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A Barbour, A Baker, A Chinese Rainmaker

In a new meshing of money and politics, the Republican fund-raiser and heavyweight lobbyist Haley Barbour has branched out into Washington's latest twist on the influence game. He has signed up as a senior adviser to Milestone Merchant Partners, a newly formed private equity group. It is modeled after the Carlyle Group, a successful merchant bank based in Washington that has relied on such prominent Republicans as former President George Bush and James Baker 3rd to drum up investment business around the globe. In this case, Mr. Barbour will be opening doors along with James Baker - James Baker 4th, a Washington lawyer and son of the former presidential adviser.

"Milestone has got great potential and I'm happy to serve," said Mr. Barbour, who is Fortune magazine's No. 1-ranked Washington lobbyist with more than 50 corporations signed as clients. During the 1997 campaign finance hearings, Mr. Barbour was hauled before Congress to explain his financial ties to a prominent Hong Kong businessman who was helping finance the Republicans. Money from China is flowing to Mr. Barbour again. Milestone Partners is financed by \$100 million from the Koo's Group, a \$36 billion Taiwanese financial conglomerate with a broad range of businesses throughout the Pacific Rim.