance as well as its soft power. For instance, regarding China–Africa developmental cooperation, he insisted on holding the annual seminars which invite 1000 African journalists by Chinese financial support, for the sake of confidence building between China and African local media. Middle Eastern countries covered by the BRI plan was proposed likewise to establish NGO networks including “the news report cooperation league.” Xi emphasized propaganda activity was the key for the success of the big project to create a favorable atmosphere in local public opinion.

3. Continuity and development of the UFW in Xi administration

3.1. Reinforce political communication with social organizations

Based on the top leader’s argument, Chinese authority has been striving not only for widening political channels with various interest groups which has been designated as objectives by the UFW, but for brushing up communication skills with them.

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9 Ibid., 435.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 444 and 450.
12 Ibid., 459.
13 Ibid., 465 and 516.
14 Ibid., 502.
Table 1. Major conferences on the UF policy (2014–2017).

(a) The 2nd Central Working Conference on Xinjiang (dierci zhongyang Xinjiang gongzuo zuotanhui), May 2014
(b) Central Ethnic Work Conference (zhongyang minzu gongzuo huiyi), September 2014
(c) National Study-Abroad Work Conference (quanguo liuxuesheng gongzuo huiyi), December 2014
(d) Central UFW Conference (zhongyang tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi), May 2015
(e) Central Party’s Mass Organization Work Conference (zhongyang dange quntuangongzuo huiyi), July 2015
(f) The 6th Central Working Conference on Tibet (zhongyang dilici Xizang gongzuo zuotanhui), August 2015
(g) National Religious Work Conference (quanguo zongjiao gongzuo huiyi), April 2016
(h) National Work Conference on the UFW for New Social Strata (quanguo xinde shehui jieceng tongyi zhanxian gongzuo zuotanhui), February 2017

Source: author’s elaboration based on relevant information of Liuxue Bianjibu, “Shoujie Quanguo Liuxuesheng,” 38; Wang, “Zhongyang Shouci Zhaokai”; Zhang, “Quanguo Xinde Shehui Jieceng”; and the official website of Zhongguo Gongchandang Tongyi Zhanxian Gongzuo Bu (www.zytzb.gov.cn/html/index.html).

Table 1 reports that central government held the national-level conferences related to the UF policy with considerable frequency from 2014 to 2017. Their subjects were social control, ethnic and religious governance and study-abroad policy. (c) (e) (h) were taken place by Xi leadership for the first time in CCP history.\(^{15}\)

As to Table 1-(d), the Central UFW Conference is the successional body of the National UFW Conference (quanguo tongyi zhanxian gongzuo huiyi) that had been held 20 times since 1950 and the last one was held in 2006 of Hu Jintao era. It is thought that its title change from National (quanguo) into Central (zhongyang) in 2015 symbolizes upgrade of the conference status. A Chinese analyst said it was a manifestation of the will of the central authority that the UFW would be push harder than before and that its policy importance would be weighed in the entire national strategy (Foshan Ribao, November 17, 2016).

3.2. Establishing the “Great Structure of the UFW”

In Table 1, Xi Jinping’s speech at (d) and the enactment of the related party rule named CCP Trial Rules on the UFW immediately after this meeting has a great significance on recent development of the UF policy. Both of them explain the fundamental guidance and priority measures of the UFW under the reign of Xi.\(^{16}\) Shown by a key phrase, the Great Structure of the UFW, the substance of the above Xi’s address can be understood as the enlargement of three dimensions such as policy actors, target groups, and the UF activities.\(^{17}\)

First, the UFW has been placed as a kind of all-party operations, so that it should be executed enthusiastically by all CCP cadres and party organs besides the UFW department (UFWD) of each administrative level.\(^{18}\)

Second, with reflection on the diversification of the intelligentsia nowadays, Xi nominated (i) IT talents who had been distinguished in the new-media like opinion leaders in cyberspace or entrepreneurs of IT venture, (ii) competent personnel experienced study-abroad, and (iii) successful younger business people of non-public sector as the main targets of the UF policy.\(^{19}\)

\(^{15}\)Liuxue Bianjibu, “Shoujie Quanguo Liuxuesheng,” 38; Wang, “Zhongyang Shouci Zhaokai”; Zhang, “Quanguo Xinde Shehui Jieceng”; and the official website of Zhongguo Gongchandang Tongyi Zhanxian Gongzuo Bu (www.zytzb.gov.cn/html/index.html).

\(^{16}\)Lin, “Xuexi Guanche,” 7–8.

\(^{17}\)Ai, “Xi Jinping ‘Tongzhan Gongzuo Shi Quandang Gongzuo’,” 21.

\(^{18}\)Xi, Zhiguo Lizheng, Di Er, 304–5; Hai, “Shilun Zhongyang,” 60.

\(^{19}\)Wang, “Xi Jinping Tongzhi,” 37; Zhang, “Dang de Shijiu Dahui,” 6.
Third, it also laid stress on the necessity to consider the UFW from the viewpoints of domestic stability, diplomatic action and national security. Since the start of Reform and Opening-Up policy in 1978, the UF policy has been implemented from the perspective of China’s domestic politics, particularly in service to economic growth. In the following topic, it will be understood the UF policy after Xi’s assuming the power has basic persistence with Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao each period. But at the same time, it is fact that Xi administration has been vigorously advancing toward the outer world through the UFW. To further expand the range of the UF activities corresponding China’s rise is a principal characteristic of his government.

3.3. CCP trial rules on the UFW (zhongguo gongchandang tongyi zhanxian gongzuo tiaoli (shixing))

In April 2015, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC) adopted the above-mentioned intra-party law, which regulates the UF policy in a comprehensive way. The Government media said, the legislation covering the UFW is for the first time in the Party history, and it is the historical landmark of institutionalization of this policy field (Renmin Ribao, May 26 2015). By examining clauses of the ordinance, one can find that its fundamental contents, like operating procedures or target groups, were laid down in Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao both administrations. To put it differently, Xi have developed the main body of the UFW carried out by his two predecessors and transformed it into the official regulation.

One evidence of the basic continuity is to raise relative status of the UFWD in CCP’s organizational hierarchy. In Article 9, the Trial Rule principally requires a head of the UFWD to be a member of a standing committee of the Party committee at provincial, municipal, and prefectural levels. In fact, this promotion within the Party order decided in the late 2000s and Xi institutionally reconfirmed it.

The prospected target of the UFW is another evidence. Article 4 of the Trial Rules name the 12 groups that CFWD desires to cooperate with, for co-opting their representative figures without CCP membership.

In Table 2-(g), the New Social Strata (NSS; xinde shehui jieceng), newly emerging socio-economic elites, was started to incorporate into the existing regime by Jiang Zemin’s initiative in the early 2000s, which officially authorized by the theory of Three Represents (san ge daibiao). It is in 2006 under Hu Jintao government that the NSS was written in the target list of the UFW at the 20th National UFW Conference. Although definition of the NSS was minor changed in 2015 by adding IT Talents at Central UFW Conference of Table 1-(d), CCP has maintained its favorable attitude to these elites.

As to Table 2-(h), people who were students overseas and have rich contribution in their own specialty are categorized of the Study-Abroad Talents (SA Talents; liuxue rencai/chuguo guiguo liuxue renyuan). The importance of SA Talents was highlighted at National Study-Abroad Work Conference of Table 1, and yet they had become the UF object at the 19th National UFW Conference in 2000 of Jiang period.20

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20 Liu, “Gang Ao Tai,” 23.
3.4. The Western Returned Scholars Association = Overseas-Educated Scholars Association of China (oumei tongxuehui = zhongguo liuxue renyuan lianyihui)

The Western Returned Scholars Association = Overseas-Educated Scholars Association of China (WRSA or WRSA = OESAC) is a government-affiliated organization that is expected to play a role as political belt between CCP and specific social groups like the official Trade Union (gonghui) and the Communist Youth League of China (zhongguo gongchan zhuyi qingniantuan). WRSA has responsibility to implement the UFW for SA Talents, whose members are famous scholars or businesspeople who returned from study abroad.

WRSA was established in 1913. After the foundation of PRC in 1949, it has been under the direct control of the UFWD of CPCCC. In 2003, Hu Jintao administration added the latter phrase, Overseas-Educated Scholars Association of China to its original name for demonstrating to extend the enrollment qualification and its activities. It shows that the extension of the UFW to SA Talent through the revitalizing WRSA has been started since Hu Jintao administration.

Still, its political presence has come to be increased than before, after Xi Jinping paid more attention to the study-abroad policy as indicated in Table 1-(c). In 2013, he attended the ceremony to commemorate the 100th anniversary of WRSA and delivered keynote speech. He said that its members must serve to the country through the study-abroad (liuxue baoguo) with the spirit of patriotism and play an important role as private diplomats who convince foreign people of China’s official discourse. And, by becoming a talent bank of “liuxue baoguo,” think tank of policy proposals and vital force in people-to-people diplomacy, WRSA should flourish as the political belt between the Party and SA Talents.

Further, the General Office of CPCCC (zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang bangongting) issued a policy letter in 2016, titled “Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of WRSA/OESAC.” This is the first specific document written about WRSA in CCP history. In the notice, what the authority asked WRSA to fulfill as its major duties are (i) political guidance and organizational incorporation for SA Talents, (ii) numerous exchange activities with Chinese individual living abroad after their study as well as social groups formed by them, (iii) to become a “friendship messenger

Table 2. Main target designated by CCP trial rules on the UFW.

(a) ‘Democratic parties’ 民主党派  
(b) Personages without party affiliation  
(c) Non-Party intellectuals  
(d) Ethnic minorities  
(e) Religious circles  
(f) Personnel of non-public sectors of the economy  
(g) New Social Strata  
(h) Personnel in the overseas or returned  
(i) Compatriots in Hong Kong and Macau  
(j) Compatriots in Taiwan and their relatives in the PRC  
(k) Overseas Chinese lived in foreign countries  
(l) Other people being necessary to cooperate with

Source: Renmin Ribao, September 23 2015.

21 Xi, “Zai Oumei Tongxuehui.”  
22 Liuxue Bianjibu, “Quanguo Liuxuesheng Gongzuo,” 14.  
23 Zhonggong Zhongyang Bangongting “Guanyu Jiaqiang Oumei Tongxue” Guangming Ribao, August 4 2016.  
24 Chen, “Hongyang Liuxue Baoguo,” 6.
between China and foreign countries by means of talking China’s story better and speaking China’s voice wider” (Guangming Ribao, August 4 2016). Initiatives are in accordance with the government’s diplomatic arrangement. Then, they communicate closer with all kinds of foreign organization in China including embassies, consulates, chamber of commerce and branches of international organization and so on.

3.5. Organizational restructuring of the UFW system

Xi Jinping administration is also keen on ameliorating organizational structure of the UFW. As a result of the following course of actions, the intra-party position of UFWD has been elevated.

3.5.1. Establishment of the leading small group system

To create the Central Leading Small Group of the UFW (zhongyang tongyi zhanxian lingdao gongzuo xiaozu) decided by the Central Political Bureau of CCCPC, soon after the Central UFW Conference in 2015. It has authority to give any cross-sectional instructions to 18 central-level organs of the Party and government. Local party committees below the provincial level have followed this arrangement, too. Among 31 provincial level party units, for example, 28 have set the counterparts in the same manner by May 2016. Most leaders of their Small Group are held concurrently by each party secretary. To the contrary, as stated above, a chief of UFWD is normally assigned to a post of standing committee of his/her own party organization.

3.5.2. Increasing the power of the UFWD of CPCCC (zhonggong zhongyang tongyi zhanxian gongzuo bu)

The UFWD of CPCCC has been expanding its scope of competence consequent upon becoming larger its organizational size. The 8th Bureau in the department, NSS Personnel Work Bureau (xinde shehui jieceng renshi gongzuo ju) was created in 2016. As a Bureau (ju) level section, its establishment was for the first time in 11 years. The 8th Bureau is seemed to be responsible for the UF policy for the SA Talents as well as NSS. Additionally in 2017, the UFWD of CPCCC newly established the 9th Bureau dealing with Xin Jiang rule.

Likewise, it is worth examining the contents of “Masterplan of Deepening Institutional Reform of the Party and the Government” announced in 2018. According to this, the role of the UFWD of CPCCC was significantly strengthened. The department not only gained the right to command the State Ethnic Affairs Commission (guojia minzu shiwu weiyuanhui) but also absorbed the State Administration of Religious Affairs (guoji zongjiao ju) and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council (OCAOSC; guowuyuan qiaowu bangongshi). The last two were fortified their organizational independence. The UFWD of CPCCC got to be able to control ethnic minority governance,

25Xin, “Zhonggong Zhongyang Zhengzhiju,” 23.
26Beaumelle, “The United Front Work.”
27Xu, “Liuxuesheng Renyuan,” 38.
28Lin, “Xi Jinping Xin Shidai,” 26.
29Zhonggong Zhongyang, “Shenhua Dang he Gojia,” 8–19.
religious control, and the Overseas Chinese policy (qiaowu gongzuo) over the sectional boundary between the Party and the State Council.\textsuperscript{30}

In particular, the fact that the prime responsibility of the Overseas Chinese policy was vested to the UFWD of CPCCC will enable the department to execute the UFW more efficiently toward foreign countries than before.

For instance, in this policy area, there have been five major powerful units called “Wu Qiao.” Besides (i) the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council mentioned previously, they include (ii) the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the National People’s Congress (quanguo renmin daibiao dahui huaqiao weiyuanhui), (iii) the Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Overseas Chinese Liaison Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference National Committee (zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Gang Ao Tai qiao weiyuanhui), (iv) the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (zhonghua quanguo guiguo huaqiao lianhuihui), (v) The China Zhi Gong Party (zhigongdang) of the “Democratic Parties.”

A consequence of the organizational reform in 2018 is the fact that UFWD of CPCCC have direct control over four groups except for (ii).

3.5.3. Tightening relationship with the Confucius Institute (kongzi xueyuan)

As stated in Introduction, the UFW is classified into “guonei tongzhan” and “haiwai tongzhan” (UFWIA). In a broader sense, the target of the UFWIA covers all overseas Chinese with local residents in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.

The concept of the Overseas Chinese policy (qiaowu zhengce) carried on by the OCAOSC is fundamentally similar to the UFWIA. In fact, their regular works like propaganda or political co-opting for Chinese government had been largely overlapped each other.

The OCAOSC is a partner unit of the Leading Group of Chinese Language Council International (guojia hanyu guoji tuiguang lingdao xiaozu) whose purpose is to teach Chinese language and culture to foreign people. And, the Office of Chinese Language Council International (guojia hanyu guoji tuiguang lingdao xiaozu bangongshi), the administrative organ of the Leading Group, has primary responsibility to manage the Confucius Institutes around the world. However, as noted above, the OCAOSC was integrated into the UFWD of CPCCC in 2018. Consequently, the latter has increased its influence upon the handling of the Office of Chinese Language Council International and the Confucius Institutes.

4. The UFW international activities (UFWIA)

4.1. Approaching target figures

As far as being confirmed by open sources, selection of priority groups and way of gaining support of them through the UFWIA are generally the same as in the domestic. In both cases, main targets are young influential figures constituted of experts, businesspeople and representatives of students’ societies or civic associations. Table 3 demonstrates the brief method of the political incorporation, though it is slightly differences depending on each actual situation. It is highly likely that this procedure flowchart of

\textsuperscript{30}For the Overseas Chinese policy in the past and present see, To, \textit{Qiaowu}. 
Table 3. Basic process of recruiting political cooperators by the UFWIA.

| (a) | Doing Survey and research to grasp the general situation of target group and making personal file and databases about representative figures who belongs to it. |
| (b) | Holding study seminars hosted by UFWD to teach participants political education (in most cases, the number of students is about 40–50 and the period of one seminar is a week in a year). |
| (c) | Inviting to join organizations affiliated with UFWD such as WRSA, subsequently to inducing and training the seminar participants to become cooperators with CCP/UFWD. |
| (d) | Appointing co-operators who have made a significant contribution to official political institutions like members of Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference or CCP. |

Source: author’s elaboration based on relevant information of many open documents and official reports published by the United Front Work Department of the central and local party organs.

Table 3 has been referred to and evolved the practice of the UFWD for NSS. The practice for NSS has been started and gradually refined since 2000s.31

On (b) and (c) in Table 3, UFWIA has naturally limited opportunities of face-to-face contact with the target persons than activities in the domestic. Therefore, to recruit political collaborators in UFWIA, it is often used to invite semi-open programs in the name of economic, social, cultural exchange, for instance, as academic conferences, economic forums, visit tours to hometown of ancestors in Mainland China and so forth.

4.2. Main targets and methodological characteristics

4.2.1. “Winning the youth back (yinghui qingnian)”

Many reports of the UFWD of local party committees have stated that their activities in the overseas are getting more and more challenging in recent years. In particular, delaying adjustment to the generational change of the overseas Chinese is thought as major cause of diffusing anti-CCP sentiment in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and many other places, so that UFWD has been repeatedly calling for the winning the youth back.32

Based on such reflections, the UFWD has started to be concentrating their energy on “New generation, New immigrants, New leaders of the overseas Chinese,” that is, young and effective leaders such as distinguished scholars, entrepreneurs with efficient management ability, and directors of the leading interest groups organized by migrants after the Opening-Up policy in 1978.33 To take an example of many, social organizations founded by new immigrants from Mainland China is a main target which the UFWD of Sichuan Province party committee has been trying to build closer relationship with in Taiwan, as well as those groups of Taiwanese.34 Staff of that department has been also aiming to nurture sympathizers in educational circles of Hong Kong.

4.2.2. Visiting tours to mainland China, social events, and the organizational cover

Comparing with the equivalents in the domestic, the UFWIA has some unique forms of the activity for propaganda, collecting information and the “arranged encounter” with future partner of the UF policy.

First, for foreigners who have family roots in China, visiting tours to the homeland of their ancestors have been conducted with enthusiasm. The intention is to use a desire for

31 Suzuki, Rule and Power, 245–261.
32 Yang, “Zuohao Xin Shidai,” 25–26.
33 Kang, “Yunyong ‘Da Tongzhan Guan’,” 10.
34 Tan, “Jiyu SWOT” 35.
confirming their own cultural identity with nostalgic feeling, while considering an ideological refusal to socialism.\textsuperscript{35} Since 2001, the OCAOSC has started the Discover Trip to China for Eminent Young Overseas Chinese (shijie huaqiao jiechu qingnian huaxia xing). This is a typical program of the roots-finding-journey for younger generation of Chinese descent who have excellent achievements in each specialty.\textsuperscript{36} It has been held a total of 11 times by 2017, when Yang Jiechi, State Councillor and Director of office of the Central Leading Group for Foreign Affairs (zhongyang waishi lingdao xiaozu bangongshi), attended its opening ceremony. The constant attendance of prominent senior cadres like Yang has shown that this event has been highly regarded by CCP.

Second, the UFWD have supported to held different types of conferences or conventions under the name of economic, social, and cultural exchanges. In Zhejiang province, the World Zhejiang Entrepreneurs Convention (shijie zheshang dahui) has been operated every other year since 2011, co-hosted by the UFWD of the provincial party committee and the same level branches of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (zhonghua quanguo gongshang lianhehui), China Overseas Friendship Association (zhonghua haiwai lianyihui) etc. This convention has been held four times by 2017, to realize closer communication with successful businesspersons who has been from Zhejiang but in other countries. There are over 33,000 participants included about 2,800 special guests at the last meeting (Xinhua Website, November 22 2017).

Third, the UFWD have recommended to establish NGOs for the organizational cover of the UFWIA, so as not to be increasingly alerted by foreign governments. In Fujian Province where a great number of the overseas Chinese historically had been produced, a researcher who has been working in the relevant institution of the UFWD in Amoy City accounted for the reason as follows.

“China’s domestic NGOs are more advantageous than agencies of CCP government in that the former can smoothly contact with the target figures/groups in foreign countries with their little hostility. If the UFWD … can mobilize civilian’s UFW activities and get help from NGOs to communicate with student associations and their members in the overseas, bigger success will be obtained with less effort.”\textsuperscript{37}

\section*{4.3. Cultivation of Chinese nationalism through language education and cultural activities}

Compared with the domestic campaigns, the cultural integrity of China has been more emphasized in the UFWIA seeking for the territorial/national reunification. Because it is difficult for foreign individuals who are the targets of the UFWIA to see and hear frequently what people conventionally think of China and the “Chineseness” within their daily life.

In the explanation of CCP, Chinese culture symbolized by Mandarin Chinese (putonghua), should be regarded as the core of spiritual cohesion of the imaginary “Chinese nation (zhonghua minzu)”. In the unlikely event that the overseas Chinese of the older generation fade away without younger successors, if cultural identity and ethnic awareness are not be reinforced by the language education for foreign children, it will be

\textsuperscript{35} Kang, “‘Da Tongzhan Guan’ Shiye,” 105.
\textsuperscript{36} Dai, “Cong Tongyi Zhanxian,” 72.
\textsuperscript{37} See above 35 106.
impossible to maintain the human network of the UFW. Therefore, the related cultural activities with the prevalence of Chinese has a great significance in the UFWIA.\textsuperscript{38}

Moreover, considering the effective propagation of information at the operational process of the UFWD, what is the cultural essence of the Chinese nation has been examined again and again. In other words, this is a kind of cultural creation which has been exploring and reconstructing China’s national identity by political action like the UFW.

From these viewpoints, the UFWD of party committees have worked on spreading Chinese language for local residents, by education in the Confucius Institute and language schools as well as broadcasting of Chinese media. “Competition among states over languages,” a Chinese specialist said, “has been intensified in the New Media era” and the circulation of a certain language became “an important indicator for the national strength, Soft Power of the state.”\textsuperscript{39} Therefore, it is thought that, it has positive effect on China’s soft power and the UFW to improve teaching curriculum, its methods and contents of Confucius Institute in accordance with a rapid world change, as well as for foreigners’ proper understanding of China.

CCP is also attempting to expand other cultural education for the overseas Chinese in the Academy of Chinese Culture (ACC; zhonghua wenhua xueyuan) established at main local administrative. It is an affiliated institute of under the control of the UFWD and has different name but the same body with the Institute of Socialism (IS; shehui zhuyi xueyuan), whose main task is political training for the “Democratic Parties (minzhu dangpai)” and non-partisan figures. ACC is the external name for foreign usage, while IS for domestic one. According to the website of the UFWD of CPCCC, as of 2016, there are over 400 schools of ACC nationwide.

The Central IS, directly run by the UFWD of CPCC, has used the name of the ACC since 1997 and conducted exchange programs to promote Chinese cultural/ethnic identity. The Central IS (ACC), an executive of the institute said, is “a complex type school that researches and spreads propaganda both socialism and Chinese culture,” and “an organizational platform of the UFW activity to cooperate with Chinese descendants worldwide as well as international friends.”\textsuperscript{40}

Confucius Institute is to go abroad and conduct lots of cultural activity like language teaching for foreigners. In contrast, the IS/ACC invites them into China based on the imaginary national pedigree, actually on the PRC stateism. As executing organs of the UFW, they have a mutually complementary relationship.

\subsection*{4.4. The UFW activities for the BRI}

As Chinese officials repeatedly have mentioned, the BRI, one of the foremost policies of Xi administration, is a giant economic project involving 26 countries and regions. It is supposed that about 70 percent of the overseas Chinese around the world have lived in the areas where this plan covers.\textsuperscript{41} Thinking that the BRI is “not only the way of economic development but also the chance to expand the UFW activities on a worldwide scale,” the UFWD of CPCCC is committed to establish a “Friendship Sphere (pengyou quan)” of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{38} Han, “Xin Shidai Wenhua,” 41.
\bibitem{39} Deng, “Zhonghua Wenhua,” 94.
\bibitem{40} Pan, “Zai Shiyi Ci Quanguo,” 51.
\bibitem{41} Zhang, “Wenhua Tongzhan,” 50.
\end{thebibliography}
In 2015, the department instructed the lower-level UFWDs to concentrate their energy on the following three missions (Guangmin Ribao, May 13 2015).

4.4.1. Information gathering and proposals for policy-making
As of September 15, 2015, the official website of the UFWD of CPCCC said, they started to organize survey groups of the on-site-visit and fund-raising for the BRI from this year (Renmin Ribao: Haiwai Ban, October 25, 2016). The team that consists of noted experts, academicians and entrepreneurs were sent to the relating regions in China with the BRI, such as the Xinjiang-Uygur Autonomous Region. This was the first-time exercise for SA Talents by the UFWD of CPCC and one of the highest standards of the UF activity by the department.

4.4.2. Economic cooperation among the partner countries of the BRI
Since 2004, the WRSA has started to held the Forum of Going Global Strategy for Chinese Enterprises (zhongguo shishi “zouchuqu”zhanlüe luntan) to promote the globalization of Chinese businesspeople and its companies. From the 13th meeting of 2014 to the 16th of 2017, conventions’ themes are all connected with the BRI. At the last conference, the number of participants reached about 700 people who had been leading figures of global business and other specialties joined from plenty of countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Russia as well as the countries along the BRI like Kazakhstan.

4.4.3. Creating favorable international environment by propaganda and exchange activities of the UFW
In terms of discussion about Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, and Sharp Power, the UFWD have demanded that the non-partisan religious elite in China support and join propaganda of CCP. Because most of the countries participating the BRI have been suffering challenges of the ethnic/religious complexity. It is thought by the authority that mobilizing the Chinese religious people have the power to persuade a number of foreign believers of the mutual benefit of the BRI, and so that their understanding can increase by the religious cultures. Likewise, the UFWD of the party Committee of Zhejiang Province has launched a program to create an “Federation of Universities for the BRI,” in order to foster joint research, human resources development and exchange faculty members with the research institutions in Zhejiang and the counterparts in the partner countries of it.

5. Conclusion
To make China even stronger state, Xi Jinping has provided the UFW with large-scale resources such as money, manpower and technology to secure domestic stability and global outreach of its national power. In foreign activities, China’s political influence through developing various institutional settings has been gradually strengthened while

42Lin, "Xi Jinping,” 26.
43Gao, “Yidai Yilu’ Guoji Hezuo,” 48–9; Liuxuesheng Bianjibu, “Jujiao ‘Zhongguo Zhizao 2025’,” 48.
44Zhang, “Wenhua Tongzhan,” 50–1.
45Yang, “Yidai Yilu’ Zhanlúe,” 85.
social control systems called Digital Leninism has developed extensively in the domestic by exploiting the advanced information technology.

UFWD has implemented fiercely (i) propaganda, manipulation of the public opinion, and the purposely distribution of false information in cyberspace, and (ii) political co-optation of local politicians, businesspeople and opinion leaders by giving various convenience irrespective of legal validity. The latter, to foster Pro-Chinese lobby will reinforce China’s foreign influence in the long run, and UFWD of CCCPC has spent more energy and time than the former.

Though, construction of human network which contributes to CCP’s political aims and its maintenance of the information flaw bases have been mostly made not by systematic and organizational but by personal effort in the long-term activity of the UFW. Hence, it is almost impossible for other non-democratic regimes to imitate it. And it is true that democratic sides need to have a certain degree of a sense of caution for China’s foreign influence in their own countries, but, shown in detail in the above account, to identify concrete activities of the UFW is not so much hard because their contents and aspects are usually patterned in most cases.

In addition, other finding can be drawn out of the previous analysis, that is, characteristics of Xi Jinping’s political perception, leadership, and management style. It is true that Xi Jinping has asserted the UFW should adjust itself to the national goal and the changing political environment for China’s Rise. However, as mentioned before, the theory and practice of UF policy under the Xi has basic commonality of that had been formed through the Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao era. In this regard, CCP’s official claim that policy innovation of the UFW under Xi has been remarkable has less explanatory power. Small novelty made by his administration might be refocused on mobilizing the Study-Abroad Talents and WRSA for diplomatic purposes, which has been discussed in the previous chapters.

After Xi became the top leader in 2012, CCP authority has tackled with (i) organizational reforms of the Party, the government and the army, (ii) social/economic reforms to satisfy peoples’ wish for improving the quality of their life, and, (iii) reforms of political channels linking the state with the society to facilitate the political communication between them. The significance of Xi’s strong appeal for revitalizing the UFW and the Party’s Mass Line (dang de quanzhong luxian) should be grasped appropriately on the last one.

Researchers have scrutinized carefully topics relating to (i) and (ii), for instance, the repeated campaign for anti-corruption, the enforcement official disciplines and the institutional restructuring for the militaristic modernization of the People’s Liberation Army. To the contrary, (iii) had not drawn much attention than the proceeding two policy contexts. However, if thinking of Mao Zedong’s remark about the tree Magic Weapons – the Party, the armed struggle and the UFW – shown in Introduction part, scholars are going to find easily that each of them corresponds to (i), (ii), and (iii). And then, in terms of much presence of Mao Zedong in Xi Jinping’s political idea, it is no doubt that Xi hopes in real earnest to sharpen the last Magic Weapon, that is the UFW.

What has been underlying as the way of Xi Jinping’s political thinking is not the reform and innovation but the revival of good tradition and renovation. The author had pointed out before that Xi’s political goal is to renovate or remodel the mega building that has constructed by the one-party rule of CCP. Through the study of the UF

46Hishida and Suzuki, Drifting Governance, 199–200.
policy under the Xi administration, his brief of political conservativeness has again become highlighted.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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