



ACADEMIC SECURITY AND COUNTER EXPLOITATION PROGRAM

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# THE OPEN SOURCE MEDIA SUMMARY

September 22, 2021

## FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH FUNDING AND GRANT MAKING PROCESSES: A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM 2016 TO 2021

*National Institutes of Health | July 30, 2021*

Since the National Institutes of Health (NIH) started working in 2016 on undue foreign interference in NIH-funded research, we have become aware of three types of problems: Undisclosed sources of foreign research support, which have led to NIH making illinformed funding decisions. These sources of support include undisclosed foreign employment, undisclosed foreign talent recruitment awards, and undisclosed foreign research grants. We have seen cases in which scientists' misrepresentations led to NIH funding duplicative projects or projects compromised by conflicts of commitment. A now-publicized example occurred at Ohio State University (see also the public court document attached). Undisclosed conflicts of interest, which have led to NIH overseeing awards that were inadequately managed for prevention of bias. In the Ohio State University case, the scientist had undisclosed positions and equity interest in foreign companies that should have been subject to a conflict-of-interest plan.

Read the full article [here](#).

## PLANNING FOR SCIENCE: CHINA'S "GRAND EXPERIMENT" AND GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

*Yutao Sun and Cong Cao | Nature – Humanities and Social Sciences Communications  
September 20, 2021*

China's rising capability in science, technology and innovation to a certain extent has to do with "a grand experiment" that started 15 years ago when the Chinese government released the National Medium and Long-Term Plan for the Development of Science and Technology (2006–2020) (MLP). MLP launched the indigenous innovation strategy and set goals to turn China into an innovation-oriented country. The junction when the old MLP phased out and a new MLP (2021–2035) will soon be introduced holds greater historical and practical significance for the Chinese and international scientific communities to make sense of planning for science. This paper reviews the progress achieved in implementing the MLP, analyzes the daunting challenges facing China to become an innovation-oriented nation, discusses the implications of planning science for the Chinese and international scientific communities, and speculates on what might be included in the new MLP. China's rising capability in science, technology and innovation (S&TI) to a certain extent has to do with "a grand experiment" that started 15 years ago (Cao et al., 2006).

Read the full article [here](#).



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## STATE DEPARTMENT PLANS ‘CHINA HOUSE’ TO COUNTER BEIJING

Jack Detsch and Robbie Gramer | *Foreign Policy* | September 21, 2021

The U.S. State Department is planning to expand the number of officials dedicated to monitoring China, a bid to track Beijing’s growing footprint in key countries around the world. The changes, which could include adding between 20 to 30 staff members, would include a boost for regional China “watch” officers: a category of officials first created during the Trump administration to track Beijing’s activities around the world under the State Department’s regional bureaus. The effort to carve out a more central China desk at State, termed “China House” by some in Washington, follows a move at the U.S. Defense Department to create a central hub to handle Washington and Beijing’s military relationship. The State Department initiative would add officers in both Washington as well as to embassies around the world to monitor China’s activities in specific countries, according to current and former officials familiar with the matter. One official said the State Department is also looking at adding more staff to track China’s procurement of emerging technologies and efforts to tackle climate change. A State Department spokesperson declined to comment. Changes at Foggy Bottom come as U.S. President Joe Biden’s administration seeks to pivot away from two decades of costly Middle East wars to long-term global competition with China.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## REVEALED: AMERICAN BIG TECH FIRMS HELP CHINA SURPASS U.S. IN STEM RESEARCH THROUGH TALENT POACHING AND ACQUISITION

Price Sukhia | *The Drilldown with Peter Schweizer* | September 21, 2021

For decades, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has viewed advanced technology as a way to “leap frog” American leadership in the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and eventually overtake the U.S. as the world’s foremost super power. Increasingly, American universities and Big Tech corporations are helping the Chinese acquire top-tier talent in scientific and technological research. This development has come into focus after a recent report from the Center for Security and Emerging Technology found that a stunning 10 percent of the collective Artificial Intelligence (AI) labs of Big Tech firms – IBM, Microsoft, Google, and Facebook – are operated in China. According to the report, U.S. tech corporations carry out research in foreign countries like China primarily to access local talent and save on costs.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## U.S. JUDGE ACQUITS RESEARCHER CHARGED WITH HIDING CHINA TIES

Jeffrey Mervis | *Science* | September 17, 2021

For the first time, a federal judge has handed down a verdict in one of the cases brought by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) against dozens of academic researchers with ties to China—and the government lost. On 9 September, U.S. District Judge Thomas Varlan acquitted Anming Hu, a former University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK), engineering professor, of lying to NASA about his funding ties to institutions in China. In addition to freeing Hu from 18 months of house arrest, Varlan made clear in his 52-page ruling that he was not impressed by prosecutors’ claims that Hu’s reporting issues amounted to fraud. Although each case is unique, the judge’s opinion could have implications for other cases under what the government calls its China Initiative. In many of the prosecutions, the government has alleged that a scientist hoodwinked the federal agency that funded the work by failing to disclose financial support from China.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **STANFORD ACADEMICS SLAM JUSTICE DEPARTMENT PROGRAM TARGETING CHINESE RESEARCHERS**

*Bill Gertz | The Washington Times | September 13, 2021*

A Justice Department program launched during the Trump administration targeting Chinese illicit technology theft is under fire from a group of Stanford University academics. The group of 77 Stanford professors stated in an open letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland that the program known as the China Initiative is fueling academic bias and the unjust targeting of Asian American researchers. While acknowledging the need to protect information for U.S. national security, “we believe, however, that the China Initiative has deviated significantly from its claimed mission: it is harming the United States’ research and technology competitiveness and it is fueling biases that, in turn, raise concerns about racial profiling,” the Sept. 8 letter states. “We strongly urge you to terminate the China Initiative and develop an alternative response to the challenges posed by our relations with the People’s Republic of China, one that avoids racial profiling and discouraging beneficial and important collaborations and influx of talented personnel,” the letter adds.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **CHINA INITIATIVE AIMS TO STOP ECONOMIC ESPIONAGE. IS TARGETING ACADEMICS OVER GRANT FRAUD ‘OVERKILL’?**

*Ellen Nakashima and David Nakamura | The Washington Post | September 15, 2021*

Qing Wang was born in rural China, came to the United States to study and worked his way into the elite ranks of American science, becoming a respected heart-disease researcher — and, in 2005, a citizen of his adopted country. Then one morning last year, an FBI agent knocked at his door in a suburb here. Within hours, Wang was in handcuffs, charged with concealing ties to the Chinese government on a federal grant application. The prestigious Cleveland Clinic, where he had worked for 21 years, fired him the same day. To federal investigators, Wang, now 56, was an example of China’s growing effort to co-opt scientists in the United States — part of a vast campaign to steal American secrets and technology. Over the past several years, the Justice Department has broadened its focus from company insiders, hackers and suspected Chinese agents to scrutinize researchers at universities and hospitals under a marquee law enforcement program called the China Initiative.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **FLORIDA RESIDENTS CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO VIOLATE IRAN SANCTIONS, OTHER CRIMES**

*U.S. Department of Justice | September 14, 2021*

Three Florida residents have been charged in federal district court in Miami with crimes related to their alleged violations of U.S. sanctions on Iran, and money laundering. Defendants Mohammad Faghihi, 52, his wife Farzaneh Modarresi, 53, and his sister Faezeh Faghihi, 50, operated Florida company Express Gene. According to the criminal complaint affidavit, between October 2016 and November 2020, Express Gene received numerous wire transfers from accounts in Malaysia, the People’s Republic of China, Singapore, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, totaling almost \$3.5 million. It is alleged that some of the money received was used by Express Gene and its principals to purchase genetic sequencing equipment from U.S. manufacturers and ship them to Iran without a license from the Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to export the machines, despite sanctions on Iran. The incoming money also was used by F. Faghihi and Modarresi to fund the 2019 purchase of the Express Gene property, says the affidavit.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **EXPLAINED: WHY ACADEMICS ARE URGING US TO END INITIATIVE LOOKING FOR ‘CHINESE SPIES’ IN UNIVERSITIES**

*Sonal Gupta | The Indian Express | September 16, 2021*

A letter by a group of 177 Stanford University academics has expressed concerns over racial profiling “fueled” through the US Department of Justice’s China Initiative, which actively looks at Chinese “spies” at the US universities. The professors have stated that though activities such as intellectual property theft and economic espionage – sanctioned by the Chinese government – must be addressed, the Department’s initiative has “deviated significantly from its claimed mission”. “...it is harming the United States’ research and technology competitiveness and it is fueling biases that, in turn, raise concerns about racial profiling,” the letter argues. Then US Attorney General Jeff Sessions introduced the program in November 2018, under former President Donald Trump, with the aim to counter “Chinese national security threats”. In his announcement speech, Sessions had stated that the China Initiative will help “meet the new and evolving threats to our economy”.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **CHINA’S WORSENING ROW WITH AUSTRALIA LEAVES RESEARCHERS PAYING THE PRICE**

*Amber Wang | South China Morning Post | September 19, 2021*

Chinese scholars in the field of Australian studies are becoming caught up in the souring of relations between Beijing and Canberra, prompting concerns about the future of academic exchange. Chinese researchers Chen Hong and Li Jianjun, both specialists in Australian studies, had their visas cancelled last year, with the email to Chen from the Australian Home Affairs Department saying he posed “a risk to ... national security”. Other scholars have said polarised views on China were making their work difficult. Australian media reports suggested Chen, a professor of Australian Studies at the East China Normal University in Shanghai, and Li, director of the Australian Studies Centre at Beijing Foreign Studies University, were drawn into a foreign interference investigation involving New South Wales MP Shaoquett Moselmane, who was investigated last year over “Chinese influence” operations. Both Chen and Li were found to be members of a WeChat group that included Moselmane and his former staff John Zhang, and was allegedly a platform to encourage the politician to advocate for Chinese government interests.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## **A CONCRETE AGENDA FOR TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION ON CHINA**

*The United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Majority Report | November 2020*

The United States and Europe increasingly agree that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) poses significant political, economic, and even security challenges. Legislators and parliamentarians on both sides of the Atlantic have played an active and leading role in shifting approaches to meet these challenges. The next step is to turn this growing agreement into a constructive and concrete transatlantic agenda to defend shared interests and values. This report puts forward concrete ideas for collaboration in six key areas: fending off malign political influence, protecting the integrity of international organizations, addressing anti-competitive trade and economic practices, investing in future technologies and shaping how they are used, confronting the security implications of the PRC’s strategic investments in energy, transport, and digital infrastructure through “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR), and invigorating partnerships in Africa and the Indo-Pacific.

Read the full article [here](#).



## CHINA'S ACCESS TO FOREIGN AI TECHNOLOGY: AN ASSESSMENT

Wm. C. Hannas and Huey-meei Chang | Georgetown University Center for Security and Emerging Technology | September 2019

China's technology transfer programs are broad, deeply rooted, and calculated to support the country's development of artificial intelligence. These practices have been in use for decades and provide China early insight and access to foreign technical innovations. While cyber theft and industrial espionage may or may not be employed, we judge that the main practices enabling AI-related transfers are not illegal. This inspires optimism on one level, but many—possibly most—of these transfers are unmonitored and unknown outside China. China's reputation as a copycat is overstated and the formulation itself is simplistic. China is building indigenous S&T capacity and can innovate on its own terms, while taking account of global trends to move to new stages of novel development. Just as important, creativity is multi-faceted and implemented by different cultures in different ways. The belief that liberal democracies, and the United States especially, are endowed with a creative advantage is not well supported by evidence. We have low confidence that any combination of persuasion or disincentives will cause China to abandon its idiosyncratic transfer practices.

Read the full article [here](#).

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## IF YOU WANT TO KEEP TALENT OUT OF CHINA, INVEST AT HOME

Ryan Fedasiuk | Foreign Policy | September 17, 2020

Many Americans first heard about China's Thousand Talents Plan when FBI agents led Charles Lieber out of his Harvard office in handcuffs earlier this year. The world's leading chemist, Lieber mentored hundreds of students and chaired Harvard's Chemistry Department while allegedly deceiving the university about his connections to the Wuhan Institute of Technology and Thousand Talents. Lieber's arrest alerted the U.S. public to China's long-standing efforts to recruit overseas scientists. By itself, participating in a talent recruitment program does not constitute a crime—but some participants concealed their affiliations with Chinese universities and double-dipped into the purses of American research institutions. Facing heightened scrutiny, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) issued a gag order on any references to the Thousand Talents Plan, its largest and most infamous talent recruitment initiative, before rebranding it entirely in 2018. But China's recruitment efforts have only expanded and grown more sophisticated since the reinvention of Thousand Talents.

Read the full article [here](#).

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