

CPAFFC and the United Front Strategy of “Sub-National Engagement”

John Dotson
(Editor, *China Brief*)

Jamestown Foundation Ninth Annual
China Defense and Security Conference
Washington, D.C.
October 15, 2019

Panel One: China’s International Propaganda
and Political Interference Efforts

CPAFFC and the United Front Strategy of “Sub-national Engagement”

Presentation Overview

- Outreach to U.S. state governments:
The May 2019 U.S.-China Governors’ Conference
- Outreach to U.S. city governments:
The July 2019 U.S.-China Mayors’ Conference
- What are CPAFFC and CCP “friendship” societies?
- Concluding thoughts on the PRC’s “sub-national” strategy

Outreach to U.S. State Governments: The May 2019 U.S.-China Governors' Conference

- Fifth “U.S.-China Governors Collaboration Summit” held in Lexington, KY from May 22nd-24th
- Sponsored by NGA and CPAFFC
- U.S. participants from states impacted by U.S.-China “trade war”
- Major themes:
 - Prospects for economic cooperation
 - Ability of “sub-national” ties to maintain U.S.-China ties amid national tensions



Outreach to U.S. City Governments: The July 2019 U.S.-China Mayors' Conference

- Fourth “U.S.-China Sister Cities Mayors’ Summit” held in Houston from July 17th-19th
- Sponsored by SCI and CPAFFC



Outreach to U.S. City Governments: The July 2019 U.S.-China Mayors' Conference

- Fourth “U.S.-China Sister Cities Mayors’ Summit” held in Houston from July 17th-19th
- Sponsored by SCI and CPAFFC
- Major themes:
 - “Cities Mean Business”
 - Xie Yuan (per Xinhua): “...stressed the importance of developing people-to-people and sub-national relationships between China and the United States”
 - Cui Tiankai: “Subnational cooperation and people-to-people exchanges are the highlights in the history of China-US interactions and a driving force for the growth of our relations.”
 - U.S. participants stressed practical nature of local U.S.-China relationships
 - Panel: “Maritime Silk Road and Impact” (OK City – Haikou)



40年来 中国人民对外友好协会一直和美国国际姐妹城协会通力合作
And at that time, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

Xi Jinping and “Sister City” Exchanges

- Xi was CCP Secretary for Fuzhou (Fujian) in 1994 when sister-city agreement signed with Tacoma, WA
- 2015: Xi Jinping visit to Tacoma / Lincoln High School



Other Examples of CPAFFC Outreach to U.S. City Governments

- May 2019: Li Xiaolin met with former Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley
 - Daley (per CPAFFC): “Governors and mayors had an important role to play in American politics... [and he would] always continue to actively promote trade and local government exchanges and cooperation between the two countries.”
- August 26: Li Xiaolin met with Dublin, CA mayor David Haubert (founder of the Sino-American Friendship City Association)
 - Li (per CPAFFC): “China has never regarded the United States as an enemy...”
 - “It has been a main task of CPAFFC to advance sub-national exchanges and friendly relations... bilateral sub-national government cooperation is mutually beneficial and win-win.”
 - “Both sides could work together to play an active role in promoting the development of China-U.S. friendship cities and sub-national government exchanges.”



What Is the “Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries”?



CPAFFC Basic Facts:

- Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (中国人民对外友好协会, *Zhongguo Renmin Duiwai Youhao Xiehui*)
- Led by Li Xiaolin (李小林) (daughter of Li Xiannian)
 - With CPAFFC since 1975; spent much of 1980s / 1990s in USA
 - 1990-1992: First Secretary PRC Embassy in USA
- CPAFFC stands at the apex of the PRC’s “friendship associations” (友好协会, *youhao xiehui*), with both local organizations within China and numerous chapters abroad
 - Lomová, Lulu, and Hála: “This system is analogous to the friendship associations (*общества дружбы*) [of] the Soviet Union, only more extensively developed” (*Sinopsis*, July 28).



What Is the “Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries”?



CPAFFC Basic Facts:

- CPAFFC conducts “exchanges with organizations among the people” (民间组织交流, *minjian zuzhi jiaoliu*) -- a state/party agency that presents itself as an NGO
- CPAFFC acts as the PRC’s lead organization for relations with local governments in other countries
- CPAFFC is NOT:
 - The China Association for International Friendly Contact (中国国际友好联络会, *Zhongguo Guoji Youhao Lianluobu*) – a separate front organization subordinate to the PLA Political Dept. ILD
 - The Council for the Promotion of the Peaceful Reunification of China (中国和平统一促进会, *Zhongguo Heping Tongyi Cujin Hui*) – a separate front organization subordinate to the UFWD
 - Part of the UFWD – CPAFFC is a united front organization, but not a United Front organization
- CPAFFC subordination is unclear – possible split lines of authority to the Foreign Ministry and the CCP Central Committee Foreign Affairs Commission (中共外事委员会) ?