



**RED
DRAGON
MENACING**

Red Dragon Menacing III(6)

On CCP's All-Out Aggression Against Humanity

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The CCP Cover-up of Religious Genocide and Repression

Nina Shea

January 25, 2022

Epoch Times Commentary

On Dec. 4, 2021, Chinese leader Xi Jinping gave his first public speech on religion in five years, blandly reemphasizing his “Sinicization” policy of “actively guiding religions to adapt to the socialist society.” In practice, Xi’s policies toward religious groups are far more wrathful.

Documents leaked to The New York Times include Xi’s private speeches in which he called for Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres to “balance” the demographics in Xinjiang and show “no mercy” toward its minority communities of Uyghur and other ethnic Muslims—a directive realized in the ongoing Uyghur genocide that features brutal birth prevention measures, mass internment, forced labor, and cultural destruction.

With the other “legal” religions of Catholics, Protestants, and Buddhists, Sinicization is enforced through a strangling web of administrative restrictions aimed to quietly turn their institutions into mere instruments of CCP indoctrination, surveillance, and control.

Beijing goes to great lengths to hide this religious repression from the rest of the world. It enforces strict censorship and bars independent human rights investigators. It deceptively explains Xinjiang’s vast network of concentration camps, documented by Western satellites, as “vocational training centers” to end poverty and terror. To reports of Uyghur women being forced to undergo abortions and sterilizations, Xi’s ambassador in Washington retorted in a tweet that China promotes “reproductive health,” to liberate women from being “baby making machines.”

The CCP is also intensifying its infamous policy of punishing domestic human rights reporters, critics, and defense lawyers. These dissidents perhaps constitute China’s largest group of prisoners of conscience, after religious believers and practitioners, themselves. Ahead of the Olympic Games, Beijing even preemptively rounded up two well-known Chinese rights activists. Religious freedom defense lawyer Xie Yang and

free speech advocate Yang Maodong were detained separately, both on “inciting subversion” charges.

Astonishingly, Chinese nationals who dissent and report on abuses from ostensibly safe havens overseas are increasingly being hunted out by the CCP for intimidation and punishment. According to a new report by the Spanish NGO, Safeguard Defenders, Beijing has forcibly repatriated some 10,000 Chinese nationals by extrajudicial means, since 2014, many, if not most, being regime critics. Under government operations Fox Hunt and Sky Net, the CCP uses kidnapping and intimidation to force dissidents back to China, the report finds.

Last summer, the Associated Press interviewed Wu Huan, who reports that she was kidnapped and held in a CCP secret or “black” jail in Dubai. Now seeking asylum in the Netherlands, she was forced to denounce her Chinese fiancé who had criticized Beijing’s policies. In the jail, she met two Chinese Uyghur Muslims. The Uyghur Human Rights Project documented 1,327 Uyghurs detained or deported to China from 20 countries, since 2014.

Beijing also issues red notices, international arrest alerts through Interpol, to extradite Uyghurs and others abroad. Uyghur rights advocate Idris Hasan, for example, is awaiting deportation from Morocco, having lost his extradition case in December 2021, despite a plea for him from the United Nations Committee Against Torture. China is currently working to place its own security officer on Interpol’s policy committee to gain greater control over the international police.

Expat Uyghurs, such as Gulbahar Haitiwaji, report being lured back to China for punishment. Living with her family in France, she was persuaded to visit China by a man who telephoned, saying he was with her former employer, an oil company in Xinjiang. Upon her arrival in Xinjiang, she was shown a photo of her daughter at a Paris protest against Xinjiang repression. Gulbahar was then given the identity of “Prisoner Number 9” and incarcerated in a concentration camp for three years, where she was prevented from praying, indoctrinated for 11 hours a day, slapped, and forcibly sterilized.



Gulbahar Haitiwaji and her husband. (Courtesy of Haitiwaji)

Chinese dissidents overseas are commonly reported to be spied on, threatened, bullied, and beaten in an attempt to silence them by CCP agents and supporters. In November 2021, former Hong Kong Legislative Council member and pro-democracy leader Nathan Law, now in refuge in the United Kingdom, accused the CCP of organizing clandestine “United Front” operations in London. He called for a probe into a pro-Beijing rally, after rally participants beat up pro-democracy counter-protesters from Hong Kong and rewards were offered on social media for doxxing Law by revealing his home address.

In December 2021, Purdue University president Mitch Daniels warned the university community of an “atmosphere of intimidation” aimed at Purdue’s Chinese students critical of Beijing, and banned attempts to deny students’ rights or to “collude with foreign governments in repressing them.” A Purdue grad student who supported the 1989 Tiananmen protests online had been harassed by other Chinese students and reported to China’s state security, which paid a visit to his family in China. Confucius Institutes have also been linked to Beijing and cited for unwanted influence in American schools and campuses, by the U.S. Secretaries of State and Education, in 2020.

While the harshest treatment is reserved for its Chinese national critics, Beijing will take reprisals against non-Chinese who oppose its religious repression, as seen with recent financial sanctions against the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the State Department's religious freedom ambassador, and several Congressmen. American chipmaker Intel was pressured to remove a posting of its letter to suppliers, prompted by Uyghur forced labor concerns, that it would not use Xinjiang-sourced goods. Athletes should be wary using the China-required Olympic app, which Canadian Citizens' Lab proved is not secure and is coded to flag for hackers the words "Xinjiang" and "Hong Kong."

The CCP cover-up is making it harder to know the full extent of its religious and other repression. But the sheer scale of abuse and the undaunted courage of Chinese dissidents ensure that its tyranny will continue being exposed worldwide.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/the-ccp-cover-up-of-religious-genocide-and-repression_4234043.html

Not Only Russia, but China Is to Blame for Threats Against Ukraine

Beijing is coordinating with Moscow and backing it economically

Anders Corr

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Epoch Times News Analysis

Any Russian invasion of Ukraine will depend upon economic depth in China, and diplomatic appeasement by Germany and France. Beijing is likely encouraging Moscow to invade, which serves the purposes of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

While NATO should be pivoting to address the China threat, Russia is using 100,000 troops on the border with Ukraine to pressure NATO for “legally binding security guarantees” that Ukraine will not join the alliance.

Moscow seeks the withdrawal of NATO military infrastructure to 1997 positions, when the two powers signed an agreement. These are impossible demands that would mean rolling back democracy in Eastern Europe, and the expansion of Beijing and Moscow’s illiberal influence globally. If NATO appeases Russia by abandoning Ukraine today, China will double down on its demand for Taiwan tomorrow. Giving into a bully only encourages the others.

Already, some Eastern European countries are vetoing the European Union’s measures against Beijing’s human rights abuse and territorial aggression, including in the South China Sea. Germany and France, which are weaker on China and Russia than is President Joe Biden, are looking for diplomatic escapes that require throwing Ukraine under the bus.

For example, Germany opposes letting Estonia gift Soviet-made artillery pieces to Ukraine, because they were based in East Germany at reunification, from which they were sent to Finland, and then Estonia. As noted by The Wall Street Journal,

“Germany’s refusal could be read by Moscow as another sign of division in the West’s ranks.”

This is not the time for division among democracies. Estonia should hand the howitzers over to Ukraine anyway, accompanied by a speech about Germany’s cowardice.

Russia’s military buildup is already visibly distracting and disuniting NATO alliance members. Biden mistakenly revealed that NATO members recently disagree on the proper response to various types of Russian invasion.

But sanctions, at least, are sure. Any deeper border incursions past what Putin already took—Crimea and effectively, the Donbass region of Eastern Ukraine—will turn Vladimir Putin and his cronies into not just the leaders of a rogue state, as currently, but into absolute pariahs.

Even democratic allies that are not being tough enough on Russia and China are losing esteem. A Washington Post editorial by historian Katja Hoyer has a title that says it all: “Germany has become a weak link in NATO’s line of defense.” Hoyer argues that “Germany cannot be depended upon when it comes to imposing sanctions on Russia.”

Sanctions will send Russia deeper into China’s cold embrace, which has swallowed so many countries after they egregiously break international law, for example, through genocide or the invasion of neighboring countries. Thereafter entirely dependent upon trade with China to evade Western sanctions, they all but lose their sovereignty.

Burma (commonly known as Myanmar), North Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Venezuela, and increasingly, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Russia are falling into Beijing’s orbit through too much illiberal trade.

A redirection of Russian trade from the United States and Europe to China is already occurring, and provides evidence for Russians and the world that Beijing stands behind Moscow’s aggression.

In 2021, according to a report by Dimitri Simes in the Nikkei Asia Review, annual trade increased between Russia and China by over 35 percent, to a record of over \$146 billion. The two countries plan to add another \$200 billion in trade by 2024.

But Russia's economy is approximately one-tenth that of China, and its trade with the country is lopsided, giving Beijing the upper hand economically and, therefore, politically.

While approximately 40 percent of Russia's trade has over the years been with the European Union, this has not yielded similar political influence for Europe because democracies shy away from economic bullying. The CCP, on the other hand, is a checkbook diplomacy impresario.

Putin is already showing his fealty to Beijing by attending its disgraced Winter Olympics, dubbed the "Genocide Games" by human rights advocates. The Biden administration is wisely instituting an Olympic diplomatic boycott, honored by many of our most important allies.

There are unfortunate exceptions. The Polish president is one of the few U.S. allied heads of state to fink and attend, putting into question his allegiance to democracy over profits to be made in China.

Xi Jinping is coercing Putin to ski the same fake slopes, by delaying high-profile deals for signature in Beijing, including the final contract for a natural gas pipeline, called the Power of Siberia-2, that will further connect the two illiberal behemoths.

As noted by Simes, "Analysts say the standoff between Russia and the West over Ukraine, which could bring new sanctions against Moscow, is likely to tighten the Kremlin's bond with Beijing even more."

Nikkei quotes international relations professor Artyom Lukin, at a university in Russia, as saying that "Putin likely received some guarantees from Xi that if a crisis erupts over Ukraine and the West imposes major sanctions against Russia, then China will stand shoulder to shoulder with Russia."

Chris Devonshire-Ellis, of an Asia investment advisory firm, told the outlet, "If further trade sanctions are placed on Russia, Moscow will need to increase Russia's sourcing capabilities elsewhere, with China being one avenue."

Russia has, since 2010, increasingly depended on China for energy exports, including through two pipelines costing \$80 billion, and a \$13 billion gas processing plant.

If Russia invades Ukraine, U.S. and allied sanctions should be immediate and tough, including against Putin, his closest associates, Russia's biggest business people, all of their immediate families, the country's sovereign debt, access to the SWIFT international banking system and U.S. technology, the top Chinese companies doing business in Russia, and the Nord Stream-2 energy pipeline to Germany.

Germany bears special responsibility in avoiding a war, and if it does not stop dragging its feet on Russia, it should face economic repercussions.

As noted by Hoyer, "everything depends on Berlin. ... If Germany continued to trade with Russia while other NATO nations applied sanctions, the economic bite would be much reduced. That would force Germany's Western allies to either escalate the situation with military intervention or to step back, allowing Putin yet another land grab."

To extricate itself from the moral morass that is its relationship to Moscow, Germany should spend the money necessary to rid itself of its environmentally destructive habit: dependency on Russian gas. This can be achieved by returning to cleaner nuclear energy. Germany should also seek layered energy security by tripling its port and storage facilities for American and allied liquified natural gas to replace the 1.7 billion cubic meters it currently buys from Russia.

Germany's defense posture is also too weak. "[Olaf] Scholz is no more willing to shoulder a share of the weight of collective Western security than his predecessor Angela Merkel was," according to Hoyer.

And Germany wants talks with Russia to follow the "Normandy format," which includes just Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and France. That would essentially break up NATO on the eve of an invasion against a fellow democracy seeking admittance to the alliance.

France has also been weak on Russia, proposing that the European Union negotiate separately with Moscow, fracturing the NATO defense against its belligerence. Germany and France, two of the world's most powerful democracies, are thus eliciting an ethically unforgiveable and strategically short-sighted cowardice in the face of threats and potential bluffing by Russia.

If Germany and other allies do not do their part in containing Russia, protecting the new and democratic state of Ukraine, and shoring up democracy globally, economic repercussions should be considered against not only China and Russia, but against our free-riding allies as well.

No democratic ally should be able to shirk its duty of robust defense expenditures and a unified opposition to the world's dictators and their aggression against fellow democracies. If Germany and France really wish to tread that crumbling path of alliance disunity, they could pull an unwilling but tough America with them onto an autocratic landslide.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/not-only-russia-but-china-is-to-blame-for-threats-against-ukraine_4230722.html

Communist Chinese Imperialists Steal Sub-Saharan Africa

Austin Bay

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Epoch Times Commentary

A quick review of communist China's calculated territorial imperialism in the South China Sea helps clarify Beijing's calculated economic, political and criminal imperialism in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2016 the Hague's international tribunal ruled that China had seized islets and "sea features" in the South China Sea belonging to the Philippines. It had also plundered Filipino fishing resources.

The ruling invoked the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, a treaty China had signed. Yet Beijing ignored the verdict. Chinese diplomats contend in Southeast Asia, China is recovering "stolen" territory.

That defense is rubbish—propaganda to blur a wicked case of aggression by an imperial Great Power (China) at the expense of a weak neighbor.

China's "lost land" scam can't mask or excuse its imperialism in vulnerable sub-Saharan Africa.

During the infamous Scramble for Africa (1881–1914), European empires seized control of roughly 90 percent of Africa. Scrambling imperialists sought colonies. Colonies gave the imperial powers natural resources, markets for goods (economic dominance), and often strategic military bases.

China's calculating communist-imperialists dominate 21st century empire-building in sub-Saharan Africa.

Almost two decades ago prescient human rights groups, developmental aid advocates and savvy accountants began warning sub-Saharan African nations that China's elaborate promises of direct economic investment and generous loan arrangements were anything but altruistic. China's offers of technical assistance to build much-needed infrastructure were suspect. Aid advisers pointed out China typically insisted on using state-owned Chinese construction companies and Chinese workers, which denied local workers opportunities to acquire modern construction skills.

Human rights groups insistently bewail the fact corrupt African politicians are easy targets for political manipulation and bribery by wealthy countries and corporations. Mineral-rich countries with corrupt governments, like the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo) and Zambia, are particularly vulnerable.

The prescient critics got this right: China's strategic goal wasn't development, but guaranteed access to natural resources to supply its industrial economy, especially with strategic minerals found in Congo like cobalt and coltan (refined tantalum).

Manufacturing mobile phones and computers requires coltan. Producing rechargeable batteries requires cobalt. China makes many electric vehicles (EVs) but one has special political importance: "city-town" mini-EVs. Domestic demand is huge. The deal the Chinese Communist Party makes with the Chinese people is they get modern goodies if they don't challenge CCP control.

It takes roughly 22 pounds of cobalt to make an electric car battery. Congolese minerals make China's economy whir and help preserve CCP power.

Congo's so-called "China Deal" is a detailed and hideous example of the CCP dictatorship's self-serving and ultimately malevolent imperialism in Africa.

In 2008 Congo's then-government, led by the authoritarian and corrupt Joseph Kabila, signed a deal with two state-owned Chinese firms. The companies were supposed to build roads, hospitals, and other infrastructure in exchange for a 68 percent stake in a huge Congolese copper and cobalt venture. Published estimates of the deal's value ran from \$6.8 to \$10 billion.

Similar Congo resources-for-development deals followed. One involved building electrical distribution infrastructure.

In 2019 President Felix Tshisekedi replaced Kabila. In 2020 Congolese officials estimated Chinese companies controlled around 70 percent of Congo's mineral deposits and mining-related industry.

Reformers demanded the government review Kabila's mining deals. In May 2021 Tshisekedi agreed. He later called the deals unfair, indicating investigators had found evidence.

They were more than unfair, they were corrupt. In late 2021 a leaked report claimed a subsidiary China Deal contract was used to distribute \$55 million to senior members of Kabila's government. According to a media report, the bribe plot used shell companies that made the operation appear legitimate. State-owned Chinese companies are in thrall to the CCP. That implicates Beijing.

Late last year we learned that in 2017 the Kabila government agreed to secretly amend the China Deal. The amendment accelerated payments to Chinese financiers and slowed the pace of infrastructure investment. In other words, communist China got money before doing required construction in Congo.

The leaked 2021 report alleged that China has invested less than one billion dollars in infrastructure projects, about half of what should have been invested by 2021.

The people of Congo are being cheated, and one of the cheats is China.

Imperialism with Chinese characteristics? Yes.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/communist-chinese-imperialists-steal-sub-saharan-africa_4240188.html

Chinese Military-Linked Firm Gathers American DNA, Provides COVID Tests

Antonio Graceffo

February 2, 2022

Epoch Times News Analysis

China is “developing the world’s largest bio database,” said Edward You, who is the U.S. national counterintelligence officer for Emerging and Disruptive Technologies. “Once they have access to your genetic data, it’s not something you can change like a pin code.”

Racing to dominate the bioeconomy, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is compiling a massive database of medical, health, and genetic information from people around the world, including Americans.

The CCP enlists the help of private companies to aid in gathering genetic data, which can be combined with top military supercomputing capabilities, to discover genetic weaknesses in a population. Bioweapons can then be developed, which prey on these weaknesses. As part of Beijing’s military-civil fusion policy, Chinese scientists, along with the military, have been conducting research in the areas of brain science, gene editing, and the creation of artificial genomes.

Similar research could be used to enhance the performance of Chinese soldiers. BGI Group, formerly Beijing Genomics Institute, is the leader of the CCP’s genome project, as well as one of the leading producers of COVID-19 tests. BGI also has ties to China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA), according to a Jan. 30 report by Reuters.

BGI operates the largest pig cloning project in the world. After manipulating generations of pig DNA, intentionally producing pigs that are smaller or larger, more susceptible to certain diseases, or less susceptible to others, the CCP is zeroing in on the ability to produce “super soldiers.” Among the projects currently underway is BGI’s attempt to make China’s Han ethnic soldiers less susceptible to altitude sickness.

BGI's current chief infectious disease scientist, Chen Weijun, was among the first scientists to sequence COVID-19, taking samples from a military hospital in Wuhan. He is also credited with the patent on the BGI test kits, which have been distributed around the world, including in the United States. Four of BGI's researchers have been affiliated with the National University of Defence Technology (NUDT), under China's Central Military Commission, which is headed by Chinese leader Xi Jinping. The NUDT has been blacklisted by the United States as a threat to national security.

Under Xi, private technology companies have been increasingly integrated into military-related research. In 2021, BGI offered to set up COVID test centers in the United States. But U.S. security officials warned that test centers would allow China to gain access to American DNA, as the swabs have genetic material on them. According to Mike Orlando, the head of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, no U.S. states agreed, but at least 18 other countries allowed BGI to establish test centers. Additionally, BGI test kits were sent to 180 nations.

Chinese medical testing companies regularly use DNA collected from test subjects for other research. Human rights groups say the CCP is using the data for security purposes such as identifying and tracking Uygher Muslims. Furthermore, Chinese police are trying to amass samples of DNA from the country's 700 million males, to keep track of future criminals.

Home ancestry tests are another way that the Chinese regime is obtaining DNA from Americans. The U.S. military has warned soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines to avoid companies such as Ancestry and 23andMe, which have ties to China. An estimated 50 million Americans have already paid to have their saliva tested for their DNA ancestry, according to Bill Evanina, former director of the U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center.

Chinese firm WuXi Biologics bought a Pfizer manufacturing plant in China, and established a production facility in Massachusetts. In 2015, the firm also bought a stake in 23andMe. WuXi Biologics now has locations in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, as well as a drug plant in Delaware, which was built with a state grant.

BGI Group earns part of its revenue by selling genetic sequencing services to universities and health systems around the world. The company has also been purchasing U.S. genomics firms since 2013, and now has multiple partnerships with U.S. companies involved in gene sequencing. In each of these arrangements, BGI gains access to genetic data. Under China's National Intelligence Law, all data obtained by Chinese companies, even abroad, must be turned over to the CCP, upon request.

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) warned that Chinese firms invest in U.S. companies in the hopes of gaining access to U.S. data. Last year, CFIUS blocked a Chinese firm from purchasing a California fertility clinic, which was located in close proximity to six U.S. military bases. The concern was that not only would the CCP gain access to the genetic data of U.S. soldiers, but also of their unborn children.

In spite of the obvious dangers, this year, the Biden administration signed a \$1.3 billion deal with iHealth Labs, a unit of the Chinese firm Andon Health Co., for home COVID test kits. It is part of the administrations' initiative to provide 1 billion free rapid COVID-19 tests to Americans.

The Winter Olympics will provide a perfect opportunity for DNA data gathering. Olympic athletes and coaches will be subjected to daily COVID tests, while media personnel and other attendees will also be tested on a regular basis. This means that the CCP will have the genetic material of every person who attends the Games. Attendees will also be required to download a government-approved health app, which has been proven to have security flaws. Internet security experts warn that the app will be able to gather user data, which, combined with genetic information, can be fed into China's massive artificial intelligence and genome projects.

Antonio Graceffo, Ph.D., has spent more than 20 years in Asia. He is a graduate of the Shanghai University of Sport and holds a China-MBA from Shanghai Jiaotong University. Graceffo works as an economics professor and China economic analyst, writing for various international media. Some of his books on China include "Beyond the Belt and Road: China's Global Economic Expansion" and "A Short Course on the Chinese Economy."

https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinese-military-linked-firm-gathers-american-dna-provides-covid-tests_4250811.html

Iran, China, Russia Cement Anti-U.S. Axis Against Democracy

John Rossomando

February 4, 2022

Epoch Times Commentary

A new axis of cooperation that includes Iran, Russia, and China is becoming more formalized and overt. The three nations are banding together to counter American power as the world's eyes are glued on Ukraine.

The Islamic Republic joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), of which Russia and China were founding members, in September. The SCO aims to foster military, economic, and cultural cooperation of its members, which also include the former Soviet Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Vladimir Putin views Iran's participation in the SCO as part of Russia's project of Eurasian integration.

"Naturally, the United States and the West, in general, are concerned about new coalitions, which are currently [being created] on the international arena," Iran's ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali told Russia's state news agency TASS on Jan. 24. "A coalition of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China is an example of such strategic coalitions."

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi visited Moscow recently, proposing a strategic agreement with Moscow that could cement their relations over the next 20 years. Raisi told the Russians that "today's exceptional circumstances require significant synergy between our two countries against U.S. unilateralism." Beijing remains staunchly opposed to U.S. sanctions against Tehran.

The Russians and Iranians agreed in October to create a “Joint Military Commission” to help coordinate actions between the two nations. Last year, Iran also signed an agreement with China on bringing closer military and economic cooperation.

The relationship among the three is not stable at the moment, because they each have differing interests, according to Ambassador Marshall Billingslea, the former top nuclear negotiator in the Trump administration who worked with China and Russia and has studied Iran extensively.

“Beijing and Moscow have a shared desire to undermine liberal democracy,” Billingslea said.

Iranian, Chinese, and Russian navies conducted maneuvers in the Indian Ocean called “Maritime Security Belt 2022” on Jan. 21 in a reminder of the growing cooperation among these three powers. China’s People’s Liberation Army Navy sent a guided-missile destroyer, a supply ship, helicopters, and members of its marine corps to these exercises. Eleven Iranian naval vessels participated, as did several Russian warships, including a destroyer and an anti-submarine warfare vessel.

Iran hopes this cooperative effort will counter the influence of the U.S. Navy in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea.

The head of Iran’s navy, Commodore Habibollah Sayyari, previously promised future joint exercises with the Russian and Chinese navies.

The three held a similar exercise in the Gulf of Oman near the mouth of the Persian Gulf in 2019.

“The recent naval drills by Russia, Iran, and China set a new model for ensuring safety and security of maritime in international waters,” Iranian Rear Admiral Shahram Irani told Iran’s Fars News Agency.

Russia and Iran have increased their cooperation since the Russians first sent troops to Syria in 2015.

“The joint naval exercise is interesting, but I read it as more of Russia and China working on interoperability and including the Iranians for messaging purposes,” Billingslea said. “All three are interested in curtailing ... our influence and in diminishing their respective vulnerabilities.”

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan sought to divide the world into spheres of influence. Germany and Italy claimed Europe, and Japan had Asia in opposition to the United Kingdom, France, and the United States—and against liberal democracy.

This new axis aims to give Russia a sphere of influence in Europe and the Arctic, Iran a sphere in the Middle East and Central Asia, and China in East Asia. As with the original Axis, this new axis brings together aggressive authoritarian powers with a desire to dominate the world order.

Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping will meet following the opening of the Winter Olympics in Beijing on Feb. 4, and China has backed Russia on Ukraine thus far. Russia and China have also grown close amid competition between China and America's allies in East Asia.

Unlike Russia and China, Iran doesn't have a large enough economy to build a global economic presence. However, Iran's criminal terrorist empire is a convenient wrecking machine that the Chinese and Russians can exploit for operations they don't want to do themselves.

Former Secretary of State John Kerry's 2013 declaration that the United States would no longer enforce the Monroe Doctrine barring non-hemispheric powers from meddling in America's neighborhood has benefitted these nations.

These new axis powers now extend their influence into our own hemisphere. Russia, China, and Iran all have established footholds in Latin America due to relationships with left-wing governments.

The three successfully banded together to protect the regime of Venezuelan dictator Nicolas Maduro in 2019 following the failed Trump administration effort to oust him. The three have stepped up economic and military aid to Venezuela. Russia threatened to deploy troops to Latin America in retaliation for U.S. support for Ukraine. Iran uses Hezbollah as a proxy in Latin America to counter U.S. influence and destabilize the region. Hezbollah has a strong presence, including with the Mexican drug cartels. China, for its part, has unveiled plans to increase its presence in Latin America that could lead to China's navy gaining access to the Caribbean.

The pace of their activities has accelerated in recent years due to the negligence of the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations to put the financial screws on the Russians.

“The more Venezuelas and Nicaraguas they can create and sustain, the fewer democracies and natural allies there are for the United States,” Billingslea said.

The Obama administration’s refusal to practice deterrence during its eight years in power—and President Joe Biden’s appeasement—are largely to blame. Now the world sits on the precipice of a possible World War III. Closer ties among the Russia–China–Iran axis could be the perfect storm in the event of war.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/iran-china-russia-cement-anti-u-s-axis-against-democracy_4254539.html

China Projects Invasion Power to the South Pacific, Trumps Empty AUKUS

Rick Fisher

February 8, 2022

Commentary

The Chinese regime has escalated its effort to achieve military and political dominance in the Pacific by demonstrating its potential to deploy dominant force to the South Pacific, intimidate Australia and New Zealand, exploit its position in Antarctica to better control low Earth orbit, and support new hypersonic weapons.

After years of the regime's outright economic and political bullying of U.S. ally Australia, expanding its penetration of some of the weaker island states like Tonga, Fiji, and Vanuatu, and using its economic power to build influence in New Zealand, there was a reaction. On Sept. 15, 2021, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States signed the AUKUS defense arrangement to equip Australia with nuclear-powered attack submarines.

On one level, AUKUS was a political master stroke, at once highlighting and threatening Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ambitions for Asian hegemony. On another level, it can be seen as a rather lagging deterrent because the Royal Australian Navy may not get its nuclear submarines for a decade or more.

The problem is that China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) is *already* a major threat in the South Pacific, with the current capability to conduct punitive invasions, blockades, or to even invade and conquer New Zealand. These capabilities will increase rapidly over the coming decade.

China is right now exposing the lagging deterrent aspect of AUKUS by exploiting the Jan. 15 massive underwater volcanic explosion that damaged the island nation of Tonga. China is using a humanitarian supply mission to preview the PLA's current and future invasion capabilities.

Demonstrating their longstanding leadership in the region, Australia and New Zealand were the first to respond, sending a Royal Australian Air Force C-17 heavy transport aircraft and a Royal New Zealand Air Force C-130 medium transport aircraft loaded with emergency supplies on Jan. 20.

But on Jan. 27, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) dispatched two of its Xian Aircraft Corporation Y-20 heavy transports, delivering 33 tons of supplies to Tonga. The Y-20 can transport about 100 troops or up to 50 tons of armored vehicles and weapons. In 2014, a PLA National Defense University report suggested the PLA acquire 400 Y-20 transports—so far, Xian has produced over 40.

The new Y-20B, powered by new indigenous WS-20 high-bypass turbofan engines, may have a cargo capacity of over 60 tons.

For the Jan. 27 mission, the PLAAF Y-20s had to make multiple refueling stops. But in the future, Y-20 tanker aircraft will enable near full-load non-stop missions to the South Pacific.

But that's not all. Now sailing to Tonga is one of the PLA Navy's (PLAN) 25,000-ton Type 071 landing platform dock (LPD) amphibious assault ships that will deliver about 1,400 tons of supplies.

The PLAN now has eight Type 071 LPDs, and three of an estimated six to eight 40,000-ton Type 075 landing helicopter dock (LHD) amphibious assault ships. With an overload, the Type 071 and the Type 075 can each carry about 1,000 troops and scores of light- or medium-weight armored vehicles.

Should the CCP decide to invade New Zealand, its 11 LPDs and LHDs could transport 10,000 troops and hundreds of light- and medium-weight armored vehicles, or enough for two medium-weight PLA Ground Force or PLA Marine brigades.

With its two, soon to be three, aircraft carriers, the PLAN could send about 75 combat aircraft to attack all targets of consequence in New Zealand. The PLA could then deploy a brigade each on New Zealand's North Island and South Island.

Thanks to decades of "woke" governments, New Zealand lacks the military forces to offer much resistance. The Royal New Zealand Army could mobilize about 4,600 troops, but only has 25 lightly-armed infantry fighting vehicles.

More bad news is that in 2001, then-Labour Party Prime Minister Helen Clark refused to purchase used fourth generation F-16 fighters to replace the Royal New Zealand Air Forces' upgraded but still 1960s vintage A-4K Skyhawk fighters. So for over 20 years, New Zealand has lacked a combat air force capable of shooting down PLAN carrier fighters and Y-20 transports, or sinking PLAN invasion ships.

In an earlier role as Member of Parliament, Clark was instrumental in causing the United States in 1986 to end its alliance obligations to New Zealand under the 1951 Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) alliance.

The then-Labour government of Prime Minister David Lange had been manipulated by labor unions beholden to the Soviet Union into adopting anti-nuclear weapons policies, which had the effect of barring U.S. Navy ships from its ports, thus forcing President Ronald Reagan to end U.S. alliance obligations to New Zealand.

While New Zealand does maintain close military relations with Australia, and nearly 40 years post-ANZUS also has cordial relations with Washington, both Australia and the United States would be hard-pressed to devote sufficient naval and air forces to defend New Zealand from a large PLA invasion force.

And why bother? The day that AUKUS and the plan to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines was announced, current New Zealand Labour Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern publicly forbade Australian nuclear submarines from entering New Zealand waters, as that would violate its anti-nuclear laws.

This is a victory for China. New Zealand's insane anti-nuclear laws, spurning of allies, refusal to build a credible defense capability, and increasing reliance on commerce with China mean that Wellington can be pressured to ignore Beijing's predations, especially any placement of military capabilities in Antarctica, an express violation of treaties governing that continent.

China already has laser systems at some of its Antarctic bases, allegedly to conduct "atmospheric research," but these could be stealthily upgraded to perform anti-satellite interception missions.

Securing south polar routes over Antarctica would be valuable to the PLA as attack routes for its new Fractional Orbital Bombardment System (FOBS) armed with hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) weapons.

Despite some gormless rulers, New Zealanders do not deserve abandonment to Chinese communist predations. The larger democracies are justified in expecting that New Zealand should do its part to defend against Chinese advances and invasion. This includes helping to prevent Antarctica from becoming a free-passage zone for Chinese FOBS/HGV weapons—some of which might well violate New Zealand's precious nuclear sensibilities.

For all these reasons, AUKUS must quickly be given real teeth. One option is to offer Australia a lease of U.S. B-1B bombers and B-21 stealth bombers, which could be stationed to deter Chinese invasion forces for many years before delivery of the first AUKUS nuclear submarines.

In addition, New Zealand should be offered low-cost used F-15E strike fighters and the sale of about 100 potentially 1,100-mile range AGM-158D JASSM-XR anti-ship missiles to help ensure the PLA keeps its distance.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-projects-invasion-power-to-the-south-pacific-trump-empty-aukus_4264725.html

Is the UN Helping China Hide Its Crimes?

John Mac Ghlionn

February 8, 2022

Commentary

In 1945, shortly after the Second World War, the United Nations (U.N.) was established. According to its website, the intergovernmental organization was created to develop “friendly relations among nations, and promote “social progress, better living standards and human rights.”

In reality, though, the U.N. appears to be inherently corrupt. In 2005, as *The Economist* reported at the time, Benon Sevan, the former head of the U.N.’s oil-for-food program in Iraq was accused of taking “kickbacks” to help an oil company win numerous contracts. Another senior U.N. official was accused of soliciting bribes. Further investigations proved that Sevan had accepted bribes from the former Iraqi regime. Shortly after the revelations, Sevan resigned from his position. In October 2005, a criminal investigation was launched. Sevan quickly fled the United States, where he resided at the time, and returned to his native Cyprus, where he still resides to this day.

Now, the U.N. appears to be aiding the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to cover up its crimes (at least temporarily) in Xinjiang, a region in northern China where acts of genocide are occurring.

Are the U.N. and the CCP colluding to cover up human rights abuses? This might sound like a ludicrous question to ask—but it’s not.

On Feb. 2, the *South China Morning Post* published a rather damning piece, in which the U.N. and China stand accused of constructing a “mutually convenient stalemate.” The accusation came after the U.N.’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the organization’s top human rights body, confirmed that it “will not publish a report on alleged abuses in the Chinese region of Xinjiang before this month’s Winter Olympics.”

Why?

After all, as the Post piece notes, the Xinjiang report has been in the works for close to three years. Additionally, it is “believed to have been ready for publication for much of that time.” Commenting on the inexplicable delay, OHCHR spokeswoman Liz Throssell said: “I am afraid we don’t have an updated timeline yet for the publication of the report. However, I understand that it will not be ready for publication before the start of the Winter Olympics this Friday (Feb 4).”

Is Beijing pressuring the U.N. into silence, preventing the organization from “spoiling” the Winter Olympics with some harsh truths? It appears so.

Last year, Nikki Haley, a former U.S. ambassador, accused China of “quietly working to corrupt the United Nations from top to bottom.” She called on the Biden administration to “call out China’s attempts to co-opt the United Nations and its agencies” and rallied other countries “to oppose China’s influence.”

Haley had a point.

The U.N. has a number of specialized agencies. Fifteen to be exact. Four of these are run by Chinese nationals: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDP), and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The U.N. relies heavily on funding to cover administrative costs and its 30-plus affiliated programs and specialized agencies, as well as peacekeeping operations. A lot of this funding comes from China. In fact, in recent decades, the CCP’s financial support for the U.N. has grown exponentially.

According to researchers at the China Power Project, before the turn of the century, China was reluctant to play an active role in the organization. Today, however, it’s now one of the largest contributors to the U.N.’s regular budget and peacekeeping budget. Interestingly, it now “provides more personnel to peacekeeping operations than any other permanent member of the Security Council.” All of these “contributions,” note the authors, allow the CCP “to exert diplomatic and political influence globally.” In other words, the CCP’s contributions allow it to control the U.N. narrative.

It’s clear to see that China carries a great deal of clout. Should we be surprised? The answer is no. Not at all. The U.N. appears to be a highly compromised organization, masquerading as an impartial one.

If in doubt, let me point you in the direction of the U.N. Human Rights Council, which is, to quote the aforementioned Haley, “a protector of human rights abusers, and a cesspool of political bias.” Again, Haley is spot on. This cesspool consists of Qatar, a country with a horrid history of human rights abuses; and Kazakhstan, a country where at least 225 people, many of whom happened to be peaceful protesters, were recently gunned down in broad daylight. It also consists of Russia, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and, of course, China. All of these countries score poorly on the human rights and rule of law index.

Which brings us back to the initial question: is the U.N. helping China?

Although we cannot answer this question with a definitive yes, it’s safe to say that the U.N. is far from impartial. It’s also safe to say that communist China, a country where genocide is most definitely occurring, has far too much influence over an organization that was established to prosecute, rather than protect, bad actors.

John Mac Ghlionn is a researcher and essayist. His work has been published, among others, by the New York Post, Sydney Morning Herald, Newsweek, National Review, and The Spectator US. He covers psychology and social relations, and has a keen interest in social dysfunction and media manipulation.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/is-the-un-helping-china-hide-its-crimes_4258286.html

Argentina's Pro-Beijing Deal With the Devil

The Falkland Islands needs more military protection against China and Argentina

Anders Corr

February 9, 2022

News Analysis

Argentina President Alberto Fernández signed a deal with the devil at the Beijing Winter Olympics on Feb. 6.

Argentina will join China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), recognize China's claims over democratic Taiwan, take another \$23.7 billion in loans for Chinese infrastructure development, and again publicly threaten the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, along with derecognition of Taiwan. Somehow all these bad things for Argentina, which will only push it away from wealthy democracies in North America and Europe, are being portrayed as a good thing by Fernández.

Argentina already owes over \$268 billion in external debt, so Buenos Aires is digging its hole deeper and threatening to become even more of a pariah by cleaving closer to Beijing on the Falklands and Taiwan issues. On Feb. 2, Argentina gave China another plum: agreement to let China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) build a power plant in the country.

It's hard to explain Fernández's actions without them reminding of the \$1.2 billion in corruption allegations faced in 2019 by his running mate and former president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. She is a powerful vice-president, and staunchly pro-Beijing.

The new agreement comes in the context of veiled military threats against both Taiwan and the Falklands. In November, a top Chinese scholar suggested that the Falklands "colonial situation ... can only be solved by force."

All of this should be resolutely opposed. Britain and its allies, including the United States, should strengthen their ties to the Falklands, make joint commitments to the defense of the islands, and consider a joint North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) base to supplement—both symbolically and materially—their primary British defenses.

And as John Penrose argued in December, the Falklands should receive a seat in the British parliament, guaranteeing their stability and cementing their permanent status within the United Kingdom.

The United States, European Union, and allies should take stronger measures to stop China's BRI project, including potentially through joint economic sanctions on countries that join.

The outrageous claims by China and Argentina on the Falklands should be answered, not only by British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, but by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, a joint U.S.-UK-Falklands statement, defense agreements between the three entities, including NATO as a whole, and preparations for increased international troop deployments on a rotational basis.

Argentina and its apparent ally, China, should never be allowed to think that another war over the islands would be fought by Britain alone. To achieve peace with China, we must project strength and commitment to the military defense of every last inch of democratic territory globally.

These moves should obviously be at the invitation of Britain and the Falkland Islanders themselves, who should be in the lead as it is their sovereignty to defend. NATO support to Britain and the Falklands would not in any way put into question the current status of the Falklands as a British overseas territory. As such, the islanders have self-government, with the singular benefit of a defense guarantee from Britain's powerful global military.

But the Falklands' current anemic military forces of just 1,000 British troops, and Britain's history of fighting alone against Argentina to keep the Falklands independent, must be corrected so that Argentina and China don't get the wrong idea. The Falklands were not and will not be easy picking for the world's dictators and their illiberal allies.

Whether or not China's navy tried to support Argentina in a war to conquer the Falklands, Britain's NATO allies should offer their military and other support in the contingency of conflict. Any illusion that Argentina or China has that the fight would be solo against Britain alone must be publicly denied and materially demonstrated in the clearest and highest possible manner. There should be no room for misjudgement in Beijing or Buenos Aires that could lead to war.

That they would even consider such an option is unconscionable given that in 2013, 99.7 percent of Falkland Islanders voted to stay British.

China and Argentina's continued statements against the will of the voters in the Falklands reveal their power-hungry and undemocratic approach to global politics. We must do more to disabuse them of their illusions that as leftists and neo-Maoists, they can make "progress" on the "right side of history" through the use of force.

Truss, who is also the minister for Women and Equality, made a pitch-perfect statement on Feb. 6 against China and Argentina's agreement. "We completely reject any questions over sovereignty of the Falklands," she said in a Tweet. "The Falklands are part of the British family and we will defend their right to self determination. China must respect the Falklands' sovereignty."

Chen Weihua, China Daily's EU bureau chief, responded with a veiled military threat. "But it's okay for [the] UK to challenge China's sovereignty in the South China Sea by sending navy vessels?" he said. "At least China has not sent its navy near the Malvinas, or what you call the Falklands."

Chen likely hopes, in vain it should be said, that we will fall for his threats and false equivalencies. The current residents of the Falklands can trace their ancestry on the islands to the 18th century, and have a right to choose their own governance. Conversely, the South China Sea has been used since ancient times by all nations in the area, who have rightful claims to large exclusive economic zones that Beijing is trying to steal.

The hypocrisy and self-dealing of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Latin America is obscene and must be ended. It's time to push back against Beijing's racist focus on "colonialism," which only and hypocritically singles out European migrants even where they, along with other "races" if you believe in race as anything but a construction, stretch back to the 17th and 18th centuries.

Migrants, including those of European ancestry who Beijing derogatorily refers to as "colonialists" in what is really anti-democratic propaganda, have a right to the vote and self-governance, as does everyone else. The world is full of migrants, and Beijing and its allies (like Burma against the Rohingya) targets them in a biased, racist, and self-interested manner at their own expense.

The best path forward is to recognize and support ethnic and cultural diversity, democracy, human rights, and individual freedoms like property and religion, all of which are found in the 1948 U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all of which are global values violated by the CCP and its autocratic allies on a daily basis. These

values, which Americans share with their allies globally, should be the cornerstone of building toward peace and justice for all.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

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Behind China's Zero-COVID Policy Lies Profits for Elite Interest Groups, Leaked Recording Shows

Jennifer Bateman

February 10, 2022

Commentary

Recently, a leaked recording of an alleged conversation with Harvard scholar Huang Wansheng in January at a private gathering in China circulated on the internet. Surprisingly, Huang revealed that Beijing's real intention in adopting the zero-COVID policy is to help the regime's elite interest groups make a lot of money. He also said that China lags far behind the United States in 5G, quantum computing, and gene technology.

Since 1997, Huang has been a senior assistant to Professor Tu Weiming, a Professor Emeritus and Senior Fellow of Asia Center at Harvard University. According to Huang, in July 2020, six months after the outbreak of the pandemic, Beijing's top officials purchased a one-way ticket for him that cost 170,000 yuan (about \$27,000) and urgently invited him back to China to lead a project named "Pandemic Control Using Science and Technology," which is directly under the command of Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Why has the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) "zero COVID" policy led to the current awful situation? Huang's response is that mass PCR testing, vaccine R&D, and mass vaccination, have been exploited by the CCP's elite interest groups to make a bundle from the pandemic.

Huang quoted the information he recently obtained to illustrate his point. A Chinese company has earned 670 billion yuan (about \$105.8 billion) from nucleic acid testing for COVID-19 alone. In December 2020, Li Ling, a professor at Peking University, boasted that China generated a revenue of 67 trillion yuan (about \$10.58 trillion) in 2020 from pandemic controls.

Huang emphasized that no other country in the world is conducting pandemic controls like China, and China's pandemic prevention methods are simply for the CCP's interest groups to make profits. Many of the CCP's top officials and their business representatives are engaged in the PCR testing industry. Therefore, Chinese authorities often order mass testing for an entire district when only one or two cases are identified, because the testing industry makes huge profits from such high volume sales of the test kits.

"Even the third shots or the fourth shots are mandatory. All these mandates are related to the interest groups behind them," Huang said. At this point, another person was heard saying, "Then, this has become a serious problem. A public health issue has been turned into a political issue."

According to Huang, the United States and European countries have realized that the rapid spread of the omicron variant can help them reach herd immunity, thanks to the variant's mild symptoms and that the immunity it generates is effective against other variants. That's why many Western countries have decided to end pandemic control measures in March, and are looking forward to a normal life after herd immunity sets in, Huang said.

Weakness in China's Health Care System

In the United States, tens of millions of people were infected in a very short period of time. Why wasn't there a visible public health crisis? Huang said he believes that this is because of the superior medical system in the United States that has a strong grassroots capacity. Huang praised the U.S. medical model, using the phrase "Point of Care" to describe it. For example, a family doctor is capable of monitoring the entire treatment of a given patient, he said.

He said the concentration of power leads to the concentration of interests. As a result, China's medical resources are concentrated in large hospitals, which overburdens them, Huang said. He believes that is one of the main reasons why China does not dare to lift its lockdown measures, as its fragile medical care system cannot handle a large number of patients.

The excessive concentration of power has caused disaster to the livelihood of the Chinese people, as reflected in the medical care system, which may face a systemic collapse in times of crisis, he said.

Huang mentioned another reason for China's weak medical system—its poor research and development capabilities. He further revealed that China is entirely dependent on foreign imports for a wide range of important medical products, such as drug research and development, medical equipment, and testing reagents.

“Almost all of China's core medical equipment is imported,” he said. “As of today, the most common model of CT [scanning] equipment manufactured in China has not yet passed the basic quality test; and 88 percent of the various reagents used in medical testing are imported.”

Quantum Computing and Biotechnology

Huang also spoke about China's IT technology, including quantum computing, as well as China's gene technology.

Mankind is still tens of thousands of miles away from truly having quantum computers, he said, as we are still far from the very first step—having stable quantum bits, which are the first prerequisite for quantum computing. Even the United States is still far from this stage, let alone China.

In addition, “all the core internet technologies are in the hands of Americans, from its roots to various software. China is just a user, the world's largest user,” Huang said. “The saddest thing about China is that it has not contributed anything to the underlying algorithms of the internet so far. For all the basic algorithms, 90 percent come from the United States, and 10 percent from the European Union and Japan. China just makes use of these algorithms to write programs.”

He also revealed what he knows about the frontier development of gene technology, especially disease-related research, in the United States.

By decoding 8,000 different proteins identified inside the human cell, “American medical scientists have figured out the mechanism of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular

diseases and diabetes. Therefore, Harvard Medical School announced to the world that treatments for these diseases will be available within 5 years,” he said.

According to Huang, the technologies involved in bioscience are much more complicated than those in IT technology, as IT is mostly based on applied mathematics, while biotechnology builds upon fundamental research as its solid foundation. “In other words, there is no way China can catch up with the United States in biotechnology,” he said.

Huawei’s 5G Turned Into a Political Issue

Regarding 5G, Huang said that 5G applications are not for civil communications, as 4G is good enough for mobile phones. The real use of 5G is in remote automation.

However, although China’s Telecom giant Huawei has invested a huge sum in the R&D of 5G, it virtually has zero application in remote automation, Huang said.

According to Huang, the United States opposes Huawei’s 5G because the wavelength range it uses does not meet 5G technical requirements. “This leads to a significant delay, roughly 0.8 seconds ... If a vehicle has to wait for instruction, whether to hit the brakes or make a turn, any accident may happen during that 0.8-second delay,” Huang said.

Therefore, he concluded that it was out of safety concerns that the U.S. government hopes that European countries will ban Huawei’s 5G applications. However, the CCP authorities treat 5G as a political issue, thinking that the United States is trying to strangle China in key technology.

Several people who were present said that this thinking comes from Xi Jinping’s ambition to dominate the world and the people surrounding Xi fortifying his mentality.

One person specifically mentioned that Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CCP, who specializes in Marxism, Leninism, and communism, kept brainwashing Xi to strengthen his ambition.

China experts in the West have said that Wang is a key person in forming the Chinese ideology today. American radio show host Hugh Hewitt wrote an opinion piece for the

Washington Post in December last year, describing Wang as the “most dangerous man in the world,” who is in charge of writing the future of China, and is able to enforce his vision “because of his outsize influence with Xi.”

According to public information, Huang graduated from the Institute of Philosophy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1981 and served as the director of the Comparative Philosophy Research Office of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. From 1997 to 2020, he was a scholar at Harvard University, and also served as a visiting professor in five universities in China, including Tsinghua University.

The Epoch Times reporter compared the voice heard in the leaked talk with a recording of Huang’s speech at the 2nd Internet Thinkers Conference held in November 2018. The voice and speaking styles of the two were very similar.

Jennifer Bateman is a news writer focused on China.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/behind-chinas-zero-covid-policy-are-huge-profits-for-elite-interest-groups_4267674.html

The Naval Balance of Power in the South China Sea Has Shifted Dramatically in Favor of China

Is it time for the US to seek a 600 ship navy?

Joseph V. Micallef

February 10, 2022

News Analysis

Over the last decade the balance of power in the South China Sea (SCS), and to a lesser extent the East China Sea (ECS), has shifted dramatically in favor of China's military forces.

The construction of seven artificial islands with a total surface area of 3,200 acres in the SCS has significantly expanded China's defensive perimeter in the region and enhanced its ability to deny the U.S. Navy's ability to deploy ships in the SCS.

Even more significant is the dramatic increase in China's naval forces. In 2012, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) had 271 surface ships versus 284 for the United States. By 2021, the PLAN's naval strength had increased to 348 ships versus 296 for the U.S. Navy.

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the PLAN's fleet is expected to increase to 420 ships by 2025 and 460 ships by 2030. These numbers do not include 85 patrol combatants that carry anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM). In addition, over the last decade there has been a substantial increase in the number of ships deployed by the Chinese Coast Guard and maritime militia.

Moreover, according to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), "the PLAN is rapidly retiring older, single-mission warships in favor of larger, multi-mission ships equipped with advanced anti-ship, anti-air, and anti-submarine weapons and sensors and C2 [command and control] facilities."

To be fair, aggregate ship numbers do not tell the whole story. The U.S. Navy has substantially more aircraft carriers, for example, than the PLAN. At last count, the U.S. Navy could deploy 11 carrier task forces, while China could deploy two. Additionally, U.S. aircraft carriers are bigger and have more capabilities than their Chinese counterparts.

The United States has a higher proportion of nuclear power surface ships and submarines than does the PLAN. Moreover, in a confrontation with the PLAN, the U.S. Navy would likely be supported by allied nations like Japan and Australia, as well as those of France and Great Britain. Nonetheless, it is clear that Beijing is striving, at the very least, for naval superiority in its home waters and the Western Pacific.

What does the creation of the artificial islands in the SCS, and the rapid expansion of the PLAN do to the U.S. Navy's ability to project force in the region? For answers and a unique perspective, I recently sat down with former Navy Captain Jim Fanell.

Fanell is currently a government fellow at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy in Switzerland. A former director of Intelligence and Information Operations for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, his near 30-year career as a naval intelligence officer spanned an unprecedented series of afloat and ashore assignments in the Indo-Pacific, specializing in China's navy and its operations. A recognized international public speaker and accomplished writer, Fanell also is the creator and manager of the Indo-Pacific Security forum Red Star Rising/Risen since 2005.

According to Fanell, the seven islands that China has built in the SCS, and in particular, "the three 10,000-foot runways at Mischief, Fiery Cross, and Subi Reef naval air stations provide the PLA an ability to concentrate forces in the South China Sea (SCS) that would complicate or even deny the U.S. Navy entry into the SCS."

Fanell noted that the three naval air stations "have more than just the runways and taxiways, they provide hangar space for ordnance loading, refuel and maintenance that can keep the PLANAF [People's Liberation Army Naval Air Force]/PLAAF [People's Liberation Army Air Force] in the air longer, thus providing a war fighting sustainment that is much greater than having to fly the 800 nautical miles from a mainland fighter base like Suixi."

The upshot said Fanell, is that the airstrips "provides the PLA an effective blocking force against any East Coast-based U.S. Navy carrier strike group that would be seeking to enter the SCS via the Malacca Strait and up from Singapore. This permanent forward deployed Chinese force would free up mainland-based forces to focus their attack

operations on Taiwan and countering any U.S. Navy carrier operations to the east of Taiwan.”

These islands, especially the Mischief, Fiery Cross, and Subi reefs naval air stations, are critical for China, claimed Fanell, “to implement their counter-intervention strategy in the SCS, as well as offering an off-axis vector of attack on Taiwan from the south ... or even from the southeast as they would surely be able to operate over the Philippines in the event of a full-scale PLA invasion of Taiwan.”

China’s artificial islands are surrounded by a host of other islands controlled by other maritime nations in the South China Sea. Most of these islands are not fortified in any meaningful way and have none or only token military forces stationed on them.

When asked if the United States should push to militarize some of these islands in the same way China has done to its artificial islands, Fanell confirmed that “the notion of getting other nations to create their own versions of Mischief, Fiery Cross, or Subi Reef is an interesting proposition and one that should be pursued for the obvious advantages of having a more permanent presence in the SCS.”

He pointed out, however, that “there are two main problems with the idea: 1) access and 2) building and sustainment.”

“Anywhere the U.S. would seek to build or assist building such a military installation is subject to the host nation, the reaction to such an endeavor by the rest of ASEAN and to a much lesser extent, to the inevitable complaints, threats, and intimidation that the PRC [People’s Republic of China] would make” would have to be considered, he noted.

Moreover, he pointed out that “in the case of the Philippines, it seems highly unlikely, as long as President Duterte, or someone associated with him, remains in office.” Even if he and his colleagues were removed from office, however, “there still would have to be a national debate and approval by the people of the Philippines for something like this to go forward.”

He also observed that it “would be hard to justify such spending when all that really would be needed is for the Philippine government to simply allow U.S. military forces to operate more freely from the existing bases and to seek money from the U.S. to upgrade what is already available.”

He did suggest, however, that the only nation that “might be interested in such an endeavor would be Taiwan and their holding at Itu Aba, but again domestic debate and approval would potentially be a limiting factor. Likewise, it is highly likely that the U.S. China Hands community would campaign that such an offer would ‘provoke’ the PRC, just like the China Hands community’s opposition to moving away from the unwritten U.S. policy of ‘strategic ambiguity’ regarding recognition of Taiwan.”

Despite persistent rumors in the Washington beltway community that the artificial islands are poorly constructed and, specifically, that the air strips could not sustain extended air operations without substantial damage, Fanell does not believe this to be the case, pointing out that “the rumors that the PRC’s seven artificial islands are poorly constructed or that their airfields could not sustain extended air operations are just that—rumors.”

In fact, he pointed out that “the three main naval air stations of Mischief, Fiery Cross, and Subi Reef continue to be militarized and upgraded. PLAN, PLANAF, and PLAAF operations are conducted on a daily basis and there is no evidence to suggest the islands are being degraded by the seas or weather.”

“High-resolution commercial imagery of these island naval air stations shows these are massive islands, the size of Pearl Harbor or the D.C. Beltway, and contain more than just a runway and a pier,” he noted, and also observed that “they are filled with hangars, extensive housing, command and control facilities, bunkering for ammunition and fuel storage.”

Regarding China’s strategy in the South and East China Seas of using an overwhelming force of short- and intermediate-range missiles, some of which may be nuclear armed, plus air and, to a lesser extent, naval power to create area denial zones that would prevent American military forces from approaching the Chinese mainland, operate in the region, or interfere against amphibious operations against Taiwan, Fanell noted the following:

“The use of short-, medium-, intermediate- and long-range ballistic missiles is an essential part of the PLA’s ‘Counter Intervention’ strategy and has grown from just tens of SRBMs 20 years ago to now having thousands of SRBMs, MRBMs, IRBMs, and most importantly from a naval perspective, anti-carrier ballistic missiles or anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs).

Weapons like the DF-21D and the DF-26, which have been flight tested against a moving target in the SCS in August 2020, present a serious and lethal threat to all

American and allied navy big deck warships operating within the first and second island chains.”

He pointed out that U.S. forces are planning to operate in these “zones,” “but do so at great risk and reliance upon counter-targeting technologies to defeat these ASBMs.” This is why he believes “missile defense systems like the Patriot and THAAD are so vitally important and should be deployed along the first island chain and in Taiwan and the Philippines.”

Fanell also pointed out that theater nuclear weapons (TNW) are also “a threat, but there is little known about this capability in the PLA inventory, let alone how they would be employed from a command-and-control perspective.” He added the following:

“We know the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] leadership is very concerned about control over nuclear weapons and that even the PLA Rocket Force still has oversight over the submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) that are onboard their ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) like the Jin-class and follow-on Type 096 SSBNs.

What is more concerning is the recent revelations of the 350 ICBM silos being built in central and western China as it appears the PRC is conducting a nuclear arms race with the U.S. It is very likely the CCP is rapidly building up their nuclear arsenal in order to blackmail the U.S. and the world into doing nothing in the event of the PLA launching a conventional invasion of Taiwan.”

Fanell also pointed out that “it is Beijing’s ultimate strategy ... to drive the U.S. military (and all other elements of national power) from the Pacific” and, in particular, that it was China’s intention to expel U.S. forces from what Chinese strategists refer to as the first, second, and third island chain defensive perimeters.

Of particular concern to Fanell is that the PLAN is venturing further afield from its territorial waters. Fanell pointed out that for “the past decade the PLAN has operated 24/7/365 in the Gulf of Aden ... every minute of every day. Those same ships have also gone on to conduct operations, exercises, and port calls across the Mediterranean and into the Baltic.”

The PLAN’s ability to routinely operate in the first and second island chains, he said, “have changed the naval balance of power in the East and South China Sea.” He added the following:

“For about the past decade, they’ve built five warships for every one the U.S. Navy built (at a much cheaper price) and in 2021 they actually commissioned 22 naval combatants compared to just three for the U.S. Navy (two of which are the small Littoral Combat Ship).

The naval balance of power has dramatically shifted in Asia in the PRC/PLAN’s favor. Not only do they have more ships and submarines in the theater, but they are outbuilding us in tonnage over the last half decade and are putting to sea more supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) with longer ranges compared to shorter ranges and subsonic U.S. Navy Harpoon ASCMs.”

“We need a national campaign to rebuild the Navy ... a new 600-ship Navy,” he argued, adding that “the Trump team demonstrated that even with a sclerotic bureaucracy within the Congress and Pentagon, it was possible to arrest the downward trend in U.S. Navy shipbuilding. Imagine what could happen if a true Reagan-like 600-Ship Navy Campaign were to be pursued with a nation unified in its understanding of the existential threat the PRC represents?”

Fanell also dismissed speculation that a Chinese move on Taiwan would be preceded by a preemptive strike against Pratas Island. The island is roughly halfway between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, and is claimed by both countries. Taiwan has a token military force on the island, but the island’s airspace is under Hong Kong’s air traffic control.

“I am afraid the many defense analysts like to talk about the importance of Pratas Island and make a great deal about the idea that the PLA is planning to take Pratas and then see what Taipei and D.C. would do,” he pointed out.

However, he added, “From all that I’ve read and seen in my career, I do not believe that when the CCP decides to make a full-scale invasion of Taiwan that they will divert time, energy, and resources to attack Pratas Reef, other than possibly launching a few runway penetrating SRBMs.”

When the CCP decides to attack Taiwan, he said, “they are going for the main island and they will seek to decapitate the government in Taipei, neutralize key military forces across the island, and get boots on the ground as soon as possible.”

Joseph V. Micallef is a historian, bestselling author, syndicated columnist, war correspondent, and private equity investor. He holds a master's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was a Fulbright fellow at the Italian Institute of International Affairs. He has been a commentator for several broadcast venues and media outlets and has also written several books on military history and world affairs. His latest book, "Leadership in an Opaque Future," is forthcoming. Micallef is also a noted judge of wines and spirits and authored a bestselling book on Scotch whisky.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/the-naval-balance-of-power-in-the-south-china-sea-has-shifted-dramatically-in-favor-of-china_4259722.html

'Mother of 8 Chained in Hut' Unmasks the False Image of a 'Prosperous' Regime

Li Zhengkuan

February 11, 2022

Commentary

The video of a Chinese mother of eight, kept chained and locked in a hut, not only shocked the nation but also revealed the darkness within the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) when the authorities ignore such things as trafficking of females and gang raping.

Having eight children was obviously violating the one-child policy of China. Under the current three-child policy, a charity visit to a family of eight children was carried out. Ironically, the visit unwittingly exposed a crime that's all too familiar to residents of remote villages throughout China.

Exposure of a False 'Prosperous' Regime

In the footage, the woman, wearing a thin layer of clothing in the winter, is held by a chain on her neck that her husband installed, in a doorless, unheated, and shabby hut. She was said to be mentally ill, and her words were incomprehensible. It was said that nearly all her teeth had been knocked out by her husband, who also cut off the tip of her tongue.

What is known is that the woman, surnamed Yang, was bought by her husband's father, Dong, in 1998. She's long been raped by the three men of the Dong family. Many local cadres and village officials have also raped her. Some wives of the village Party committee members even fought with their husbands because of their abuse of the woman.

Who were the fathers of those eight children? The husband, Zhimin, certainly didn't know, but responded casually: "Regardless, they all have to call me dad."

Yang Mouxia was abducted as a schoolchild. For more than 20 years, she's lived a hellish life. What is shocking is that the villagers were aware of her situation. In fact, abduction and human trafficking are not uncommon in rural China, and the locals have actually become accustomed to such things.

Following exposure of this horrible crime, a veteran investigative journalist Deng Fei revealed on Chinese social media Weibo that there was another girl in the village who showed up around the same time as Yang. She was also chained up, and found in conditions that were even more miserable. She could only lie on her stomach on the ground and continuously shake her head. She wore no clothing, and had just a blanket to wrap around herself.

According to Deng's post, she hadn't received a charity visit because she hadn't had enough children to honor the Party's new policy.

Chinese netizens were outraged, and local authorities were forced to come up with the lame excuse that Dong offered shelter when Yang was found begging on the street in 1998.

The official even claimed that the marriage was legal and that abduction and human trafficking do not exist.

Will the CCP Rule by Law?

After the video was exposed, netizens found that Yang closely resembled the picture of a missing girl from Sichuan Province, around 930 miles away from Yang's current residence in Jiangsu Province. Her name was Li Ying.

Li Ying, born in 1984, was a sixth grader when she went missing in Dec. 1996 at the age of 12. Her age matched well with Yang's age when she was first seen at Dong's home.

Computerized analysis confirmed a match between the facial images of Yang and Li, even the fine measurements of the distance between the eyebrows and eye size

matched. It can be almost certain that Yang and Li are the same person, the Chinese media reported.

Li's father, a veteran, passed away long ago. His friend recognized Yang's close resemblance to Li's father, according to a Chinese netizen.

Many Chinese netizens also recognized that Yang spoke in a local Sichuan dialect. In other footage, after Yang was unshackled, she pointed at the Dong's house and said, It's a nest of jerks, the entire family is rapists.

Li's mother in Sichuan has provided a blood sample to the police for DNA testing. However, Chinese netizens are worried that even if Yang is confirmed to be Li, the CCP will not admit it.

Claiming to rule by law, will the CCP publish truthful DNA testing results?

If Yang indeed turns out to be Li, the CCP's official claim will be proven to be a lie and could spark another wave of outcries that could be hard to control.

This incident will also be more than just an issue of image for the regime, after a recent sex scandal involving a senior CCP leader was revealed by Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai.

According to the 2020 trafficking in Persons Report by the U.S. State Department, Chinese women and children suffer from the worst human trafficking in the world; Iran, North Korea, Cuba, and so forth, also have similarly high incidents of human trafficking.

Once the truth about the tragic mother of eight is revealed, it will confirm the severity of human trafficking in China. The international community will not remain silent on the human rights issue in China.

We can't presume that the CCP will admit the wrongdoing, because all relevant videos on the mother of eight have already been deleted from Chinese social media. A typical move by the regime for so-called "maintaining social stability."

What's even more outrageous is that Zhimin, husband and rapist of the mother of eight, was not punished. Instead, he received donations from netizens.

It's indeed sickening to see Zhimin, holding the donated money and smiling in a Chinese report on Feb. 3. He lined the children up to thank those who made the donations. Local authorities even started reconstruction and yard work around his house.

None of this would happen without the endorsement and arrangement of the CCP.

China Among the Highest Number of Human Trafficking Cases

Xuzhou City, where the mother of eight was reported, has an above average per capita GDP. But, according to a 1989 publication that used data from the book "Age-Old Crimes: A Documentary on the National Trafficking of Women," investigators found that more than 48,000 women were sold in Xuzhou, between 1986 and 1989.

The documentary described how a local village, Niulou, had a population increase of more than 200 women in those three years, all of whom were trafficked girls, and accounted for two-thirds of married women in the village.

In another village, Jiangji, nicknamed "the largest human wholesale market" in the area, nearly every household has been involved in human trafficking. The local officials in various departments, including the public security bureau, police station, family planning office, and so on, were fully aware of the human trade.

This is the situation in a city that's well off, what about the rural areas and the less developed cities?

Human traffickers are rampant in poverty-stricken areas across China. The document gave an example of brokers publicly showing seven girls who were up for auction in a bustling market that bordered Shandong and Henan provinces.

This took place more than 30 years ago before the one-child policy showed its detrimental effect on gender balance in China. It is likely to be more prevalent today.

CCP Initiated Human Trafficking in 1950

When Zhimin suddenly became a Weibo celebrity even after the exposure of his crimes, and received public and even governmental aid, it's clear that his conduct is under the protection and endorsement of the CCP authorities.

The "Age-Old Crimes" book told the story of Li Xiaolan, a girl abducted from Guizhou, who sought help from a policeman on a street in Xuzhou. The officer took her to his cousin's house. That night, the cousin raped Li Xiaolan, and then sold her for 1,800 yuan (\$284) the next day.

In fact, the CCP initiated bride trafficking as early as 1950, when it occupied Xinjiang, shortly after taking over China. The CCP abducted more than 8,000 teenage girls from Hunan Province, in the name of "recruiting female soldiers," to resolve the marriage and childbirth problems for soldiers stationed in Xinjiang.

Obviously, human trafficking has never been a big deal to the CCP. The administrative means are easily manipulated to openly justify the crime.

A 1988 joint notice by the ministries of public security, justice, and civil affairs, as well as All-China Women's Federation, showed the CCP's cruel attitude on the trafficking of women: "Those who were abducted as a teen, and are now at the legal age of marriage, and show willingness to live with the buyer, shall follow the formalities of marriage registration and household registration in accordance with the law."

To quickly make up for the gender imbalance in Chinese society created by the one-child policy, the regime touts those multiple births, even though they occurred because of human trafficking.

As for the rape crimes, Zhang Gaoli, the top senior leader of the CCP, and his sex scandal involving a female sports star, are the perfect example of how the perpetrators get away under the ruling of the radicals, just like the ancestor of the CCP, the Paris Commune.

Conclusion

When the regime carries on its 2022 Winter Olympics at the cost of suppressing human rights and national wealth, the mother of eight incident reveals the false image of the red "prosperity," "rule by law," "common prosperity," and "the largest democracy."

This is just the tip of the iceberg of misery under CCP rule. What is even more terrifying is the indifference of local people to crimes of human trafficking and gang rape, and who even condone the evil acts. This reflects the collapse of social morality under the CCP's atheist rule.

When universal values are abandoned or even disappear, no one will be safe, and anyone can become a victim at any time.

How long will you, the kind-hearted Chinese people, remain silent to this inhumanity?

Li Zhengkuan is a freelance writer who covers China's affairs. He started contributing to The Epoch Times in 2020.

<https://www.theepochtimes.com/c-opinion>

Keanu Reeves Has a Message for China

John Mac Ghlionn

February 11, 2022

Commentary

Hollywood's love affair with China has been well documented. But Hollywood actors' love affair with China has not.

In recent years, American actors like Michael Douglas, Michael Pitt, Frank Grillo (who played a starring role in "Wolf Warrior 2," the highest-grossing Chinese film in history), Bruce Willis, and Adrien Brody have all contributed to the pro-China narrative.

Of course, one cannot discuss actors and pro-China narratives without discussing John Cena, a man who had the audacity to call Taiwan a country. For that "faux pas," he apologized to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Profusely. In fluent Mandarin. There are apologies, and then there are apologies. Cena's performance was Oscar worthy.

Thankfully, there is one actor who's not interested in apologizing to the CCP. That man is Keanu Reeves. When it comes to China, unlike the above-mentioned actors, "The Matrix" star has clearly chosen the red pill over the blue.

Born in Beirut, Reeves, 57, is not just an accomplished actor. He also happens to be an accomplished musician. On March 3, he will perform at the 35th annual Tibet House U.S. Benefit Concert, alongside the likes of Patti Smith, Trey Anastasio, and Jason Isbell.

Founded at the request of the Dalai Lama back in 1987, Tibet House is a New York-based educational nonprofit committed to the preservation and protection of Tibet's ancient traditions of philosophy, art, and culture.

As I have shown before, the CCP is interested in Tibet for one very specific reason—its natural resources. The Tibetan plateau, home to more than 46,000 glaciers, has one of the largest reserves of freshwater in the world. Known as the “water tower” of Asia, close to a quarter of a billion people in 10 different countries across Asia—Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Burma (Myanmar), Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand, and Vietnam—rely on this “tower” for water. Make no mistake about it, the CCP wants to control the continent’s water supply, hence its obsession with controlling Tibet.

Taking a Stand

The people of Tibet are desperate. While most of the world sits idly by, Reeves, to his credit, is prepared to take a stand. Not surprisingly, the Chinese are far from happy.

As *The Hollywood Reporter* recently reported, the actor has “incurred the wrath” of millions of Chinese nationalists. The “Little Pinks,” a group of young, hyper-aggressive, overly jingoistic digital warriors are now suggesting that Reeves, and all of his future work, should be banned from China. The movie star is fast becoming a “de facto persona non grata in the Chinese entertainment landscape”—which makes his willingness to defend Tibet all the more impressive.

Worth somewhere in the region of \$380 million, Reeves doesn’t need to perform. He doesn’t need to do anything. But he has offered to. And that’s something worth celebrating.

After all, it has been a long time since a genuine Hollywood heavyweight stood up to China. In fact, it has been the best part of 30 years.

In 1993, Richard Gere, then one of the biggest stars in Hollywood, made headlines around the world—especially in China. At the Oscars, Gere took the stage to present the award for best art director. Before announcing the winner, however, Gere, a practicing Buddhist and long-time friend of the Dalai Lama, went totally off script, criticizing the CCP’s occupation of Tibet as well as its “horrendous, horrendous human rights situation.” For telling the truth, Gere was punished severely. The committee chose to ban him from future Oscars, a ban that still exists to this day.

It’s clear to see that Gere has paid a heavy price for his honesty. In 2017, the actor told *The Hollywood Reporter* that there were (and still are) “movies that I can’t be in because

the Chinese will say, 'Not with him.'" He added, "I recently had an episode where someone said they could not finance a film with me because it would upset the Chinese."

A year before this rather depressing interview, the musician Lady Gaga, a formidable actor in her own right, met with the Dalai Lama. Because of this, she finds herself in a similar boat to Mr. Gere. The artist is now banned from touring or selling merchandise in China.

Which brings us back to Mr. Reeves. Why take a stand? Why jeopardize his acting career?

When it comes to movies, the Chinese market, lest we forget, is by far the biggest in the world. For Reeves, there appears to be more important things than money. In 2019, *The New Yorker* published an interesting piece, titled "Keanu Reeves Is Too Good For This World." After reading the piece, it's difficult not to agree. He certainly appears to be too good for Hollywood, a place full of moral grandstanding and superficial concerns.

While many actors pretend to stand for something, Reeves actually does. For this, he deserves a great deal of credit.

John Mac Ghlionn is a researcher and essayist. His work has been published, among others, by the New York Post, Sydney Morning Herald, Newsweek, National Review, and The Spectator US. He covers psychology and social relations, and has a keen interest in social dysfunction and media manipulation.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/keanu-reeves-has-a-message-for-china_4259538.html

How Rural China Forms an Accomplice Network to Control Trafficked Females

He Qinglian

February 12, 2022

Commentary

Many analyses blame the Chinese human trafficking industry for the misery of a Xuzhou mother of eight. The stereotype of rural Chinese as simple and hard working people ignores the fact that the abducted females sold for marriage are faced with the oppression of the buyers, and even more so the oppression of the villagers, who are a small community of accomplices who keep the woman in bondage. Villagers, don't believe what they're doing is a crime.

Females Sold for Marriage Can't Escape

There are two Chinese films giving a rough idea of how rural communities have evolved and become a serious taboo of the Communist regime.

"Blind Mountain," was a cinema release in 2007, and state media, CCTV's propaganda program on law, "A College Girl Abducted for Marriage" aired in 2018.

The CCTV program imitated lines and plots from the Blind Mountain film, and added two fictional characters, relatives of the buyer: a cousin Hai, and another cousin working as a police officer. The sympathetic Hai tried to help the girl escape, but failed; and the police officer did the righteous thing and punished the buyer.

"Blind Mountain" was based on a real person named Zheng Xiuli.

I saw the movie and researched the actual hardships Zheng experienced. After reading many similar cases, I have a certain understanding of how local communities form an accomplice network when a female is bought for marriage.

The enabling is done by local villagers who prevent the wives from running away. The CCTV program deliberately omitted this very important fact, but portrayed the abducted women as isolated cases or a crime committed by a few poor farmers. The program gave an image of a communist rural life filled with fine farmhouses, clean and tidy farmyards, and many nice cars.

“Blind Mountain” has all the elements of an abducted woman’s tragedy, whose situation was better than that of the Xuzhou mother of eight who was mainly raped and abused by the husband, and became a sex slave of many men in the village.

Zheng Xiuli, a young woman from Northeast China, had a life far more devastating than the film showed.

Zheng Xiuli, a college graduate, went south to work in Zhuhai in 1994. The trafficker, posing as a job broker, abducted her to Huaping Village, nearly 200 miles away, and sold her for 3,000 yuan (\$431.88) to a 49-year-old villager named Guo.

Zheng tried to escape the night she arrived at Guo’s house, but the entire village was mobilized to catch her, and so she was beaten badly by Guo’s family. That night, with the help of Guo’s brother and sister-in-law, Guo raped Zheng Xiuli.

Zheng tried to escape many times, until she realized that everyone around her was an accomplice in her captivity. In the following two years, Zheng Xiuli gave birth to two children.

Finally, the desperate and badly abused Zheng splashed sulfuric acid on both of Guo’s brother’s children, and injured five other students.

Zheng Xiuli was not waiting to be rescued, but to be arrested by the police.

In the end, she was sentenced to death for the crime of intentional injury, which was deferred.

Some said that screenwriter Li Yang hoped to draw attention to the tragedy of abducted women with the movie.

Why Villagers Become Accomplices

The incidents of Zheng Xiuli and the Xuzhou mother of eight reflect issues that are far beyond the scope of buying and selling women. One wonders why they could not escape.

I recall the reports I read when I was in China that gave details of an abduction. The local police raided a village in the middle of the night. Otherwise, they would be surrounded by villagers and the mission would fail. The police were there to carry out a rescue, not to cause a mass event.

So let's look at why villagers would unite in fending off a police action.

In remote rural China, it is not easy for men to get married. Generally speaking, women are reluctant to marry men in poor areas, and many farmers will exchange their own daughters for daughters-in-law. Those who have no daughters have to pay thousands of yuan, and even tens of thousands, for a marriage. This amount will drain the family's entire resources. Thus, the brides the farmers buy are considered property that ought to be secured by the entire family—the buyers.

Today's Chinese villages have become a community of shared interest, whether they are single-surname villages or mixed-surname villages. Poor villages are filled with bachelors, who resort to traffickers to get a wife. To protect the property they paid for, villagers follow an unwritten rule to form a system of containment. For instance, they will notify the buyer if they learn of the abducted woman's intention to escape; when police arrive, they hide the abducted woman; and when necessary, they intervene in police rescue efforts.

Don't expect the party secretary of the village to stand up for justice. As a villager himself, the local party secretary is bound to guard his villagers' interests.

There's also a 2006 film, "The Story of An Abducted Woman," based on Gao Yanmin, a woman abducted and sold to a man in Xia'an Village, Hebei Province. The villagers were hostile to reporters who tried to interview Gao Yanmin after her story was made public. They blamed Gao for exposing the villagers' buying wives and ruining their reputation. The village party secretary asked a reporter who went for an interview: "There are still more than 60 bachelors in the village, how can you help them?"

In the absence of intervention, the sex ratio at birth generally ranges between 103 and 107 male births per 100 female births, according to UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund). The preference for sons in rural China is very serious, which has created an extraordinary gender imbalance. In 2004, China recorded 121 boys born for every 100 girls; in 2019, it still remained at a ratio of 112 boys for every 100 girls. Chinese men are estimated to outnumber women by about 30 million for 30 years, according to a Party mouthpiece.

Rural China, harboring the majority of single men, has a huge demand for wife buying. This is the social background of China's serious abduction and trafficking of women. Coupled with the regime's general disregard for human rights, women's rights are easily violated, and the buying of abducted women will only continue in rural China. Trafficking in females is exacerbated because the authorities ignore the issue.

Materialized Rural Development Under the Regime's Ruling

More than 20 years ago, I concluded that Chinese society has morally collapsed in my book "China's Trap." Rural China became the epicenter of the phenomenon of moral collapse, filled with small communities of human trafficking criminals. This moral collapse is the result of the CCP's land reforms after it came to power. Through a series of movements in land reform, the CCP completely destroyed the clan system dominating village autonomy, an ancient system prior to 1949; killed all local intellectuals and noblemen that governed the system; and instated communes run by bandits and gangsters.

Rural reform under the CCP has focused on material infrastructure, and has nothing to do with civilization or humanity. In the 2005 meeting of its rubber-stamp legislature, the regime proposed to build a socialist countryside that fosters production, development, management, construction, mechanization, and agricultural standardization. In 2021 when Xi Jinping emphasized building a new socialist countryside "that is more beautiful and has better living conditions," it was still focusing on material aspects.

After exposure of the Xuzhou mother of eight, the local government responded to the outraged public with a notice saying that this so-called "family" has received aid and medical insurance since May 2014, subsidies in reconstruction of housing from the government in 2021, and many charitable donations from society. However, there's no

mention of the woman constrained by a dog-chain on her neck, who was gang raped by the three men in the buyer's family.

This is the new socialist countryside the regime has built. Women's rights have been abused in a morally collapsed Chinese society.

He Qinglian is a prominent Chinese author and economist. Currently based in the United States, she authored "China's Pitfalls," which concerns corruption in China's economic reform of the 1990s, and "The Fog of Censorship: Media Control in China," which addresses the manipulation and restriction of the press. She regularly writes on contemporary Chinese social and economic issues.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/how-rural-china-forms-an-accomplice-network-to-control-trafficked-females_4273591.html

China's Cyber Capabilities Pose an Existential Threat to America

John Mac Ghlionn

February 13, 2022

Commentary

Chinese leader Xi Jinping intends to turn China into a leading “cyber superpower.” Although Xi is known for delusions of grandeur, this particular dream is fast becoming a reality.

In July of last year, in an effort to strengthen its cybersecurity sector, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) drafted a three-year action plan. With such a plan, we should expect an increase in information warfare and cyber espionage.

Speaking of Chinese espionage, the American media and publishing company News Corp. recently announced the discovery of a “persistent cyberattack” targeting employees’ emails. Founded by Rupert Murdoch, the multinational mass media corporation owns Dow Jones & Company, a publisher of both The Wall Street Journal and the New York Post. The attack, we’re told, was carried out by Beijing-backed cyber experts.

This is not surprising. Both the Post, an outlet I contribute to from time to time, and the Journal have written rather damning pieces about China. The former, for example, has documented (in great detail) the ties between shady Chinese operatives and Hunter Biden.

After this attack, the United States—China’s biggest rival—should be on high alert. Sadly, though, the country now finds itself in a state of cyber-limbo. In fact, the United

States has never looked more vulnerable. Seven out of eight federal agencies, according to a Senate report, are failing to protect critical data.

Why?

Poor cyber security infrastructure. Such shoddiness could cost the country dearly.

The report, titled “Federal Cybersecurity: America’s Data Still at Risk,” called the findings “stark.” Many of the very same issues that “have plagued Federal agencies for more than a decade” are still present. Agencies of critical importance have “made minimal improvements.” In 2020, for example, only “DHS managed to employ an effective cybersecurity regime.”

Now, with tensions between the United States and China escalating, Beijing will surely look to exploit these weaknesses. In fact, it already has. As U.S. cybersecurity issues mount, China’s cyber capabilities become more potent. Not only is the CCP busy training the next generation of cyber specialists, China’s Ministry of State Security, according to U.S. intelligence, “uses criminal contract hackers to conduct unsanctioned cyber operations globally, including for their own personal profit.”

To be clear, the importance of cybersecurity cannot be emphasized enough. A country with poor cyber infrastructure is extremely vulnerable to attack. As the most powerful country in the world, the United States has a number of allies. For the very same reason, however, it also has a number of enemies, including China.

At present, U.S. agencies suffer from poor cyber hygiene, meaning the practices and precautions used to keep sensitive data safe and secure from attackers are substandard. This explains why CCP-backed hackers have stolen the data of at least 206 million Americans. Without adequate cybersecurity measures, protected health information (PHI), personal information, and intellectual property are at risk of being compromised.

Inside China’s Cybersecurity Contest

To get an idea of the threat posed by China, let’s discuss the Tianfu Cup international cybersecurity contest, an annual event that sees the brightest minds congregate for a weekend of state-approved hacking.

The latest contest took place in Chengdu, the culinary capital of China. The competition hosted three separate tournaments: the first, aptly called “vulnerability demonstration,” saw competitors demonstrate various weaknesses that could be exploited; the second competition involved the cracking of specific devices; the third, meanwhile, was called the “OS [operating system] cracking competition.” The contest, which was held on Oct. 16-17, 2021, was the biggest one to date; with a total bonus of \$1.5 million. It’s easy to see why.

Throughout the contest, teams were given five minutes to run their exploits; not surprisingly, the device cracking competition drew the most attention. In just 15 seconds, the Kunlun Lab team successfully cracked the security of an iPhone 13 Pro live on stage. Besides manipulating vulnerabilities in Apple’s iOS software, the hackers also demonstrated an ability to target the likes of Google and Microsoft.

A few months before the event in Chengdu, CCP-backed hackers targeted Microsoft Exchange servers. The attack, according to the BBC, affected at least 30,000 organizations globally. Were the attackers previous Tianfu participants? Don’t bet against it.

After all, in 2020, one of the iOS exploits showcased at the Tianfu Cup was used in a cyberespionage campaign carried out against the Uyghur people.

In a piece for War on the Rocks, J.D. Work wrote, “The Tianfu competition demonstrated the continued ability to hold key Western systems and networks at risk.” The competition, he added, “highlighted the substantial depth of China’s offensive cyber inventories, and showed off a talent base of aggressive hackers undeterred by blowback from international exposure of its activities.”

Judging by the evidence, Work warned that we are headed “towards a surprising future in which China’s offensive cyber power surpasses that of the West.” He cautioned that the competition’s sponsors included “prominent firms within the country’s defense industrial base.”

What happens in China no longer stays in China; and what happened in Chengdu certainly won’t stay in Chengdu. The Tianfu Cup is far from a harmless competition. It showcases the smartest, sharpest minds in China, and how such minds can be weaponized by the CCP.

Which brings us back to the United States’ shambolic approach to cybersecurity. Who will win the wars of tomorrow? Well-trained soldiers or well-trained cyber specialists?

The latter, I argue. Who knows, maybe the wars of tomorrow will be won by Tianfu veterans.

John Mac Ghlionn is a researcher and essayist. His work has been published by the New York Post, Sydney Morning Herald, Newsweek, National Review, and The Spectator US, among others. He covers psychology and social relations, and has a keen interest in social dysfunction and media manipulation.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinas-cyber-capabilities-pose-an-existential-threat-to-america_4265110.html

Will Xi Jinping's 'End of Days' Plunge China and the World Into War?

Gordon G. Chang

February 16, 2022

Commentary

When truckers took over Canada's capital, Ottawa, and shut down border entry points to America, some called it a "nationwide insurrection." Mass demonstrations have occurred across the democratic world. People have had enough of two years of mandates and other disease-control measures.

Not so in the world's most populous state, which maintains the world's strictest COVID-19 controls. There are no known popular protests in the People's Republic of China against anti-coronavirus efforts.

Yet China is not stable, and Xi Jinping is facing his "End of Days," as a recent essay by opposition figures (see below) puts it. The revolt is not in society at large but at the top of the Communist Party. As Gregory Copley, president of the International Strategic Studies Association, told Gatestone, Xi Jinping, China's mighty-looking leader, has an "enormous array of domestic enemies."

Xi created that opposition. After becoming China's ruler at the end of 2012, he grabbed power from everyone else and then jailed tens of thousands of opponents in purges, which he styled as "anti-corruption" campaigns.

Xi also used the disease to great advantage. As Copley, also the editor-in-chief of Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy, points out, "Xi's 'zero COVID' policy is, indeed, less about stopping the spread of COVID and more about suppressing his internal enemies, both in the public and in the Party."

The “enormous array” is now starting to strike back. Xi is most vulnerable on his handling of the country’s stagnating economy. For one thing, the draconian campaign against COVID—massive testing, meticulous contact-tracing, strict lockdowns—have of course undermined consumption, which Beijing has touted as the core of the economy.

Beijing is panicking, adding nearly a trillion dollars in total new credit last month, a record increase. Chinese technocrats have also become sneaky, embarking on what the widely followed Andrew Collier of Global Source Partners terms “shadow stimulus”—stimulus provided by local governments and their entities in order to allow the central government to avoid reporting spending.

China needs a vibrant economy to service enormous debts, largely run up as Beijing overstimulated the economy, especially beginning in 2008. When the so-called “hidden debt” is included, total debt in the country amounts to somewhere in the vicinity of 350 percent of gross domestic product.

Not surprisingly, Chinese companies are now defaulting. The debt crisis is so serious it can bring down China’s economy—and the country’s financial and political systems with it.

For three decades, a Chinese leader was essentially immune to criticism because all decisions of consequence were shared by top figures in the Communist Party. Xi Jinping, however, as he took power also ended up with accountability—in other words, with no one else to blame. With things not going China’s way in recent years, Xi, often called the “Chairman of Everything,” is taking heat.

There are signs of intensifying discord among senior leaders. In the most recent hint of distress, “Fang Zhou and China”—“Fang Zhou” is a pseudonym meaning “ark”—wrote a 42,000-character essay titled “An Objective Evaluation of Xi Jinping.” The anti-Xi screed, posted on Jan. 19 on the China-sponsored 6park site, appears to be the work of several members of the Communist Party’s Shanghai Gang faction, headed by former leader Jiang Zemin. Jiang’s faction has been continually sniping at Xi and now is leading the charge against him.

Fang’s piece incorporates previously voiced criticisms but does so in a comprehensive fashion. Fang blames Xi for, among other things, ruining the economy.

“Xi will be the architect of his own defeat,” writes Fang at the end of the rant, in a section titled “Xi Jinping’s Denouement” or “End of Days.” “His style of governance is simply unsustainable; it will generate even newer and greater policy missteps.”

Fang notes that Xi was able to take advantage of a feeble opposition but has not been able to accomplish much. “Xi’s policies have been retrogressive and derivative, his successes minor and his blunders numerous,” writes the Asia Society’s Geremie Barme, who translated the essay, summarizing Fang’s thoughts. Fang believes Xi “deserves a score of less than zero.”

Xi is not one to let a decade of zero scores get in the way of his continued rule. Communist Party norms require him to step down at the 20th National Congress, to be held sometime this fall if tradition holds. He obviously wants a precedent-breaking third term as general secretary so that he can become, as outsiders say, “Dictator for Life.” Most observers expect he will get that new term.

Maybe. Fang Zhou’s essay shows Communist Party leaders are risking stability by airing disagreements in public. Xi Jinping therefore, now realizes he is in the fight of his life.

Xi’s problems, unfortunately, can become our problems. He has, for various internal political reasons, a low threshold of risk and many reasons to pick on some other country to deflect elite criticism and popular discontent.

In 1966, Mao Zedong, Communist China’s first ruler, started the decade-long Cultural Revolution to vanquish political enemies in Beijing. Xi is doing much the same thing now, especially with his “common prosperity” program, which could return China to the 1950s.

Unlike Mao, however, Xi has the power to plunge the world into war, and he has reason to lash out soon.

Xi is targeting the United States. On Aug. 29 of last year, People’s Daily, China’s most authoritative publication, accused America of launching “barbaric” attacks on the Chinese nation. On the 21st of that month, Global Times, a tabloid controlled by People’s Daily, insinuated the United States was working with China’s “enemies.”

The Communist Party of China has always believed its struggle with the United States is existential—in May 2019 the official People’s Daily declared a “people’s war” on America—but the hostility has become far more evident in the past year.

Virulent anti-Americanism suggests Xi Jinping is establishing a justification to strike America. The Chinese regime often uses its media to first warn and then signal its actions.

America has now been warned.

From the Gatestone Institute

Gordon G. Chang is a distinguished senior fellow at the Gatestone Institute, a member of its Advisory Board, and the author of "The Coming Collapse of China."

https://www.theepochtimes.com/will-xi-jinpings-end-of-days-plunge-china-and-the-world-into-war_4282023.html

Washington, the Americas, and the Tragedy of Puyi

Gregory Copley

February 18, 2022

Commentary

When Puyi—the last emperor of China—emerged from the Forbidden City in Beijing, he realized that he ruled over nothing. He was surrounded by a fractious republic; the world he thought was limitless and his was gone.

By 2022, the United States was emerging from the Forbidden City of Washington and finding itself geographically isolated: the Americas, once its bailiwick, were no longer in its grasp. The Western Hemisphere had moved significantly under the sway of that other “forbidden city,” Beijing.

Unlike Puyi, who had no control over his early upbringing and isolation, the United States almost willfully allowed the Western Hemisphere to slip from its influence over the past century, particularly after World War II. The Americas were taken for granted; they were not the focus of the first-rate political, intelligence, or security minds of Washington, nor of U.S. budgets or diplomacy.

But if dominance or loss of the Western Hemisphere was considered critical to the United States during the days of the Monroe Doctrine, originated by President James Monroe in 1823, then why not now? The United States is now hemmed in geographically and geopolitically by Western Hemisphere states that feel either resentment or envy of America, and without any residual obligation to *kowtow* to Washington. The United States lost the prestige it needed to command respect.

The Monroe Doctrine’s hegemonic objectives were never replaced by an overarching U.S. strategy. The mechanisms put in place for the region, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), are not “front and center” in Washington.

Washington occasionally focused on the region to create the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) between Mexico, the United States, and Canada, and then the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which came into effect on July 1, 2020.

The Cold War forced some other concessions with Canada to create the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), a defensive accord to detect and counter hostile polar strategic bomber incursions and incoming inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

NORAD may be one of the instruments to give the United States and Canada defense against polar orbit fractional orbital bombardment systems (FOBS) from Beijing's Strategic Rocket Force of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces.

Beijing uses ground-based space assets in South America, particularly Argentina, for its military space program to service its global position satellite networks (the BeiDou Navigation Satellite Systems).

Washington's giveaway of the Panama Canal in 1977 did get some attention among U.S. officials, but only after it was lost. Beijing then gained dominant influence over Panama, with Panama ultimately recognizing Beijing as the government of China, replacing the recognition of the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan's official name).

Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela announced the switch on June 12, 2017, but this was the result of years of Beijing's attempts to infiltrate Panama, even to the point of working through Venezuelan proxy militias to create a paramilitary force capable of either staging a coup in Panama or threatening the viability of U.S. control of the Canal. Even before 2017, the Panamanian government had been moving real asset control over the Canal's infrastructure to Chinese dominance.

The United States and Panama in 1978 signed the Treaty Concerning the Permanent Neutrality and Operation of the Panama Canal. But the reality is that, since 2017, the actual levers of control had moved increasingly out of U.S. hands, despite the fact that President Theodore Roosevelt built the Canal (completed in 1914) to ensure absolute U.S. strategic capability, particularly to move warships between the Atlantic and Pacific.

Under the 1978 treaty, the United States reserved the right to intervene militarily in the event that the neutrality of the Canal was compromised. But as successive blockages of

the Suez Canal have shown, any rapid or preemptive steps to compromise the Canal would take weeks to years to remedy.

The fact that Washington did nothing to avert the Panamanian government's move toward recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC) showed that Washington did not understand the fact that the ROC—Taiwan—was a viable and valuable ally of the United States, and that U.S. support of Taiwan's diplomatic posture was, in fact, of major importance to Washington.

Washington, since the presidency of Jimmy Carter, regarded the security partnership of the United States with Taiwan as a strategic burden when, in fact, it had been a significant contributor to U.S. security in many ways.

Meanwhile, China now dominates the Caribbean Basin, and from there mounts its intelligence and indirect warfare activities into the United States and Central and South America.

Beijing's actions from the Caribbean often rely on the violation of U.S. laws by Caribbean political leaders, particularly Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit.

Dominica, with a population of some 70,000, hosts a Chinese Embassy staffed by some 200 officials (when the country no longer warrants even a small U.S. or British legation). China is an active participant in Dominica's aggressive "passports for sale" scheme, including diplomatic passports. Beijing, significantly, grants visa-free entry into China for Dominican passport holders, a rare privilege. Canadian security officials have, in recent years, intercepted scores of Chinese holders of Dominican passports, traveling on questionable missions.

China also "influences" Dominican shipping registry operations, even though the Dominica flagging agency is based in the United States and is actively engaged in anti-U.S. sanctions-busting operations. The shipping of Iranian oil on Dominica-flagged tankers to China violates U.S. law, making the Dominican agency subject to U.S. law.

Dominica offers the Chinese intelligence and active measures agencies (such as the United Front Work Department) a safe haven for operations against the Americas.

Canada, too, is a key to the PRC thrust into the Western Hemisphere. There is a reason why the Australia-United Kingdom-United States treaty, AUKUS, did not include Canada

and New Zealand, the other two partners in the Five Eyes (UKUSA Accords) intelligence pact.

The Canadian and New Zealand political leaders willingly compromised themselves to Beijing, to the point where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau refused to attend the Australia-Canada Economic Leadership Forum in Melbourne, Australia, on Feb. 13, 2020, because Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison was regarded as "conservative."

Trudeau's representative at the forum explained to the Australian audience that Canada felt itself invulnerable to threats from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) because Canadian citizens had been with Mao Zedong during the "Long March" of 1934-35.

Meanwhile, Beijing's engagement in Argentina is critical to its space and Antarctica strategies, and to cause a new Falklands distraction to the UK at an appropriate time. A revived threat by Argentina to "recover" the Falklands—which it calls the Malvinas—would necessitate a diversion of British military thinking and assets to the South Atlantic. This would play on the fact that the UK, like the United States, no longer has sufficient military assets to deal with more than one major crisis at a time.

The tide in the Americas continues to move out of the United States' grasp. There is a renewed move toward pro-Beijing governance in Chile, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. The Venezuelan example of President Nicolás Maduro thumbing his nose at an ineffective attempt by the U.S. government to remove him from office did not go unnoticed throughout the Americas, or the world.

Despite all this, the impact of nature and poor local governance has played a critical role in the threat to the U.S. southern border. Climate issues and poor local governance in Central America and Mexico have helped the Chinese regime, in particular, to facilitate the narcotics trade into the United States while assisting disheartened Central Americans to migrate illegally into the United States.

The Americas are thus a key battleground for the United States. China, even as it moves back into Maoist isolation, relies on degrading the U.S. strategic and trade posture. Even an isolated communist China in the future can continue to wreak havoc on U.S. influence in the Western Hemisphere. And states in the Americas do not look to the United States for a model of governance or ethical standards.

So the analogy of Puyi leaving the Imperial Palace is apposite. The United States awakens and finds it has lost the world around it.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/washington-the-americas-and-the-tragedy-of-puyi_4285244.html

China's Penchant for Plagiarism Poses an Existential Threat to US

John Mac Ghlionn

February 18, 2022

Commentary

In October of last year, China's biggest streaming platform, Youku, was accused of plagiarizing "Squid Game," one of the most popular TV shows in recent history.

Although the line between inspiration and plagiarism is often a fine one, there's little doubt that the idea for the Chinese show, suspiciously named "Squid Victory," was stolen.

Should we really be surprised by this blatant act of plagiarism?

Absolutely not.

It's common knowledge that plagiarism is very much an established business model in China. This business model poses existential risks to a number of countries, most notably the United States.

In 2012, Tencent, owner of WeChat, was accused of plagiarizing an iPhone news app. According to reports at the time, it "copied design ideas in overall layout, photo viewing and commenting" from Apple.

Baidu, China's biggest internet search engine, has been accused of copying Google.

Alibaba, with its "copy and paste strategy," is clearly an Amazon rip-off.

This phenomenon of lifting ideas from successful foreign companies is known as "Copy to China"; it's not very original, but it's highly effective.

Today, Tencent has a net worth of \$50 billion; Baidu is worth north of \$60 billion; and Alibaba is worth \$588 billion.

Last year, Elon Musk accused XPeng, one of China's biggest electric car makers, of stealing old source codes from Tesla.

I could go on, but you get the picture.

At its core, plagiarism is a form of theft. It comes in many forms, from academic dishonesty to acts of artistic piracy. It also includes the theft of military intelligence, something Beijing excels at (more on this later). This particular form of plagiarism poses an existential risk to the United States.

Former Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe recently warned that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) plans to rob, replicate, and replace every one of America's industries one by one.

If this sounds ridiculous, it really shouldn't. Remember who you are dealing with, a country that builds cities faster than most places, including the United States, build bridges.

According to a report published by the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, the CCP has a specific goal of "achieving leadership in various emerging technology fields by 2030." Less than a decade from now, China seeks to be a leading player in the fields of biotechnology, advanced computing, cyber warfare, and artificial intelligence.

To reach its goal of technological supremacy, the CCP is currently employing "a wide variety of legal, quasi-legal, and illegal methods to acquire technology and know-how from the United States and other nations," according to the report.

Not surprisingly, one of the "illegal methods" is the theft of U.S. intelligence.

When you think of places where Chinese espionage might be occurring, Arkansas doesn't exactly spring to mind. But it should.

Recently, The Federal Bureau of Investigation office in Little Rock issued a warning. According to Special Agent James Dawson, all an attempt to ensure "economic security," the CCP is stealing "valuable information and innovation from people in Arkansas and across the country."

For years, he warned, “China has sought methods and means to be able to deprive the U.S. of any advances that it has made in technological areas.” In an effort to surpass the United States, the CCP “will spare no effort whatsoever.”

This includes working closely with academics across the United States. In January of this year, a professor at the University of Arkansas pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about patents he had filed in Beijing. A few weeks earlier, Charles Lieber, the former chair of Harvard’s Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology, pleaded guilty to working closely with China.

If all of this isn’t bad enough, China’s military advancements are being fueled by acts of industrial espionage. The CCP has stolen blueprints for F-22 and F-35 stealth fighters and supersonic Navy cruise missiles.

This is not to say that China is devoid of original ideas; it’s not. However, the theft of ideas from U.S.-based organizations is a genuine problem that poses a genuine threat to the Western world.

As the science writer Ethen Kim Lieser previously warned, the CCP has made heavy investments in the J-20, an air superiority fighter with precision strike capability. The J-20 appears to be a direct copy of the aforementioned F-22 and F-35 fighter jets. Furthermore, as Lieser noted, the J-20 “has the potential to considerably enhance China’s regional military strength.”

Justin Bronk, a research fellow for airpower and technology at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies in the UK, appears to agree. In a recent RUSI report, Bronk argued that the design of the J-20 “incorporates many features which have been copied from the F-22 and F-35, including nose cone shaping, the electro-optical targeting system (EOTS) under the nose, and the side-mounted (diverterless supersonic inlet) intakes.”

This is where decades of plagiarism have taken us. It started with China copying ideas from Google and Amazon.

Where does it end?

With superior weapons in the hands of the CCP, that’s where. Less than a decade from now, China’s military powers look set to peak, which will most certainly increase the risk of nuclear conflict.

To quote the author Anthony Horowitz, “once you get into the world of dystopia, it’s hard to avoid plagiarism, because other people have had such powerful visions.”

Are we already living in a dystopia? Not quite. However, we appear to be headed in that direction. The dangers posed by China’s copy culture should not be underestimated.

John Mac Ghlionn is a researcher and essayist. His work has been published by the New York Post, Sydney Morning Herald, Newsweek, National Review, and The Spectator US, among others. He covers psychology and social relations, and has a keen interest in social dysfunction and media manipulation.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinas-penchant-for-plagiarism-poses-an-existential-threat-to-us_4274960.html

Beijing Should Be Put on Notice: A War With Russia Is a War With China

For effective deterrence, the West should deploy international troops and more effective missiles to Ukraine

Anders Corr

February 19, 2022

News Analysis

Xi Jinping is the winner, whether or not Vladimir Putin massively invades Ukraine any time soon.

By surrounding Ukraine with troops, naval forces, and military “exercises” to the point of full readiness for an all-out military invasion, Putin and his partner in crime Xi have learned what the United States and allies are willing to do—and not do—in the defense of a democracy that is peripheral to U.S. alliance systems.

Russia’s preparations for war, and the West’s relative inaction, informs Xi’s own awful calculus about a potential Taiwan invasion, and diverts the international spotlight from his “Genocide Games.” If Putin actually invades, the West and Russia could militarily and economically debilitate each other, empowering Xi even more.

Short of war, what are Putin and Xi learning?

The United States and allies are willing to threaten massive economic sanctions against Russia, likely to include removal of the country from the world’s SWIFT interbank transfer system. The allies are also willing to flow limited asymmetric weapons into Ukraine, including relatively weak, compared to what is available, anti-tank and surface-to-air missiles (SAM).

Britain and some of the Baltic states deserve credit for being leaders on the delivery of asymmetric weapons, perhaps due to more recent, pressing, and personal experiences with territorially-aggressive dictators. Former President Donald Trump first approved the flow of Javelin anti-tank missiles to Ukraine in 2018, for which he also deserves credit.

However, these lethal weapons—as important as they are—are insufficient to deter Putin with certainty.

The West has been unwilling to increase U.S. and allied troops in the country as tripwires. The current U.S. and allied stance is such that Putin can reasonably believe that he will be initiating a bloody but localized war in Ukraine in which his tanks, planes, and ships may struggle against asymmetric weapons, but in which his larger forces will ultimately be able to hold all of Ukraine's territory and digest the independent democracy into an occupied territory of "greater Russia."

A Possible Xi-Putin Deal

What is Xi willing to provide Putin in exchange for the motherlode of information that daily flows about NATO's red lines, not to mention Russian self-banishment further into a status of pariah state with whom only Xi's China will do business?

Xi will support Russia diplomatically, including through China's veto on the United Nations Security Council. Xi will promise (for what it's worth after Beijing's many broken promises) to buy more of Russia's exports, including oil and gas, especially if sanctions hit Russia particularly hard, which they will.

Beijing will attempt to mitigate the economic effects of sanctions further by increasing exports to Russia and allowing Russian banks to use Chinese interbank transfers should Russia be barred from the SWIFT international system.

The Risk of Global Escalation

However, any attempt by China to mitigate the economic blows that the West is planning for Russia could land China itself into secondary sanctions. Beijing may resist this and could, in turn, threaten economic countersanctions against the West. For

example, the United States depends upon China for many of its medical and pharmaceutical imports, which Beijing could slow or stop altogether.

That would escalate quickly. Economic sanctions and countersanctions between the West and China, if placed on existential goods like energy or medical supplies, could lead to further decoupling or even military conflict.

President Joe Biden, acutely aware of the risk of escalation, believes that U.S. troops in Ukraine to rescue American citizens could risk a “world war,” and so is showing his hand by publicly refusing any such deployment.

Asked on NBC on Feb. 10 whether there was a scenario in which U.S. troops would be sent to Ukraine to rescue Americans, Biden responded: “There’s not. That’s a world war when Americans and Russia start shooting at one another.”

In brinkmanship, which is what is happening in Ukraine today, whoever fears war the most loses. Putin, despite his less powerful military, is showing that he has the requisite nerve to win, at least against the United States. Whether he can defeat war-ready Ukrainians supported by the West, however, is another matter.

Increased Military Support to Ukraine Is Essential for Deterrence

For this reason, military materiel flowing into Ukraine from the United States and allies is especially important to deter Putin.

According to Richard Fisher, a senior fellow at the International Assessment and Strategy Center, “so far the U.S. has transferred about 800 to 1200 FGM-148 Javelin guided anti-tank missiles, with a maximum range of 4.7 km but with accurate all weather guidance and a tandem warhead able to defeat reactive armor.”

More decisively for any war, guided anti-tank missiles of Ukrainian manufacture number in the thousands, according to Fisher. Ukraine also has approximately 12,000 armored vehicles. But this isn’t much compared to Russia’s 30,000.

Ukraine has received, from the Baltic states, FIM-92 Stinger shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles, according to Fisher.

The United States could provide Sensor Fuzed Weapons (SFW), anti-ship missiles, and long-range anti-aircraft missiles. But if we wait, it could be too late. It would be better to provide them now.

“While they would have to be delivered by Ukrainian combat aircraft into very dense Russian missile and gun anti-aircraft networks, U.S. Sensor Fuzed Munitions have the potential to provide Ukraine with an asymmetric advantage that could take out thousands of Russian tanks, mobile artillery, armored support vehicles and trucks,” Fisher wrote in an email.

“If coordinated with unmanned aircraft strikes and electronic warfare attacks, perhaps enough Ukrainian aircraft could get through so that Sensor Fuzed Munitions could deflate the initial Russian offensive in its early stages and allow Ukrainian combined forces to deliver decisive counter attacks.”

Fisher estimates that approximately 400 sensor-fuzed munitions, each of which is armed with 40 independently-targeted munitions, would enable Ukraine to disable thousands of Russian tanks and support vehicles, depleting Russian armored strength for years into the future.

“But now Russia has the advantages of numbers and of being able to [choose] when to begin its offensive,” Fisher wrote. “It will make extensive use of cyber attacks combined with drone strikes and Special Operations assaults to try to immobilize Ukrainian command systems and personnel, to create the chaos needed for its tank-artillery-armor forces to advance.”

Democracies Must Stand Up to China and Russia

Ukraine is a fellow democracy and, as such, the rest of the world’s democracies, and their allies that value the stability of the international system, should stand by Kiev shoulder-to-shoulder to deter or defeat Russia, as need be.

More should be done by the United States, NATO, and allies to support Ukraine with international boots on the ground, as well as increased delivery of higher-quality lethal

munitions capable of decisively defeating, or even rolling back, Russian forces by ground and air.

Apparently, that is necessary to deter Russia's current show of belligerence, which is imposing a major cost in terms of information revelation that is already harming the security of democracies globally, even if Moscow ultimately decides not to invade. The information loss by democracies helps both Moscow and Beijing in their illiberal and militaristic plans for future aggression.

NATO cannot let China benefit from this information, or from the power vacuum left by a U.S.-Russian war. China should be on notice that a war between any NATO ally and Russia—because of Beijing's involvement in supporting Moscow diplomatically and economically—would necessarily be a NATO-China war.

The Biden administration has thus far failed to deter aggression by both Russia and China, with China benefiting most by Russia's current aggression toward Ukraine. Beijing must not be allowed to stay high and dry during a European conflict.

The United States, NATO, and other allies must toughen up, project their power, and more effectively and quickly deter the world's most aggressive dictators.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/beijing-should-be-put-on-notice-a-war-with-russia-is-a-war-with-china_4275773.html

Kick China Out of Interpol

Interpol must come clean on Hong Kong

Anders Corr

February 20, 2022

Commentary

Interpol is supposed to be a respected international police organization, for collaboration to nab murderers and rapists. But when the world's worst criminals get control, it starts to look closer to terrorism or the mafia.

That is the sorry state of international policing as Interpol refuses to help Hongkongers who are fleeing persecution from Beijing's so-called National Security Law (NSL). Interpol should publicly reaffirm the safety of Hong Kong human rights advocates who fear its politicized arrest warrants, called "red notices."

The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) 2020 NSL is horrible and broadly worded, according to Amnesty International, and has global extraterritorial effect. The law applies globally to anyone of any citizenship who organizes peaceful protests anywhere, for example, on Chinese human rights issues. Beijing can use its influence to get Interpol to issue red notices against anyone who violates the NSL—chilling freedom of speech everywhere.

Did you attend a human rights protest on Hong Kong, or against the Uyghur genocide, and then go to Portugal for vacation? Watch out—Interpol could have you on a list and arrest you when you land with your Hawaiian shorts and Vinho Verde in hand.

The Portuguese authorities, who have an extradition treaty with China, could then send you for prosecution in a Beijing court. Surprise. Vacation over.

On Jan. 13, 16 Hongkongers and their supporters signed an open letter to the Interpol General Secretariat. They wrote, “Most of us have been forced to flee Hong Kong after the imposition of the National Security Law, which essentially created a set of political crimes.”

“Our only real crime is standing up for the fundamental human rights and liberties enshrined in the [U.N.] Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” signed in 1948 by China, Britain, the United States, and most other countries at the time.

One of the letter signatories from Hong Kong, Simon Cheng, claims to have been tortured while detained by the Chinese regime. He was at the time a British Consulate employee in Hong Kong.

The British Foreign Office warned another British citizen, Luke de Pulford, that he risked extradition to Hong Kong for prosecution.

According to the letter’s authors, the Chinese regime in 2021 increased its talk of “going after” the activists, including through Interpol. “Most of us undersigned have been confirmed as being wanted or having an arrest warrant on us, based on the National Security Law,” they wrote. “Others have been implicated in court documents or in State-aligned media publications.”

The signatories are likely the “tip of the iceberg,” as they noted, given tens of thousands of human rights advocates who fled Hong Kong since Beijing’s suppression of pro-democracy protesters and free media in that city.

“The constant threat and uncertainty of a potential arrest as China expands its long-arm policing efforts by both legal and illegal means, creates a profound chilling effect striking at the heart of fundamental liberties such as the freedom of expression and movement everywhere,” they wrote.

The letter signatories give the example of the Uyghur Idris Hasan, targeted by a China-initiated Interpol red notice in 2017. Hasan was detained and is currently facing deportation from Morocco. The notice was apparently issued in violation of Interpol’s own rules and review processes. If extradited to China, he could be detained in a “reeducation” camp, subjected to forced labor, tortured, forcefully sterilized, or killed.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is conducting at least one genocide—maybe three if one includes the persecution of Falun Gong and Tibetans. The CCP rules

through force rather than democratic election. It conducts fear campaigns against anyone who complains. The CCP should be considered a terrorist organization by U.S. law, as argued by Teng Biao, a respected University of Chicago academic, and Terri Marsh, an international human rights lawyer.

This is the country with which Interpol, and its member states, continue to sully themselves by continuing to treat the CCP's China as a legitimate member of the international system.

In 2018, Interpol was led by Meng Hongwei, a Chinese police official answerable to the Beijing regime. When he ran afoul of CCP leader Xi Jinping, he himself was arrested on a trip to China. Beijing is now targeting Meng's wife and twin boys, who the French police are thankfully providing with 24-hour protection.

In November, China's Hu Binchen was elected as one of Interpol's 13 executive committee members. Hu is a senior police official answerable to Beijing. The organization elected an official from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as its president at the same time. The official, Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi, is accused of overseeing torture against a UAE human rights defender as well as against two Britons.

The UAE has long cooperated with China through extraditions of Uyghurs back to China. One report claims that Chinese police are detaining Uyghurs in a black jail on UAE territory. The UAE is a Belt and Road country, and has extensive trade with the totalitarian country.

Cheng argues that Interpol should cancel any red notices it may have issued against human rights defenders, and confess publicly to having issued them.

The Wall Street Journal editorial board argues that America is not doing enough to protect those wrongly targeted by Interpol. While the State Department did say that "we will continue to stand with Hong Kongers as they respond to Beijing's assault on their freedoms," according to the Journal, these are just words. The U.S. government has not directly addressed the serious allegations of Beijing's abuse of Interpol.

"The Biden Administration should push Interpol for a public response," the Journal wrote. "If not, Hong Kongers might find out they're a target only after it's too late. Meanwhile, they will be living in fear, which is exactly what China wants."

The Journal is right to demand at least this much from the Biden administration. But even this is a band-aid solution that fails to address the ultimate cause of the problem.

America must do more.

The CCP is closer to a mafia or terrorist organization than to a legitimate political party in control of a legitimate state apparatus. It is absolutely wrong to allow for it to control or even influence decision-making at the highest levels of international policing.

China should be kicked off Interpol until it gets its house in order, including an immediate cessation of the genocide and what may seem impossible but what should be demanded in accordance with the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Beijing must begin to actively support democratization and human rights reforms within China itself.

To allow a country that is currently conducting a genocide, the world's worst crime, into a so-called police organization, year after year, is worse than perverse. It sullies the good name of all other countries and police officials who are trying to responsibly use Interpol for good and ethical policing.

Interpol stands for "International Criminal Police Organization." The awkward name is looking ever more apt, the more criminal its leadership appears to be.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/kick-china-out-of-interpol_4273389.html

Elite Capture

Peter Schweizer

February 20, 2022

Commentary

While researching how Americans have been getting rich by helping the Chinese Communist Party achieve its outspoken aim of replacing the United States as the “world’s No.1 power,” I came across the phrase “elite capture”—their term to describe the actions of influential people in the U.S. towards China.

“Elite capture” can refer to different things, but to the Chinese Communist Party, China’s intelligence apparatus, or those involved in quasi-private business ventures, it is a crucial tool of their success. The idea is simple enough: by tempting another country’s elite with money, access, and favors, you move them to see their interests and China’s interests as intertwined or even the same.

The Chinese are not subtle about this, and they barely try to hide it. They practice it around the world, most notably in Africa in pursuit of their Belt and Road Initiative. But elites in Western democracies have proved to be a soft touch, particularly among non-governmental elites.

“Red Handed: How American Elites are Helping China Win,” my latest book, centers on this truth and explores how elites in academia, high-finance, sports and entertainment, and the technology sector became apologists for China’s deplorable human rights record, industrial and military espionage, and increasingly aggressive behavior.

What separates this from ordinary diplomacy or even the time-honored business slogan that “the customer is always right” is the power wielded by those who succumb to the temptation. The book investigates the public activities and statements of some of the most powerful people in the United States. From the world of Silicon Valley, we explore Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, Tim Cook of Apple, and Bill Gates of Microsoft. From the world of Wall Street, we looked at Ray Dalio of Bridgewater, the largest hedge-fund investment company in the world, and Larry Fink of BlackRock. From academia we

explored the actions of Harvard and Yale universities. We surveyed the relationship histories of the Bush family, the Trudeau family of Canada, the Pelosi family, and of course, the Biden family.

Yet, the news each day is full of still other examples. The way China has co-opted all these people and institutions—and others besides—is alarmingly similar, straightforward, and not hard to piece together. In 30 years of investigative reporting, I am used to having to dig through endless layers of shell corporations, intermediaries, bank records, and tax filings to reveal these connections. Yet, the connections between the people and institutions we reviewed, and the Chinese government, fairly glowed on the page once we determined to look at the mechanics of corruption through the lens of Chinese capture of American elites. This is one reason I have said this is the scariest investigation I have ever done.

Pressed to the wall, each of the individuals we discuss would deny their role in helping China gain access to American capital markets, American military and surveillance technology, or American policy making. Each will say they are merely pursuing business opportunities that the Chinese market has offered them, as any goods capitalist should. They may argue the companies they run are truly *international* corporations and, as such, obligated to take as neutral a stance on American foreign policy as possible.

And they are not fully wrong about that.

Not all of them are as brazen about it as the Sri Lanka-born Chamath Palihapitiya, a billionaire venture capitalist and investor who in an interview last week waved away the issue of China's genocide against its own Uyghur citizens with the dismissive "nobody cares."

Nor are they all as obsequious about it as Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg. At a 2015 state dinner at the White House for visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping, the third-richest man in the world squired his ethnically Chinese, seven-months-pregnant wife over to be introduced to Xi and immediately made a strange request. Would Xi give their unborn child his Chinese name? The communist dictator was shocked by the request and politely declined, explaining it would be "too great a responsibility" to give to a total stranger.

Nor are they as star-struck about it as Ray Dalio, who wrote in his 2017 book, which bears the title "Principles," of his "personal hero," Wang Qishan. "Every time I speak with Wang," Dalio swooned, "I feel like I get closer to cracking the unifying code that unlocks the laws of the universe." Wang is the second most powerful man in the

Chinese Communist Party and known as Xi's enforcer. The Economist called him "the most feared man in China." But not to Dalio. Readers learn, on the very next page of that book that at the same time Dalio was trying to start a new hedge fund in China.

Apple Computers is another great example. Almost everything the company sells is manufactured in China, and the iPhone has more than 23 percent of the market for phones in China. Apple has repeatedly been accused of benefiting from the forced labor of Chinese Uyghurs, which the company denies. But, as a tech investor told Vanity Fair recently, "If you're Apple and you've spent 20 years building infrastructure in China, you can't just press a button and move your entire infrastructure to India," adding, "Rebuilding your supply chain takes 10 to 15 years. Right now, I just don't think they have a choice."

Of course, Apple's CEO, Tim Cook, was present at an exclusive meeting at Microsoft's headquarters in Seattle, where tech titans met Xi even before that 2015 state dinner. When Xi entered the room, a thunderstruck Cook turned to a colleague and said, "Did you feel the room shake?"

For others it happens similarly with commercial opportunities. No one should have been shocked by basketball player LeBron James's upbraiding another NBA team's general manager for tweeting about China's repression of democratic protests in Hong Kong. James earns millions royalties on jerseys and other items bearing his name and likeness in China, but is apparently also expert on foreign affairs, scolding the Houston Rockets' then-GM Daryl Morey as "either misinformed or not really educated on the situation" regarding Chinese repression of dissent in the territory.

Yet the Chinese communists are not absolutists about this. There is a common phrase in Mandarin that roughly translates: "A lot of help, with a little badmouth." The phrase captures that the practical Chinese know their friends will have to criticize China's actions from time to time. But so long as those friends are advancing China's interests on the important things, they will deign to overlook that.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was a harsh critic of China's human rights abuses. In her first term in Congress, she found herself in Tiananmen Square in 1991 and bravely unfurled a banner inscribed, "To those who died for Democracy in China." Furious Chinese police seized the banner. "I started running," Pelosi recalled. "And my colleagues, some of them, got a little roughed up. The press got treated worse because they had cameras, and they were detained."

She too has recently evolved. And her husband, Paul, has since made millions of dollars in deals with China as a partner investor in Matthews International Capital Management, a pioneer in the Chinese investment market, and through his other ventures. She has, for two years now, blocked efforts by Congress to investigate the origins of the COVID virus. With much of the evidence pointing to the possibility of a lab leak of the virus in Wuhan, Pelosi ordered the Democrats in Congress not to cooperate with any efforts to investigate the matter.

The behavior, statements, and actions of these and many other people we discuss at length in the book, certainly suggest the intertwining of their interests with China's interests. And those interests are thick enough to block out the humanitarian and national security concerns that China's rise is built upon.

As the muckraker and novelist Upton Sinclair wrote, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it."

From the Gatestone Institute

Peter Schweizer, president of the Governmental Accountability Institute, is a Gatestone Institute distinguished senior fellow and author of the best-selling books "Profiles in Corruption," "Secret Empires," and "Clinton Cash," among others. His new book is "Red Handed: How American Elites are Helping China Win."

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China Fills the Power Vacuum America Leaves Behind

Monika Palotai

February 21, 2022

Commentary

As the West is facing a possible confrontation with Russia over Ukraine, it's becoming increasingly clear that the United States can't afford an open conflict with Vladimir Putin—and it's not because the Russian autocrat is too strong, or the United States too disinterested. America has to keep its eyes on the real challenge, an ascendant China, and a new Cold War that Washington appears to be losing. That should not be.

The United States won the Cold War before by building up its defensive capabilities and leveraging its economic prowess in foreign policy by investing in cutting-edge technologies and shoring up the economies of its allies. Over the past two decades, America seems to have forgotten its own winning strategy, while China clearly learned its lessons.

The gradual and seemingly voluntary renunciation of the United States' global primacy is lately fashionably interpreted as the decline of a hegemon. Another way to see it, however, is America neglecting its allies, leaving them with neither financial nor security support—and giving them no choice but to side, however reluctantly, with whoever offers it. Famous for its political long game, China readily steps into the void America leaves behind.

And so, as the late Charles Krauthammer put it, the decline of the U.S. superpower status is actually a choice, as is America's economic engagement with China. China watches its adversary up-close: it trains its elites at American universities and underwrites its economy with American intellectual property. As the United States

gradually abdicates its historic role as a superpower, China, the emerging new hegemon, is eager to take America's place and fill the power vacuum.

Beijing has grown increasingly assertive in global politics, from the Middle East to Eastern Europe and Latin America. Traditionally pro-U.S. nations are not struggling anymore to choose between Beijing and Washington—the United States essentially forced their hand. They have found a new patron in China that's using its growing economic strength as the United States used to against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Beijing lures its funding-starved client states with investments, starting with the historic U.S. adversaries and moving to countries in need of financial support, using bilateral agreements to forge alliances of mutual dependence. As Brazil's ambassador to China Paulo Estivallet explained: "We'd rather not be so dependent on exports to China, but what is the alternative?"

As in Latin America, the United States has been active in the Middle East and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) much longer than China. And yet, as America is pulling back, China is stepping in. Beijing has had its eyes on the oil-rich Persian Gulf for a while, eager to cement its cooperation—and influence—with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other regional U.S. allies. Some GCC states' relationships with Beijing have become reciprocal, at least in the short term. Saudi energy giant Aramco signed a \$10 billion deal in 2019 to expand its business beyond the kingdom, into China, starting with the city of Panjin. Not surprisingly, in January 2022, GCC Secretary-General Nayef Falah al-Hajraf and GCC's ministers reaffirmed their support for China's positions on Taiwan, human rights issues in Xinjiang, and hosting the Beijing Winter Olympics. For its part, China expresses no interest in the rights of religious minorities or Saudi girls and women. It's all strictly business.

Hungary, a European Union member state and NATO ally, has lately been vilified for cozying up to China and labeled a Chinese puppet and a Trojan horse simply because of its interest in Chinese infrastructure investment in Central Europe. Absent from the scathing criticism is any awareness that the United States failed to offer its allies any alternatives to Chinese money. Moreover, the U.S. government continues to treat Hungary as an outcast instead of an ally, blocking the U.S. ambassador nomination for three and a half years, and making Hungary the only democratic EU country not invited to the "Summit of Democracy" in December 2021.

China doesn't have such problems with its strategic partners—or targets. It approaches U.S. friends and foes alike to advance its foreign policy objectives. And so, the recent \$117.5 billion 30-year China-Russia gas agreement resembles the 25-year China-Iran strategic accord of 2021, though there's a symbolic element in the deals that taunts the

United States: “Russia and China are superior to political and military alliances of the Cold War era. Friendship between the two States has no limits, there are no ‘forbidden’ areas of cooperation,” the signers announced on the opening day of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Mahmoud Abbaszadeh-Meshkini, a spokesman for the Iranian Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, added the proverbial cherry on top: “In the new world order, a triangle consisting of three powers—Iran, Russia, and China—has formed.”

America needs to remember that countries are by-and-large motivated by their national interest, not by ideology, and that a declining hegemon, who makes cultural and ideological demands with less and less to offer in return, has limited appeal. Meanwhile, China offers supposedly lucrative deals without requiring any political or ideological adjustments from the countries seeking its investment or protection—not until it’s strong enough to demand everything, that is. For now, however, it’s all business, and seemingly reciprocal at that.

The United States should re-learn its own Cold War playbook and use it against the Chinese Communist Party instead of letting China wield it against the West. America must act fast to provide credible, practical, unified alternatives to China’s sprawling economic footprint, and to collaborate with its democratic allies while respecting their cultural and national identity. Until the United States proposes an alternative, national interest of smaller and larger players friendly to the United States will push them into China’s snare disguised as investment opportunities.

The template to win this new Cold War already exists. It only needs to be revived, adapted to the new adversary, and executed. The U.S. allies will welcome America’s return.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-fills-the-power-vacuum-america-leaves-behind_4289783.html

Chinese Warship Lasered an Australian Surveillance Plane—When Will We Hit Back?

Our politicians complain but do nothing in response

Anders Corr

February 22, 2022

News Analysis

China's Navy is firing lasers again, this time at an Australian surveillance plane within Australia's own exclusive economic zone, and very likely within sight of the Australian mainland.

This is a laser redux of similar aggression by China's Navy against U.S. and Australian pilots that has occurred on multiple occasions over the years, without serious response. That failure of credible deterrence is an invitation for more abuse.

China's latest laser show cannot in any way be presented as a defensive action by the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). It is offensive, against a U.S. ally, and up close and personal.

Australia's prime minister, the conservative Scott Morrison, rightly described the attack as an "act of intimidation." An expert commentator claimed that it could be a laser rangefinder for a much more powerful weapon.

Regardless, it could have blinded the pilots, who flew a P-8A Poseidon aircraft hit on Feb. 17. It should result in consequences.

Back in the 1950s, the PLAN ship would have been shot out of the water. Perhaps a jet fighter that accompanies the plane could have replied with an uncomfortably close shot across the ship's bow. That would have sent the message and given the next captain of a PLAN ship pause before lasering a U.S. ally.

Now we have gentler methods of making the point, which should at least be new economic sanctions that cost the regime in Beijing hundreds of millions of dollars every time a PLAN ship even thinks of unpacking its lasers.

The responsibility for imposing these consequences should not rest on the shoulders of Australia alone. All democracies and countries that value their independence should support Australia with coordinated international sanctions that hit Beijing hard and where it counts—in the wallet.

The laser was “aimed” off Australia’s north coast. Australia’s Defense Force (ADF) said on Feb. 19 that the PLAN vessel illuminated the Australian plane as the former traveled east in the Arafura Sea, which abuts the Northern Territory. The ADF said the lasering could “endanger lives” on the Australian plane. “Such actions are not in keeping with the standards we expect of professional militaries.”

The following day, Morrison said, “I can see it no other way than an act of intimidation, one that was unprovoked, unwarranted and Australia will never accept such acts of intimidation.”

He rightly stated that the latest act of aggression fully justifies Australia’s decision to ally more closely with the United States, Japan, Britain, and India in various formations, including the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad) with the United States, Japan, and India, as well as the AUKUS pact, in which the United States and United Kingdom are providing Australia with critical nuclear propulsion technology for its submarines, and making a pretty penny in the process.

France, which has lagged other democracies on the issue of China, and which had offered Australia outdated diesel-electric submarines, lost a penny.

Morrison reasonably demanded that China do a full investigation of the incident and provide a report. So far, Beijing has been entirely mum. If it keeps that up for a couple more days, Australia and its allies should impose joint economic sanctions immediately.

On Feb. 21, the prime minister doubled down. “We haven’t received an explanation as yet,” he said on an Australian radio interview.

“This is a dangerous and reckless act. And worse, it can be seen, as I said yesterday, as an act of intimidation and bullying. They were in our exclusive economic zone and they were pointing a laser at an Australian surveillance aircraft,” Morrison said.

U.S. and Australian pilots have noted incidents of Chinese military lasering of allied planes and helicopters since at least 2017, including from PLAN vessels, China’s military base in Djibouti, and even disguised fishing boats. The latter are China’s militarized and heavily subsidized Maritime Militia, which ply the waters far from where any sane unsubsidized Chinese fisherman would go.

To add insult to possible injury, Beijing signed the 1995 Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons, an international agreement that bans the lasering of pilots. But the regime has made a mockery of international law so frequently that any reliance on its promises became foolhardy long ago.

The Chinese Communist Party previously denied reports of its military forces lasering U.S. and Australian pilots. These denials should never have been allowed to go unanswered and without economic sanctions. The failure to respond to these provocations—in a way that impacts Beijing directly—is an invitation for more.

Morrison last week rightly accused the Labor Party in Australia of being weak against China. He said that Beijing prefers Labor to the conservatives as a result. He’s right to say so.

But it’s time for conservatives to put their money where their mouths are, and take much tougher action against Beijing. Sadly, Morrison is behind in the polls. If he is on the way out anyway, let’s hope he at least gives Beijing a parting shot at the end.

Anders Corr has a bachelor’s/master’s in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are “The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony” (2021) and “Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea” (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinese-warship-lasered-an-australian-surveillance-plane-when-will-we-hit-back_4295386.html

India Bans Game Apps on China Surveillance Fears. And the World Should, Too

J.G. Collins

February 23, 2022

Commentary

Shares of Sea Ltd., a Singapore-based technology company, slumped over 18 percent on Feb. 14 after India banned 54 game apps, including Sea's popular Free Fire game.

While Sea is located in Singapore, its American depositary receipts (ADRs) are listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). While it is the city-state's most valuable company by virtue of its wildly popular games, it also runs business-to-consumer (B2C) internet shopping platform Shopee and internet payment app SeaMoney.

India's ban was due to "elements hostile to the sovereignty and integrity of India and for activities detrimental to national security," according to a government source quoted by The Hindu. India has banned 321 apps for similar reasons.

India's concerns appear to be well-founded.

Sea's founders are natives of China who were educated in Singapore and the United States. And Sea's seed capital came from Tencent, one of several Chinese companies that India's intelligence services have identified with alleged links to China's People's Liberation Army (PLA).

American intelligence agencies appear to have concurred.

According to the Financial Times, in early 2021, the State Department and the Pentagon under President Donald Trump (during his last weeks in office) both wanted to add

Tencent and other apps companies to a U.S. investor blacklist that would have prohibited Americans from owning shares of the company.

But infighting among Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller, together, against Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, an investment banker, resulted in Tencent and the others being excluded from the list. The Financial Times quoted a former U.S. National Security Council official to the effect that removing what he called “the Big 3” (Alibaba, Tencent, and Baidu) risked being viewed as investors’ interests taking precedence over national security.

And clearly, American investors are still interested in Sea, notwithstanding the national security concerns and the India ban. Fund manager Cathie Woods of Ark Investments, which invests in “innovative disruption,” reportedly picked up 145,000 shares after India’s ban on Sea apps dropped the stock.

It takes time for society to adjust to the kind of innovative disruption that is Ms. Woods’ forte. When such innovative disruptions have cruel or catastrophic consequences—as, for example, when innovation allowed the armies of World War I to resort to the ghastly use of mustard gas and other poison gases on their enemies—thoughtful world leaders of goodwill banded together under the Geneva Convention and defined rules and standards that banned poison gases in warfare. That was nearly a century ago.

Today, we are on the precipice of seeing such “cruel or catastrophic consequences” in the realm of cyberwarfare. Recognizing that, a small group of governments and non-governmental organizations created the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace at the Munich Security Conference.

But this small step is hardly sufficient. Governments and tech companies must grow these efforts quickly and comprehensively, so that we avoid, say, a cyberattack on a nuclear reactor or the disabling of civilian air control radars mid-flight.

But as those movements grow and, hopefully, become an accepted international norm to protect cyberspace, those forming them must also insist that apps and app stores be included.

There must be for app downloads something akin to the “Underwriters Laboratories” seal of approval, with their ubiquitous “UL” logo, that we see on virtually all electrical products. Such an international, third-party, independent, verification would ensure that an app is safe, that data servers are secure from governmental intrusions, and information as to where they are located. Prior to download, consumers should be

provided a menu of options so that they select the level of personal information they share with the app, what portions of it they wish to use, etc.

The independent assurance agency—perhaps part of the World Trade Organization or the United Nations?—would also prevent retorsion—the kind of “tit-for-tat” that occurs among governments that act against one another.

We are years away from making all this happen, of course. In the meantime, caveat emptor. And beware any app that has any ties to China so long as that country is enslaved to the global criminal enterprise the world knows as the Chinese Communist Party.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/india-bans-game-apps-on-china-surveillance-fears-and-the-world-should-too_4291945.html

Pompeo Sends a Tough Signal to Beijing With His Visit to Taiwan

Pompeo sets course on China

Anders Corr

February 24, 2022

News Analysis

“We need to do all we can to protect our American way of life at home, and allowing these thugs, autocrats, and dictators to move around freely is not in America’s best interest,” former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted on Feb. 23.

Pompeo could have been talking about Vladimir Putin and his recent invasion of Ukraine, about Xi Jinping and his threat to do the same to Taiwan, or about both.

If his tweet relates to China, and I think it does, it reinforces that of the possible Republican presidential candidates in 2024, Pompeo is the toughest on China. That accords with what my sources say, as well.

And Pompeo is doubling-down on his China hawk status by planning a trip to Taiwan from March 2 to 5. On March 3, he will meet President Tsai Ing-wen.

Pompeo and his wife will join Vice President Lai Ching-te and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu for dinner, making it not just business, but social. That’s the best way to improve relations between our two countries.

The visit, according to an official Taiwan statement, demonstrates the bipartisan nature of U.S. support for the island democracy.

But not everybody is toasting. Beijing has already sent fiery missives denouncing Pompeo in the direction of Taipei, a city in an independent country that is about to host America's greatest hope for 2024.

Pompeo's China Policies

In January 2021, just as President Joe Biden entered office, Beijing sanctioned Pompeo and another 27 leading Trump administration officials.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) doesn't much like Pompeo.

The year prior, Pompeo called the CCP a "predator" and "the central threat of our times."

Shortly after, Pompeo broke the mold again, designating the Beijing regime's persecution of the Uyghurs a "genocide." The designation opened the floodgates for the incoming administration, and other governments around the world, to do the same. That put Beijing squarely in the "pariah" box of international relations.

Pompeo also facilitated the U.S. approval of multiple Taiwan arms sales, strengthened bilateral exchanges, supported more participation by Taiwan in international organizations, and ended State Department restrictions on official U.S. contact with Taiwan.

Pompeo said that for decades, the State Department had "created complex internal restrictions to regulate our diplomats, service members, and other officials' interactions with their Taiwanese counterparts."

He continued: "The United States government took these actions unilaterally, in an attempt to appease the Communist regime in Beijing. No more."

Pompeo has been a strong and public advocate for Taiwan's democracy and freedom both during and after his government service. He confirmed that "Taiwan has not been a part of China" in a November 2020 radio interview.

During the upcoming Taiwan visit, Pompeo will be accompanied by his close adviser, Dr. Miles Yu, a professor of history at the U.S. Naval Academy.

Yu argues that there is more evidence for the CCP's genocide against Falun Gong than there is against the Uyghurs. There is plenty of evidence for both, of course, which means there is a double or even triple genocide ongoing in China, if one includes the Tibetans.

When news of Pompeo's upcoming trip was announced, China's foreign ministry made note of his sanctioned status and flung a veiled threat at Taiwan.

"Pompeo has long been sanctioned by China due to his anti-China actions and deeds," said Wang Wenbin, China's foreign ministry spokesman, on Feb. 21. Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party "attempts to achieve independence with the help of the U.S. will only end up getting themselves burnt."

The Benefits of Pompeo's Taiwan Visit

Former Taiwanese diplomat Vincent Chao observed on Feb. 21 that Taiwan will benefit from Pompeo's visit in three ways. First, it will normalize high-level government meetings between the United States and Taiwan. Second, it will put Taiwan's international participation at the core of U.S. goals. And third, it will further liberate U.S.-Taiwan relations from prior restraints.

The visit might benefit Taiwan in other ways as well, if three main topics of discussion include what lessons Ukraine has for the changes needed to Taiwan's status in order to assure its safety and sovereignty.

First, Taiwan needs a better deterrent against territorial aggression by the Chinese regime. This should include America's most powerful conventional weapons, but also an independent nuclear deterrent and U.S. and allied boots on the ground. If Ukraine had more powerful weapons and NATO boots on the ground, Putin would not have invaded. Taiwan needs all that—and more—to deter Beijing, which is far more powerful than Moscow.

Second, Taiwan needs tougher laws against foreign illiberal influence, especially from Beijing. That should include better protection against influence that the regime attempts to exert on Taipei through Taiwanese business people.

Third, and with effective protections against military and political aggression in place, Taiwan's independence and sovereignty should be internationally recognized, starting with the United States. It should be explained publicly and forcefully to Beijing that a sovereign country does not use the threat of force. Instead, sovereignty inheres in the people, who vote their government into being.

My final piece of advice for Pompeo's upcoming flight to Taiwan: Do not transit through mainland China.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/pompeo-sends-a-tough-signal-to-beijing-with-his-visit-to-taiwan_4298129.html

Beijing, Moscow, and Tehran Coordinate the Destruction of Democracy

Anders Corr

February 25, 2022

News Analysis

As deadly missiles rain upon Ukraine from a fateful and ill-conceived decision by Vladimir Putin to invade, one prominent country stands with the Russian dictator: China.

Having just signed a wide-ranging strategic agreement with Putin on Feb. 4, Xi Jinping is effectively joining a Moscow pact against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). China's junior ally Iran also signaled support for the dictators by condemning NATO as at fault for Russia's crime.

The condemnation of NATO's expansion is the condemnation of European democracy's self-defense. That stance against democratic defenses is central to China's emerging alliance systems.

The three dictatorships claim that NATO is offensive, when it is clearly defensive. They ignore the right of people and countries everywhere to choose their own leaders in fair elections. They reject the right of nations to choose their own defensive alliances based on shared democratic values. They thereby flout the U.N. 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

For Beijing, Moscow, and Tehran, the normal laws of decency that all nations follow are thrown out of the windows that Putin's missiles have blown. Xi seeks to control the world. Tehran has fallen in line. And Putin is doing his best as a second-tier partner by striking the first blow for our illiberal future.

What Putin does today to Ukraine, Xi will do tomorrow to Taiwan. Tehran will do the same in Iraq and Syria. The three ongoing fights are inextricably linked as the world's dictators-in-chief seek ever more power, held by hubristically assuming NATO and friends are too cowardly to oppose them militarily.

They think that making their countries sanction-proof by intertwining their economies, diverting their trade to one another, and denominating their contracts increasingly in the yuan instead of the dollar, will keep their new conquests safe.

On Feb. 24, the day of the first missile attack on all of Ukraine, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs sided with the aggressor. Foreign Minister Wang Yi and the ministry spokeswoman denounced the United States, validated "Russia's legitimate concerns on security issues" and complicated the aggression by referring to Moscow's "specific" historical grievances.

China's support for the Russian invasion can be outwardly subtle, but powerful beneath the surface as Beijing guarantees to Moscow an economic lifeline in case of sanctions. Beijing knows that such support can blow back with secondary sanctions on China's economy. Already, China's Unipac couldn't find a ship to deliver Russian crude oil.

After the Feb. 4 meeting between Xi and Putin, "China's top leaders huddled behind closed doors for several days to discuss the Ukraine crisis, according to people familiar with the matter," reports the Wall Street Journal.

"Among their concerns, these people said, was the risk of financial and trade penalties imposed by Washington in response to any help that Beijing might extend to help Russia evade U.S. sanctions."

Indeed, America and our allies can—and must—sanction Russia along with China for its enabling role in the invasion. Without Xi's promise to help Russia financially, Putin could not have made the decision to invade.

The NATO response to the Russian invasion more generally cannot be in isolation from the China threat. To do so would ignore the core of the illiberal alliance system in Beijing. Democracies around the world that wish to defend themselves against these rising authoritarians must have a comprehensive strategy—at the core of which is removing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from its coordinating role.

The United States has talked about this since President Barack Obama's "pivot to Asia," still incomplete two administrations later. America's alliance systems are bifurcated between NATO in Europe, and our hub-and-spokes in Asia, which are so brittle that without the United States, would fall apart. What's more, the Ukraine crisis threatens to derail the pivot, which perhaps not coincidentally is exactly what the CCP wants.

On Feb. 19, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson rightly called for a new global NATO.

"If Ukraine is invaded, the shock will echo around the world," said Johnson, who warned that autocratic regimes in Asia and further afield would "draw the conclusion that aggression pays and that might is right."

No longer can NATO think that the protection of its members is limited to Europe. As long as China, whose economy is approximately 10 times that of Russia, continues to pull the strings with dictators around the world, NATO must address the root of the problem in Asia.

Despite the temptation to focus on the televised violence likely to unfold daily from Ukraine over the next weeks, we need to take the larger strategic view and look at the source of that violence, which is Beijing's influential antipathy for both democracy, and the world's most powerful democratic alliance: NATO.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/beijing-moscow-and-tehran-coordinate-the-destruction-of-democracy_4300243.html

Russian Invasion of Ukraine Is a Boon for the Chinese Regime

New gas pipeline deal strengthens Russia-China alliance

Antonio Graceffo

February 25, 2022

News Analysis

Ukrainians awoke to the sound of shelling on Feb. 24, as the long-dreaded moment had arrived. Russia had invaded Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's recognition of two breakaway Ukrainian republics and subsequent invasion of Ukraine has prompted the United States and Europe to bring sanctions, including shutting down the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which will result in a huge financial and global power win for China.

"We will limit Russia's ability to do business in dollars, euros, pounds, and yen. ... We're going to stunt the ability to finance and grow the Russian military," said President Joe Biden in a speech on Thursday, in reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Refugees are now fleeing over the border into neighboring Poland. Shortages have started in Ukraine, and many businesses are closed. Global commodities prices are spiking, while stock markets are tanking, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average falling 700 points. Global wheat supplies are threatened. Thousands of miles away, Americans will be feeling the effects of the Ukraine crisis, in the form of rising gas prices.

And soon, China will have access to the cheapest gas on the planet, putting it in a position to undercut manufacturers around the globe. Furthermore, China will move closer to having Russia in its pocket.

On Feb. 21, Putin delivered an impassioned speech, demanding Ukraine to accept that Crimea is part of Russia and that Ukraine should refrain from joining NATO. At the same time, parts of two Ukrainian regions—Luhansk and Donetsk Oblast—petitioned Putin to recognize their autonomy. The two Russia-backed regions have always been pro-Russia. Consequently, he granted the request, establishing the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) and Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR). The remainder of Luhansk and Donetsk Oblast remain under Ukrainian control.

In the early part of the week, the upper house of the Russian Parliament granted Putin the authority to use military force outside of the country. By midweek, he sent “peacekeeping” troops to the two breakaway republics, while over 150,000 Russian troops waited on the Ukrainian border. At that point, Putin was still claiming that he was not planning a full-scale invasion. On Thursday morning, however, Russian forces hit multiple targets inside of Ukraine with missile and artillery barrages. Russian paratroopers dropped into the Hostomel airport in the Kyiv region, while troops seized Chernobyl’s former nuclear power plant.

For many years, Ukraine has been the sight of an ongoing conflict between ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians, as well as Russian speakers who are pro-Russian. Since 2014, roughly 14,000 people have been killed in fighting between the Russian-backed separatists and the armed forces of the Kyiv government. During this time, as many as 2 million are believed to have fled the region. This week, shelling resumed, claiming the lives of both military and civilians.

Global Response

The recognition of the separatist states, as well as the movement of Russian troops earlier in the week, elicited differing responses from the world’s most powerful nations.

Hu Xijin, former editor of China’s state-run tabloid Global Times, said that Putin’s recognition of the breakaway regions was meant to “break the deadlock” of the crisis, by demonstrating “Russia’s strategic determination.”

The United States and the United Kingdom said they would move forward with sanctions.

Germany Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that he would halt authorization of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, a move which was applauded by both the United Nations and NATO. Germany's agreement to shut down the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is one of the most important sanctions, but one that Germany did not take lightly. Russia is Europe's number one supplier of natural gas, therefore, a decertification of the pipeline would be a major financial setback.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, more and more countries have stepped forward with calls for sanctions, including Japan, Australia, Canada, and others.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that the European Union was preparing a strong set of sanctions designed to weaken Russia's economy and its ability to modernize. She also said that the EU would freeze Russian assets and prevent Russian banks from accessing European financial markets.

The most damaging sanction the United States has in its arsenal is to remove Russia from the SWIFT system. This would basically make it impossible for Russia to sell its exports, ostensibly tanking the Russian economy. Originally, Biden said that this sanction would only be applied if Russia engages in a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Russia has previously threatened the United States that removing Russia from the SWIFT would be tantamount to a declaration of war. Now that an invasion has occurred, Biden announced an increase in sanctions, but specifically said that he will not remove Russia from the SWIFT.

In addition to sanctions, Biden has authorized the movement of U.S. equipment and troops, already in Europe, to support Baltic allies, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Additionally, the president passed an executive order prohibiting U.S. trade and investment in the breakaway republics. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the UK would freeze the assets of banks and individuals financing the region.

However, Beijing's reaction was to refrain from calling Russia's attack on Ukraine as an invasion, laying blame on the United States rather than Russia.

China Benefits From Russia-Ukraine Conflict, New Gas Deal

At the end of the day, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will be the big winner of Western sanctions on Russia.

First, China needs Russia's support on the Taiwan issue, and this Ukraine crisis ensures that they will have it.

Second, China is looking at a huge strategic gain, in terms of energy security. Russia's Gazprom provides liquefied natural gas (LNG) to China, and Beijing has offered to soften the blow to Russia's economy by increasing its purchase of Russian gas.

The two countries are ironing out a deal for a new pipeline, which was announced on Feb. 4 and reported to be worth \$117.5 billion. The Power of Siberia-2 is expected to dramatically increase gas shipments from Russia to China. The deal will be settled in euros, as both China and Russia are trying to eliminate the use of the U.S. dollar.

This pipeline will make the CCP less susceptible to a U.S. maritime blockade of shipments from the Middle East. Currently, more than 70 percent of China's petroleum and LNG passes through the Strait of Malacca, an area patrolled by the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

The increased sale of gas to China will not completely make up for the loss of Russian exports to Europe, but it will decrease Russia's dependence on the European market. As an additional economic aid to Russia, Beijing lifted restrictions on imports of Russian wheat and barley. And while both countries will benefit from this transaction, it is important to remember that the two are only "allies of convenience."

A Sino-Soviet split drove the two countries apart in 1960, and they even fought a border clash in 1969 in Heilongjiang. One reason why former U.S. President Richard Nixon went to China in 1972, during the height of the Cold War, was to establish relations with China, to balance against the USSR.

Today, the difference in economic power, and the unwillingness of Putin to play second-fiddle in a China-led world, sometimes puts the countries' interests at odds. China will be financing the Power of Siberia-2, which has a payback period lasting until 2050. Consequently, the financing, as well as the pipeline itself, would make Russia more dependent on China—a condition that Beijing would most likely welcome, but which Putin would prefer to avoid.

Antonio Graceffo, Ph.D., has spent more than 20 years in Asia. He is a graduate of the Shanghai University of Sport and holds a China-MBA from Shanghai Jiaotong University. Graceffo works as an economics professor and China economic analyst, writing for various international media. Some of his books on China include “Beyond the Belt and Road: China’s Global Economic Expansion” and “A Short Course on the Chinese Economy.”

https://www.theepochtimes.com/russian-invasion-of-ukraine-is-a-boon-for-the-chinese-regime_4299119.html

Biden, Don't Trust China With American Intelligence on Russia

China and Russia are de facto allies

Anders Corr

February 27, 2022

Commentary

When President Joe Biden came to Xi Jinping with American intelligence about an upcoming Russian invasion of Ukraine, begging Xi to do something about it, Xi must have thought Biden pretty naive.

First, Xi almost certainly knew and approved Vladimir Putin's horrific plan in advance. Putin needed a buyer of last resort for the sanctions he knew were coming, so he had to get guarantees from Xi first.

Second, even if Xi didn't know, he would have approved. The Russian invasion, including war crimes like attacks on civilian apartments and power stations in Kyiv, take the spotlight off Beijing's own human rights abuse and territorial aggression.

Third, Russia's invasion is turning it into a pariah state. The sanctions that resulted are forcing it into China's arms, just as with the coups in Burma (Myanmar) in 2021 and Thailand in 2014. China is playing the democracies, and their sanctions, like a fiddle.

Xi must have had a good laugh, when he got off the Biden video call. (If Xi does in fact ever laugh, which is unclear. Perhaps he just smirked.)

That would have been right before Xi called up his good buddy Putin and told him all about the American intelligence that Biden was sharing. That kind of double-cross builds trust between thieves, but lasts about as long as required for one of them to get their hands on the loot.

The New York Times first reported the Biden administration's good-hearted but fumbling intelligence shares, on Feb. 25. They occurred over the course of three months and half a dozen meetings with the Chinese ambassador, foreign minister, and finally Xi himself.

The idea to share the intelligence must have come when the more dovish in the administration thought, "Aha! This will really be the issue on which we can finally cooperate with the Chinese Communist Party! The CCP isn't cooperating on the climate, trade, human rights, democracy, health, nonproliferation, or terrorism. But, hey, maybe a Russian invasion is the golden ticket!"

Instead, the administration just got stabbed in the back.

The Chinese officials who spoke with Biden officials initially claimed that they did not think an invasion was really going to happen.

That turned out to be a lie when the administration got intelligence that not only did the Chinese know about the plans, but they informed the Russians that they would not oppose them.

According to Edward Wong at the Times, "After one diplomatic exchange in December, U.S. officials got intelligence showing Beijing had shared the information with Moscow, telling the Russians that the United States was trying to sow discord—and that China would not try to impede Russian plans and actions, the officials said."

That must have really hurt. Biden was trusting Xi to do the right thing and Xi did the opposite. The administration must have felt like fools.

They are in fact fools, because Xi and Putin are clearly on the same side of the Ukraine issue. On Feb. 4, the two signed a strategic statement that referred to a partnership between the countries that had "no limits" and no "forbidden" areas of cooperation. In the document, both took a stand against NATO expansion, and for "their core interests, state sovereignty and territorial integrity." This is an affirmation, without saying so explicitly, of Russia's claim to Ukraine.

In turn, the Russian side explicitly supported the “one China” principle, and “that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, and opposes any forms of independence of Taiwan.”

The mutual recognition by the two dictators of their territorial claims over “their common adjacent regions” set Putin up in a de facto alliance for the support of his Ukraine invasion.

Both Ukraine and Taiwan are territories, they believe, that once belonged to their respective countries. Both would like to join Western alliance systems. Both could go nuclear in order to defend themselves.

While Xi has talked a lot about invading Taiwan, Putin tries to retain the element of surprise. This worked for Putin in the invasion of Crimea and Donbass in 2014. It didn’t work so well more recently.

Xi nevertheless doubled down for Russia. After the invasion, Beijing explicitly supported Russia’s “legitimate security concerns” and the “sovereignty and territorial integrity” of all countries.

In the context of the Ukraine invasion, most Westerners might read that latter point as supportive of Ukraine. But Putin claims Ukraine as a part of Russia. So he can read Xi’s slyly-worded points as entirely supportive of Russia’s own territorial integrity, which includes all of “the Ukraine.”

Xi knows this, and to underline his support for Russia’s war, China’s foreign ministry regularly blames the United States, defense assistance to Ukraine, “hyping up the possibility of warfare,” and NATO expansion. Putin is off the hook, according to the CCP.

Xi is leading Putin to believe, insulated as he is by the yes-men in the Kremlin’s group-think, that he will be victorious in not only Ukraine, but in keeping countries like Sweden and Finland out of NATO. Indeed, Russia’s foreign ministry spokesperson threatened these countries on Feb. 25 to stay out.

Putin is obviously biting off more of Europe than he can chew. Russia is no longer the economically powerful Soviet Union. It currently has an economy about one-tenth the size of China or Europe. Nobody respects Côte d’Ivoire with nuclear weapons, which is how Russia is now described.

Similar ideological insularity afflicts Xi, who believes that his authoritarian form of rule is superior to the messy chaos of democracy. He uses his COVID strategy as an example, locking down his entire country of 1.4 billion people to achieve low death rates. But his quasi-command economy also stifles innovation, and so China's vaccines don't work well. The country is still locked down, while the West is finally emerging back into normal human freedoms.

Putin and Xi are telling each other that dictatorships are more efficient, and so they can easily take territory from unallied democracies like Ukraine or Taiwan. Ukraine is hopefully in the process of disabusing them of this authoritarian illusion. Time will tell.

What should already be abundantly clear, however, is that democracies cannot trust Russia and China, who hold themselves as superior.

But there is one silver lining. Neither can Putin and Xi trust each other. At the earliest, China will snatch Russia's own sovereignty if given the opportunity. And vice versa. That makes them weak allies. Indeed, they have not even been able to say the word.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/biden-dont-trust-china-with-american-intelligence-on-russia_4304233.html

Russia's Only Financial Partner Is China

Chadwick Hagan

February 28, 2022

Commentary

It's clear that a new economic and political partnership has formed between Russia and China.

While Russia's tiny economic footprint is a little threat to the United States, Russian President Vladimir Putin's ambitions are fueled by China's support, both financially and politically.

According to official data from the World Bank, the gross domestic product (GDP) in Russia was worth 1483.50 billion (1.4 trillion) U.S. dollars in 2020, and the GDP value of Russia represents 1.3 percent of the world economy. That is roughly the size of the Netherlands and Belgium combined.

Russia is in the midst of suffering serious financial ramifications from the international financial world. On Feb. 24, the U.S. Treasury took unprecedented actions against two prominent Russian financial institutions, Sberbank of Russia and VTB Bank, "drastically altering their fundamental ability to operate. On a daily basis, Russian financial institutions conduct about \$46 billion worth of foreign exchange transactions globally, 80 percent of which are in U.S. dollars. The vast majority of those transactions will now be disrupted. By cutting off Russia's two largest banks—which combined make up more than half of the total banking system in Russia by asset value—from processing payments through the U.S. financial system."

Additional sanctions by the G-7 countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, and Germany) include banning certain Russian banks from using the SWIFT financial network. Banning Russian banks and Russian affiliates from using SWIFT is a major inconvenience. Commodities from oil to grain will be

severely disrupted. SWIFT's service is international in nature and allows global banks and governments to communicate with each other (and transfer funds) with ease. The ripple effect from the G-7 sanctions will last for years.

Russia has built up one of the world's largest stockpiles of cash and gold, estimated to be over \$600 billion. The SWIFT sanctions will severely limit Russia's ability to utilize their stockpile internationally.

While SWIFT is bipartisan, Russia was almost banned in 2014. According to the BBC, "Russia was threatened with a SWIFT expulsion before—when it annexed Crimea. Russia said the move would be tantamount to a declaration of war. Western allies did not go ahead, but the threat did prompt Russia to develop its own, very fledgling, cross-border transfer system. To prepare for such a sanction, the Russian government created a National Payment Card System, known as Mir, to process card payments. However, few foreign countries currently use it."

China has felt similar interbank pressures in years past and, in 2015, the People's Bank of China (China's central bank) debuted the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) to sidestep any future payment embargoes.

However, much like Russia's Mir, the CIPS platform has not been widely accepted. A report from the Bank of Finland Institute for Emerging Economies stated, "As of end-May [2021] 1,189 banks representing roughly 100 countries used CIPS. Of these banks, 569 operated in mainland China, 355 elsewhere in Asia. Many of the foreign bank branches are subsidiaries of Chinese banks."

There is also growing evidence that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) shared intelligence from the United States with Russia, intelligence that supported U.S. claims Russia was planning to invade Ukraine.

The CCP has been exposed as the only global power supporting Russia and the only superpower against sanctioning Russia.

It will be impossible for the Kremlin to continue a state of normalcy without China's economic support going forward. Without the CCP's support it would be completely unaffordable for Putin to mount such an attack on Ukraine and to risk financial alienation from Western markets.

The CCP is supporting the Kremlin to create a brutal axis of power in Eurasia, the Middle East, and throughout Asia. But the support is also to further the CCP's own aggressive territorial ambitions of seizing Taiwan and extending its reach throughout the Middle East with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as "One Belt, One Road") infrastructure juggernaut.

Chadwick Hagan is an entrepreneur, financier, and author. He manages business interests in North America and Europe, and founded the boutique investment bank Hagan Capital Group in 2003. He is active on Twitter and is a frequent speaker and columnist on finance, entrepreneurship, and investing. He is a trustee and director of the Hagan Family Foundation and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and the Linnaean Society.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/russias-only-financial-partner-is-china_4306716.html

China's Propaganda on Ukraine Seeps Into Western Mainstream Media

Western reporters repeat CCP propaganda that contradicts its territorial aggression

Anders Corr

March 1, 2022

News Analysis

In otherwise excellent reporting on China's reaction to Vladimir Putin's Ukraine invasion, Western reporters continue to buy into major elements of Beijing's propaganda, namely that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) stands for peace, state sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and that these so-called Beijing policies somehow contrast with Moscow's invasion.

Nothing could be further from the truth, if one considers the long and continuing history of the CCP's militarized land grabs that go from their initial Jiangxi Soviet of 1931-1934, to Yan'an starting in 1935, Beijing in 1949, East Turkestan (now Xinjiang) in 1950, and Tibet in 1951.

From 1964 to 1969, CCP leader Mao Zedong attempted to take Soviet territory, but was rebuffed militarily. In 1974, China fought a battle against South Vietnam (then allied with the United States) and took the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. A U.S. aircraft carrier was nearby, but unfortunately did not assist. Had we nipped Chinese expansion in the bud, history would surely have unfolded more amicably.

In 1988, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy killed Vietnamese marines on Johnson South Reef in the South China Sea and later built an artificial island on which they put a military base. In 1995, the Chinese regime occupied Mischief Reef in the

Philippines' exclusive economic zone, and built a massive military base in clear violation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In 2009, Beijing claimed all of the South China Sea as its territory in a note verbale to all U.N. member states. In 2012, the Chinese Coast Guard grabbed Scarborough Shoal from Philippine fishermen.

I visited the shoal in 2016 and personally saw the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) endangering the lives of Philippine activists as they attempted to swim to a rock on the shoal and plant a flag. The CCG backed their motorboats toward the swimmers, who had to swim evasively and push off the boats. The CCG thus sought to stop them and scare them back to the fishing boat on which we had come. The CCG's large steel boats also came within a few yards of our smaller wooden fishing boat, purposefully rocking it violently to scare us away. I caught it all on camera.

More recently, the PLA occupied Himalayan territory within India and Bhutan's borders. Bhutan is a tiny country that relies on India for its defense, and India has attempted to deescalate PLA incursions by fighting them off in mountainside scuffles without using firearms. Finally, China maintains close relations with the Taliban, and terrorist groups in Burma (Myanmar) that control territory.

China's 1979 War Against Vietnam

In 1979, China's Chairman Deng Xiaoping waged a war against Vietnam over its invasion of Cambodia and budding alliance with the Soviet Union. Vietnam pushed the Chinese military back, but Beijing managed to move the border a bit south in the process, taking some strategic locations, including mountainous heights for which the two sides had fought.

According to my sources in Vietnam, for example, China kept two of three waterfalls at Ban Gioc, plus the northern hill adjacent to the falls, and some territory at the Huu Nghi border. The border marker is on the south side of the falls, as I witnessed myself on a trip there in 2015.

Professor Carlyle Thayer at the University of New South Wales confirmed in an email, "There were small bits of land that China retained for tactical reasons" after the 1979 war.

Thayer is skeptical, however, of claims by some of my sources that China had a colony within Vietnam from 1975 to 1977 of about 3,000 people, and started a parallel government in the strategically central district of Bao Lac. China comes close to this in Burma today, so the claims should be further investigated.

Alexander Vuving, a faculty member at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, wrote in an email: “After the war, the Chinese withdrew to north of the pre-1979 border in most areas. But they did gain some territories. These are several strategic locations along the border, most of which were legalized as Chinese territories in the Sino-Vietnamese land border treaty of 1999.”

Vuving wrote that Ban Gioc and the Huu Nghi border crossing “are among the disputed places where Vietnam ceded to China in the 1999 border treaty. I don’t see evidence of China militarily occupying these places but they seemed to control them after the war. These two places are more symbolic than strategic. There are several strategic heights along the border where two sides fought for their control during the 1980s. Most of these were also ceded to China in the land border treaty.”

What Will Be Invaded Next?

It seems that the CCP’s territorial ambitions, viewed from its 1931 capture of Jiangxi Province to its latest captures of territory in the Himalayas, know no bounds. What’s next on the CCP chopping block? The Senkaku Islands of Japan? All of Taiwan? All of Bhutan?

Now that Russia’s military is absorbed in a war in Ukraine, might China grab Russia’s relatively undefended far-east? In 1964, Mao reportedly complained about Russia’s land grab east of Lake Baikal, a broad stretch of territory that is about a third of today’s Russia. Could such a claim be used as a basis for a future Chinese invasion?

What about the Korean peninsula? In 2017, Chinese leader Xi Jinping apparently convinced then-President Donald Trump that all of the Koreas used to belong to China. Was he testing the waters for a historical claim that could some day lead to an invasion?

Nobody knows what China or Russia will take next, because their dictators opportunistically change their stories depending on what they think they can take at the

moment. What is certain is that the Soviets in the past, and China today, have ambitions of global hegemony.

Western Reporters Fall for CCP Propaganda

After studying and personally witnessing China's military expansionism, it is unfortunate to read mainstream Western reporters, supposed to be experts on China issues, repeating without any caveat, critical perspective, or context, CCP claims that Beijing stands for "territorial integrity."

Recent examples, apparently caused by a perceived disconnect between Beijing's propaganda supporting "territorial integrity" and its silent support for Putin's invasion of Ukraine starting with Crimea in 2014, and continuing in a more violent and extended manner today, can be found in otherwise excellent reporting by The New York Times and Financial Times.

On Feb. 26, a New York Times reporter called Beijing "a staunch proponent of sovereign independence," which she contrasted with Russia's invasion. Other reporters took up the same theme the next day.

On Feb. 27 in The New York Times, a second reporter claimed that "state sovereignty and territorial integrity [is] a longstanding tenet of Chinese foreign policy."

The Financial Times on the same date referred to "Beijing's policy of support for global peace and stability."

None of this is anywhere near the truth, as should be clear from the history noted earlier, or most recently, Xi's supportive attitude towards Russia's invasion. There is no contrast between Xi and Putin on this point. They both want to steal territory, and they both deny it. China has consistently infringed on the sovereign independence, territorial integrity, and global peace of its neighbors and Asia as a whole, all the while claiming that it has a right to do so. Putin is following the same strategy in Ukraine.

There is one difference, however, and that is that Xi is a bit more powerful and cagey than Putin. The CCP thrives by creating or taking advantage of conflict between others, and stepping into the power vacuum that results.

This has been true since the CCP took power in 1949 after China's Nationalist government exhausted itself in a fight against Imperial Japan. The CCP largely sat that fight out in Ya'nan, and then took Beijing when the time was ripe.

Xi could do the same to Russia, after having encouraged it to destroy itself in Ukraine.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinas-propaganda-on-ukraine-seeps-into-western-mainstream-media_4305637.html

The New Cold War (Part I)

The Axis of Authoritarianism

Part 1 of the series 'The New Cold War'

Antonio Graceffo

February 28, 2022 Updated: March 1, 2022

News Analysis

The Chinese regime is determined to dominate the world economically, politically, and militarily by 2049, posing a greater threat than the USSR ever did. As alliances form around the globe, some analysts believe that a new cold war is already here, accelerated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The U.S. Department of Defense paper on Chinese military buildup states, "Beijing seeks to reshape the international order to better align with its authoritarian system and national interests, as a vital component of its strategy to achieve the 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.'"

World domination in multiple spheres was never on the table during the Cold War with the USSR, which was confined to the military realm.

In economic terms, it appears that China is on pace to overtake the United States. China's growth of 4.8 percent, while below the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) baseline target of 5 percent, is still considerably greater than U.S. growth. If it continues at this pace, Japanese researchers say that China's economy may eclipse the United States' by 2033.

Unlike the developing cold war with China, the Berlin Wall created a geographic delineation between East and West, containing the USSR behind the Iron Curtain. It

also prevented communication and trade from reaching beyond the Soviet-controlled areas.

By contrast, the United States is China's largest trading partner, with much of China's growth fueled by the influx of foreign capital. Foreign direct investment in China expanded by over 14 percent in 2021, and the United States is one of the top investors. Through the export of technology and a targeted program of economic coercion and social media disinformation, the CCP is able to project its ideas and influence around the world.

The CCP's foreign policy is targeted at building a "community of common destiny." Since 2019, the CCP has increasingly used its military as part of its foreign policy. In 2020, there was a shift toward building alliances by providing COVID relief; when this failed, Beijing returned to a trade and military-led strategy. China's economic expansion supports the CCP's military ambitions by providing money for investment, necessary for the modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as well as improving the country's manufacturing and industrial base.

The CCP Forms Alliances

China has 14 land borders, including those with Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Burma (commonly known as Myanmar), Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Vietnam. Furthermore, China shares maritime borders with Brunei, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Taiwan.

Beijing has had territorial disputes with most of these nations. The development of a regional pro-China block is not likely, as a result of the CCP's aggressive actions in the South China Sea, incursions in the Senkaku Islands, and territorial violations of Bhutan, as well as skirmishes with India, where Chinese troops fought, and were killed, for the first time in about 40 years. Rather than making China more secure, each of these actions simply drove allies closer to the United States.

Western confidence in Chinese leader Xi Jinping is low, with many worrying that international organizations—such as the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, and Interpol—are coming under China's control. In the United Nations, China has voted against intervention in genocide, including the genocide against

Uyghur Muslims being committed by the CCP. At the WHO, the CCP recommended the means to contain COVID-19, while selling the world the personal protective equipment (PPE) and vaccines to implement the plan. Xi offered Chinese technology to help upgrade Interpol's communications. He also claimed that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as "One Belt, One Road"), which will earn the CCP trillions in interest and construction contracts, is an international public good.

The CCP enjoys strong support. Consequently, Xi seems to be increasingly satisfied with obtaining allies through economic coercion rather than by winning friends through popular, soft power initiatives. Meanwhile, Russia remains the CCP's most powerful, potential ally.

In the weeks leading up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China and Russia formed a pact, in what may be the beginnings of two competing camps, allies, and opponents in a new cold war. The two nations have signed a 30-year gas contract. In the U.N., they have also united in voting down proposed sanctions on North Korea for missile testing.

The CCP plans to forcibly annex Taiwan, a move that only 7 percent of Taiwanese approve of. A recent joint statement, issued by Putin and Xi, says Russia supports China in Taiwan, while the CCP supports Russia in Ukraine.

Stephen J. Hadley, former national security adviser under President George W. Bush, calls the statement "a manifesto for their global leadership." According to the statement, the CCP also supports Russia to "oppose further enlargement of NATO." It did not specifically state that China would fight for Russia or vice versa, although the two nations are unified in opposing American norms and influence in the world. The statement explicitly declares that Russia and the CCP would build a coalition of like-minded countries, which Western observers are calling an "axis of authoritarians."

The second part of this series will explore which nations are being drawn into the axis of authoritarianism. Some nations are being sucked into the conflict unwittingly, simply by already being part of China's or Russia's sphere of influence.

Read part II [here](#).

Antonio Graceffo, Ph.D., has spent more than 20 years in Asia. He is a graduate of the Shanghai University of Sport and holds a China-MBA from Shanghai Jiaotong University. Graceffo works as an economics professor and China economic analyst, writing for various international media. Some of his books on China include "Beyond the

Belt and Road: China's Global Economic Expansion" and "A Short Course on the Chinese Economy."

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The New Cold War (Part II)

New Cold War Alliances Forming

Part 2 of the series 'The New Cold War'

Antonio Graceffo

March 1, 2022

News Analysis

Western economic sanctions may drive Russia closer to communist China, with their axis of authoritarianism expanding to include countries in both the Chinese and Russian orbits.

Although Russia and China are intensifying their alliance, they have no formal defense agreement. China's only official ally is North Korea. Nevertheless, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is building relationships with other authoritarian regimes through the sale of surveillance technology, and by providing training on how to control the populace and censor the internet. Through these and other economic interests, the countries expected to join China's side are Iran, Venezuela, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and possibly other nations that are part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as "One Belt, One Road").

Afghanistan is likely to support China, but it is not in a position to wage a foreign war. Many of the BRI countries are horribly indebted to China and may feel the need to vote with Beijing at the United Nations—but most are unable to aid China in a war and many would not want to do so. Cambodia has become nearly a vassal state of China, but again, the military capabilities of Cambodia are quite limited.

Beijing seems to be trying to project some soft power through participation in global organizations and events, such as the Olympics, but it is doubtful that it will win over any new allies. The CCP is facing difficulties as advanced, wealthy countries are unlikely to abandon the U.S. side to join the China camp.

Previously, the CCP counted on China's position as the world's factory and global financier to garner support. Now, however, it appears that industrial power alone will not be enough to help Beijing recover from its destructive diplomacy or its history of broken deals and aggressive actions.

Unlike China, Russia has official allies. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is comprised of six countries: Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The remaining Central Asian Republics, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, while not part of the CSTO, are clearly within the Russian sphere of influence. Additionally, the Central Asian Republics are dependent on trade with China, making it improbable that they would turn their back on the China-Russia axis.

Cuba is a Russian ally in the Americas. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel have discussed forming a "strategic partnership." In January, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Russian Television network RTVI that Russia may position military assets in Cuba if the United States and its allies do not yield on the Ukraine issue.

India opposes the CCP and has been moving deeper into the U.S. orbit, despite continued weapons purchases from Russia. According to a 2020 report by the Stimson Center, around 70 percent to 85 percent of Indian military equipment come from Russia. New Delhi has also been increasing its purchases of U.S. weapons, but India is unable to operate militarily without support from Russia, according to a 2021 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report.

This political ambiguity has worked for India, until now, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine may force India to take sides. So far, New Delhi has failed to condemn the invasion, and Washington is increasing pressure for India to join the rest of its allies in sending a strong and unified message to Russia.

Similar to India, Vietnam and China have an uneasy diplomatic history. Vietnam's hatred of China has been moving it deeper into the American sphere, although Russia is its largest supplier of weapons. While Hanoi has not specifically condemned the invasion, Vietnamese media are covering the unfolding events without their usual pro-Russia bias.

This leaves Vietnam as a bit of a wild card in terms of which side it will favor. It is possible that Hanoi's distrust of the CCP is stronger than its fondness for Russia. Or, the fact that the United States is Vietnam's largest trading partner may tip the scales in favor of Vietnam joining the U.S.-led alliance.

The Burmese junta has spoken out in support of the invasion. Facing its own set of Western sanctions, Burma (commonly known as Myanmar) is dependent on the CCP for trade and investment. The Burmese junta also purchases weapons from both China and Russia, as well as Ukraine, Serbia, and India.

In addition to selling weapons to Burma, Serbia has refused to join Western sanctions against Russia. Serbia buys weapons from both China and Russia, while the Russian Federation is Serbia's fifth-largest trading partner.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the European Union and NATO, including the United Kingdom, Germany, and Canada, have all signaled their closer alignment with the United States. In the Asia-Pacific, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Indonesia condemned Russia.

This leaves Russia and China with a bit of a rogues' gallery of supporters, mostly smaller countries with limited economic and military capabilities. Furthermore, even the partnership between Beijing and Moscow may become so plagued by sanctions that the CCP will distance itself from Russia.

Read part I here.

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The New Cold War (Part III)

US Response to China-Russia Axis: Building Alliances and Extending Sanctions

Part 3 of the 3-part series 'The New Cold War'

Antonio Graceffo

March 2, 2022

News Analysis

As the world's most influential countries unite in a harsh response to the Ukraine invasion, imposing crippling economic sanctions on Russia, the United States is attempting to break up the Beijing-Moscow axis, with possible sanctions on Chinese companies that continue to support Russia.

The United States has responded to the growing threat from communist China by establishing a China Mission Center and by enlisting allies to contain the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Department of Defense, and Congress are unified in their stance against China and Russia. CIA Director William Burns identified China as the agency's top challenge and priority, warranting the establishment of a new China Mission Center. Last year's U.S. defense policy bill of \$768 billion—the largest in history—specifically targets the threats from these two countries. The bill also underscores the need to combat disruptive technologies, particularly those being developed by China, such as hypersonic missiles, artificial intelligence (AI), and quantum computing.

The bill also includes \$7.2 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which is consistent with the U.S. strategy of geographically isolating the Chinese military. "Containment,"

“partnerships,” and “alliances” are words frequently used by U.S. lawmakers when discussing the need to cultivate allies to stand against the Chinese regime.

Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are beefing up their security to defend against Chinese aggression. The U.S. defense budget allocated money for joint training and patrols with these nations as well as Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, India, and other European countries.

The threat of the old USSR gave rise to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Today, NATO’s mandate has expanded to cover China. Other U.S.-led alliances focused on containing China include the Five Eyes, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad), and AUKUS.

Moving forward, the Biden administration plans to promote even “greater connectivity” between Western democracies, further expanding the U.S. network of allies.

Washington is also prohibiting investment in many Chinese tech firms, while banning certain Chinese technology from the United States. A more comprehensive crackdown on Chinese technology could have several positive effects. First, it would hamper Beijing’s propaganda efforts, particularly through apps and social media. And second, it would decrease China’s income, which would provide Beijing less money for military expansion. Moreover, halting technological investment between the two countries would prevent the regime from obtaining U.S. technology, stymying China’s advancement.

The White House has called China to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. So far, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has refused to refer to it as an invasion, and even abstained from a U.N. vote to force Russia to withdraw from Ukraine. The CCP has called on both parties to act with restraint and to reach a negotiated solution. In a recent statement, Beijing went so far as to say that it respects Ukraine’s sovereignty.

In the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, it appeared that the CCP would support Russia and that economic sanctions against Russia would drive Moscow deeper into Beijing’s orbit. Now, however, the CCP seems to be backpedaling a bit, but remains to be seen how far it would go.

Washington is expected to ask Beijing to join in sanctions against Russia. The White House on Feb. 24 banned U.S. chip sales to Russia and is preparing to put pressure on China to do the same. Cutting off Russia’s access to chips will severely hamper its ability to wage a modern war.

China is Russia's largest supplier, providing Russia with 70 percent of its chips through such firms as Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp. (SMIC) and Lenovo Group Ltd. The U.S. ban extends to technology made with U.S. inputs, regardless of where the actual components are manufactured, impacting a wide array of Chinese companies. SMIC could potentially be targeted for U.S. sanctions if it continues to export to Russia.

President Joe Biden warned that "Putin will be a pariah on the international stage. Any nation that countenances Russia's naked aggression against Ukraine will be stained by association." Although Biden did not name China, his meaning was clear. If the CCP refuses to back away from its support of Russia, the United States will prepare additional sanctions that would squeeze China out of its lucrative trading arrangements with Europe and other Western countries.

China remains the unknown factor in what may be a NATO versus Russia war. Consequently, the release of a U.S. national defense strategy document has been delayed, until it becomes clear if the United States will be fighting a war on one or two fronts.

Analysts believe that the U.S. response to Russia will impact the CCP's behavior regarding Taiwan. At the same time, some believe that this Ukraine crisis will strengthen Western resistance toward China's rise. And while the CCP may be looking at the U.S. reaction to Russia to decide its next move, the United States can look at Moscow's response to predict the CCP's behavior if similar sanctions and economic isolation are imposed on China.

Read part I here.

Read part II here.

Antonio Graceffo, Ph.D., has spent more than 20 years in Asia. He is a graduate of the Shanghai University of Sport and holds a China-MBA from Shanghai Jiaotong University. Graceffo works as an economics professor and China economic analyst, writing for various international media. Some of his books on China include "Beyond the Belt and Road: China's Global Economic Expansion" and "A Short Course on the Chinese Economy."

https://www.theepochtimes.com/us-response-to-china-russia-alliance_4312012.html

Sanction China for Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Beijing supported Moscow all the way—most importantly with an economic escape valve

Anders Corr

March 2, 2022

News Analysis

China's regime is stepping into the economic breach for Moscow. While the rest of the world sacrifices by rapidly increasing sanctions on Russia for its bloody invasion of Ukraine, Beijing works quietly behind the scenes to ensure that Russia increases exports to China, and that Chinese companies keep doing business in Moscow's empire.

This profits the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) with the blood of Ukrainian patriots. Xi Jinping is at least partially at fault as he apparently refused to discourage Vladimir Putin from the invasion in advance. And given the lack of Western action against China and Russia's depredations, why would he?

A military conflict between Russia and the West only weakens China's adversaries in America and Europe. Xi's promise of a "no limits" friendship with Russia just before the invasion enabled Putin's disastrous military conflict, which will open a power vacuum globally for Beijing.

Perhaps in exchange, during the Winter Olympics, Xi agreed to a 30-year contract for Russian export of gas to China, denominated in euros to mitigate the risk of dollar sanctions.

Last week, China opened new avenues for Russia's grain exports, including removal of import restrictions on Russia's wheat. Russian wheat exports are approximately \$7.9 billion annually.

The South China Morning Post reported on Feb. 28 that China's Didi Global tried to close its ride-hailing business in Russia after the invasion, most likely because it already operated at a loss. But apparently, the CCP pressured the company and Didi reversed its decision.

As Putin puts his nuclear forces on alert, Beijing continues to refuse to denounce him for the invasion, despite numerous public demands, including one on Feb. 28 from the White House, that it get off the sidelines.

Actually, Beijing is the quarterback.

While the Bank of China and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China reportedly restricted financing for Russian commodities after the invasion, analysts believe that China's participation in the West's financial sanctions only abide by the letter of the law, not its spirit.

SWIFT Sanctions Should Be Extended to China

Beijing knows the risk of secondary sanctions, which it wants to avoid given the West's current dominance of international financial flows through the SWIFT and CHIPS systems, which communicate and clear fund transfers. SWIFT stands for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication. CHIPS stands for the Clearing House Interbank Payments System.

These systems give the United States and allies unprecedented power to surveil and limit transborder financial flows. China knows this and is working to sanction-proof its economy by creating its own similar global systems based on the e-CNY, or digital yuan, and CIPS, or Cross-Border Interbank Payment System. CIPS actually uses the SWIFT system for communications.

If China succeeds in getting its alternative system into widespread use, and protects its physical and cyber functions, it will be hard to deter Beijing from a Taiwan invasion through the threat of economic sanctions.

While some argue that SWIFT and CHIPS sanctions should not be used against Russia and China because it will quicken the growth of the e-CNY and CIPS, this is false. China and Russia already know the risk of SWIFT and CHIPS to their unmitigated authoritarianism, and are working to proliferate their digital alternatives, which are ready and waiting in their embryonic forms. The more time they have to grow, the harder it will be to stop them.

Using SWIFT sanctions against both China and Russia now will nip e-CNY and CIPS in the bud.

China's Burgeoning Trade With Russia and the World Enables Aggression

The Ukraine conflict is further strengthening Beijing's economic centrality, as Russia is forced to utilize China for its international payments, giving Chinese bankers a chance to charge a commission—of perhaps as much as 10 percent if past China-Russia energy contracts, when Russia came under sanction for Crimea, are any guide. Furthermore, Beijing is likely to be in an excellent position as a near-monopsonist of Russian energy and grains, to push prices down through hard bargaining.

China had \$146 billion in trade with Russia in 2021, an increase of 36 percent over 2020. China imported about one-third of Russian crude oil that year.

China holds \$3.2 trillion in foreign exchange, more than any other country in the world. The dollar dominates its holdings. In January, it sold off \$28 billion of this, perhaps in part foreseeing Russia's invasion and the inflationary effect it might have on the world's hard currencies.

To further promote its own currency as a replacement for the dollar, Beijing is proliferating hundreds of billions of dollars worth of yuan currency swaps around the world, which by empowering China, empowers Russia and decreases the ability of the West to sanction either country economically for future territorial aggression.

In November, for example, Britain renewed its sterling-renminbi currency swap of ¥350 billion for five years. Such swaps put U.S. and allied economies at long-term risk, and could further enable Russian and Chinese aggression against Sweden, Finland, and

Taiwan, for example, all of which have been threatened in one way or another by the China-Russia axis.

As noted by economist Gary Ng in a comment to Al Jazeera, “With China’s support, the pressure on Russia will definitely be less, especially for financial linkages. This is especially true as Russia is isolated and China is the only country with meaningful economic size that can offer help.”

Ng said that “The real tricky moment will come if the US expands the scope and enforces secondary sanctions, which will become a tug-of-war between China’s support for Russia versus whether the West is willing to pressure or put secondary sanctions on China given its large role in global trade.”

Expand Sanctions on China If It Refuses to Sanction Russia

The focus of the West’s economic sanctions solely on Russia is forcing Moscow to cleave ever closer to Beijing. It is a win for China, and it shouldn’t be, as Beijing likely encouraged the invasion in the first place, and certainly abetted it by sharing U.S. intelligence with Putin in advance.

Economic sanctions for the Ukraine invasion should be against both China and Russia, which would incentivize Beijing to influence Moscow to pull out of its occupation.

Secondary sanctions are absolutely necessary to force China, as the dominant partner in the China-Russia axis, to immediately terminate the Ukraine invasion. Beijing has the power to stop the bloodshed. America and allies have the power to force China to do so.

Last week, President Joe Biden said “Putin will be a pariah on the international stage. Any nation that countenances Russia’s naked aggression against Ukraine will be stained by association.”

The same should be true for China. Any nation that countenances the CCP’s support for naked aggression against Ukraine will be stained by association.

The Biden administration must put its money where its mouth is. Unless Beijing imposes economic sanctions on Moscow equal to those from the West, let's impose the same sanctions on China.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/sanction-china-for-russias-invasion-of-ukraine_4307194.html

More Nuclear Weapons Are Required to Deter Russia and China

Reduce US vulnerability to Russia-China nuclear blackmail

Rick Fisher

March 3, 2022

Commentary

America has failed to deter Vladimir Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine. His looming military failure, and the coalescing opposition of the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), led to Putin's Feb. 27 order to put his nuclear forces on "high alert," a general nuclear threat against the United States and NATO.

Very soon, that failure to deter could extend to the Taiwan Strait.

Following decades of military buildup, Russia and China have simply lost their fear of the United States—they are not "deterred." This now justifies an immediate U.S. move to "re-MIRV" or replace multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) nuclear warheads removed from its land and sea-based nuclear missiles.

It is crucial to review how Russia and China have justified such a U.S. nuclear rearmament.

Against Ukraine, Putin massed a force of 160,000 or more troops and on Feb. 24 commenced a massive multi-axis invasion for the purpose of turning a neighboring democracy into a Soviet-era-like client state. A similar fate could await the Baltic States and even Poland.

Instead of adhering to the 2010 New START nuclear reduction treaty negotiated with President Barack Obama that committed both sides to a deployed nuclear warhead count of 1,550, Putin has spent the last decade building new nuclear weapons not covered by New START, like the Avangard nuclear hypersonic glide vehicle and the Poseidon large nuclear torpedo.

This is in addition to Russia's estimated 2,000 (or many more) theater nuclear weapons mainly threatening NATO, which may include new sub-kiloton "low yield" nuclear weapons designed to destroy concentrations of NATO ground forces or to obliterate villages.

Russia and China also have spent the last decade deftly assembling a military alliance based on clear opposition to the United States and democracy, and mutual support for their respective imperialist ambitions, including Moscow's restoration of Soviet-era dominion in Europe, and Beijing's invasion and destruction of the democracy of Taiwan.

Also, having for decades touted its preference for a small nuclear arsenal, by early 2021, it became clear that China had a new goal of achieving nuclear superiority. Building 350 or more missile silos, each of which could be armed with 10 warhead intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), along with more submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and intercontinental bombers, points to a possible 4,000 warheads by the late 2020s.

This may become the greatest ever nuclear threat to the United States, as Russia and China's growing cooperation over the last decade in "missile defense" could mirror a much more threatening cooperation in "missile offense" in which they combine their nuclear warheads for coercive or massive nuclear strike operations against America.

In one of his first major foreign policy decisions, in a Jan. 26 phone call with Putin, President Joe Biden agreed to extend the New START Treaty by five years to 2026, locking the United States into a deployed warhead count of 1,550.

However, should China and Russia proceed with their nuclear modernization and buildups, by 2026 their combined nuclear forces could exceed 3,000 warheads, which, along with their many thousands of theater nuclear weapons, would enable overwhelming nuclear superiority to blackmail or strike America and its allies.

To build a greater sense of fear/deterrence in Moscow and Beijing, it is necessary to reverse the U.S. nuclear reductions of the 2010 New START Treaty, which saw the United States reduce its deployed warheads from 2,200 to less than 1,550.

By some counts, if the United States puts three warheads on its 400 Minuteman ICBMs (now reduced to one warhead), and rearmed its 280 Trident II SLBMs on 14 Ohio class nuclear ballistic missile submarines, it could deploy up to 3,200 warheads.

To be clear, when Putin issued his Feb. 27 order of placing his nuclear forces on high alert, he was asserting his ability to use nuclear weapons to destroy Ukraine's democracy in the face of valiant opposition by Ukrainian military and mobilized civilian forces.

Putin made a vaguer nuclear threat in a Feb. 24 speech, warning, "Those who may be tempted to interfere in these developments from the outside ... they must know that Russia will respond immediately, and the consequences will be such as you have never seen in your entire history."

Putin was also seeking to deter NATO from providing Ukraine with new fighter jets, and to deter the United States, Britain, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Romania, the Netherlands, and others from providing new lethal assistance.

But what if U.S. and NATO efforts to supply a long-term resistance in Ukraine requires combat air support to ensure weapons and supplies cross borders into Ukraine, or even air delivery closer to the fighting in Ukraine?

While the United States has dispatched additional combat aircraft and will soon send 7,000 more troops to Europe, Biden, in his Feb. 24 press briefing reacting to Russia's invasion, stated, "Our forces are not and will not be engaged in the conflict with Russia in Ukraine."

Placing such limits on the scope of American military options may seem prudent to some, but to others it can be a signal that Putin is successfully limiting the ability of the United States to support Ukraine, even as Russian military forces indiscriminately murder civilians while trying to decapitate the government in Kyiv.

China's Xi Jinping, who may be preparing for an invasion of Taiwan by mid-decade, or sooner, will take note: superior regional and strategic nuclear weapons can help deter the Americans from defending their friends and allies.

To prevent Russia and China from deterring U.S. support, or limiting U.S. military options for defending its interest and its allies, it is necessary to build up the U.S.

deployed nuclear force to about 3,000 warheads by replacing those reduced after the year 2010.

It also should be considered that in this decade the United States may require the deployment of 5,000 warheads on ICBMs and SLBMs, and up to 1,000 theater nuclear weapons each for Europe and Asia. Britain and France should also be urged to increase their total nuclear warheads to at least 1,000.

There is much else that is needed to deter Russia and China. But the key to getting their attention, and convincing them to decide against war in Europe and Asia, is to build up U.S. nuclear forces to a far greater level.

Rick Fisher is a senior fellow at the International Assessment and Strategy Center.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/more-nuclear-weapons-are-required-to-deter-russia-and-china_4314370.html

Amid Ukraine War, US Rushes to Show Support of Taiwan to Counter CCP Aggression: Scholars

Nicole Hao

March 4, 2022

News Analysis

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought fresh attention to China's threat to annex Taiwan by force. Taiwanese scholars told The Epoch Times that the U.S. delegation who visited Taiwan this week protected the self-governing democratic island.

Beijing's recent launch of two military exercises made the atmosphere across the Taiwan Strait—a 100-mile wide body of water that separates China and Taiwan—more intense.

One military drill occurred from Feb. 27 to March 1 in the South China Sea, and the other from Feb. 27 thru March 13 in the Yellow Sea between East China and the Korean Peninsula.

Under such intensity, the U.S delegation's visit to Taiwan, had a significant impact, the scholars commented.

Two Delegations

The first delegation was led by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen. The group arrived at Taipei on March 1, and stayed in Taiwan until March 2.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen met with the delegation. Tsai's office said the group was dispatched by U.S. President Joe Biden, and their visit would permit "an in-depth exchange of views on Taiwan-U.S. cooperation issues in various fields."

The other members of the delegation were former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy, former White House Deputy National Security Adviser Meghan O'Sullivan, former Senior Director for Asia at the White House National Security Council Michael Green, and former senior director of Asian affairs at the White House National Security Council Evan Medeiros.

On the day the Mullen-led delegation left, former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his wife started their visit that ends on March 5, according to Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Pompeo's visit displays fully U.S. bipartisan backing for its 'rock solid' support" for Taiwan and the close friendship between Taiwan and the U.S., the foreign ministry said.

Pompeo led the Central Intelligence Agency from 2017 to 2018, before he was promoted to be secretary of state. On this Taiwan trip, he met with President Tsai.

Some Taiwanese scholars believe that the U.S. delegations' visit brings peace to the Taiwan Strait, although Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin claimed on March 1 that it is "futile for the U.S. to send anyone to demonstrate its so-called support for Taiwan."

Taiwanese Scholars

"[Sending delegations to Taiwan] is the quickest way to show the interaction between the U.S. and Taiwan. It shows that the United States is taking care of the safety of Taiwan. Taiwan is in a key strategic position in the Indo-Pacific region," Doong Sy-chi, Taiwan Thinktank deputy executive-general, told the Chinese-language Epoch Times on March 1.

Doong said that all members of the Mullen-led delegation are former senior security or national defense-related officials, in which “[the Biden administration] emphasizes to maintain the stability and peace [in the Taiwan strait].”

Yen Chien-Fa, a professor and director of the international cooperation department at Chien Hsin University of Science and Technology, said in a phone interview on Tuesday: “[The U.S. delegations’ visit] shows that Taiwan is the core of America’s Indo-Pacific strategy.”

Su Tzu-yun, Director of the Institute for National Defense and Security Research Military Strategy and Industry in Taiwan, told the Chinese-language Epoch Times that the Taiwan Strait is an important water for global freight shipping. To protect the independence of Taiwan or to keep the strait as an international water, the United States is defending the world.

“The strongest opponent that the Chinese regime faces [in the Taiwan Strait] is the United States. China’s military exercises in the Yellow Sea and the South China Sea are training the military’s response when confronted by the U.S. and Japanese troops,” Lee Cheng-hsiu, a senior assistant research fellow at Taiwan’s National Policy Foundation, told The Epoch Times in a phone interview.

Both Su and Lee said they didn’t think the Chinese regime would annex Taiwan at this time.

“Taiwan isn’t Ukraine. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a ground war. Any war in the Taiwan Strait will be naval and air battles. The Chinese regime has to assemble its troops to cross the sea, which will easily be defeated,” Su said.

Luo Ya contributed to this report.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/taiwan-isnt-ukraine-taiwan-strait-issue-is-us-china-duel-scholars_4310737.html

China Is Hoarding Commodities

The Russia-Ukraine war is strengthening China's economic power

Anders Corr

March 4, 2022

News Analysis

America and Europe surprised Chinese and Russian bankers. In retaliation against Russia's invasion of Ukraine, they froze about \$630 billion worth of Russian foreign reserves on Feb. 26.

Moscow suddenly couldn't utilize the hard currency reserves that it thought it possessed. It likely planned to use the billions to defend the ruble on international markets. Instead, the ruble fell about 30 percent against the dollar on Feb. 28.

Beijing is taking notice. Confronted with the potential lack of value of its \$3.2 trillion worth of foreign exchange reserves, the regime is quietly offloading dollars by purchasing assets globally, including most recently through an energy and commodities push.

Driven by compounding geopolitical instability from the Russian invasion, sanctions over the Uyghur genocide, pandemic supply chain dislocations, trade disruptions in the Black Sea, the Australia trade spat, and skyrocketing maritime freight costs, Beijing is acquiring critical commodities like oil, gas, iron ore, wheat, barley, corn, and gold.

Price appears to be of little relative concern to state-owned buyers purchasing materials to prepare for increasing expected commodity scarcities. Many commodities are already jumping in price over the last few days by 3 percent to 8 percent due to the war. Sanctions on potash from Belarus pushed China to pay 139 percent more for the fertilizer ingredient, now sourced from Israel and Canada.

On the other hand, the war sometimes helps China's competitive position. With Russia's new pariah status, Beijing has the bargaining power to denominate commodities contracts with Russia in its own currency, the yuan. Dollar and euro-trades with Russia are now increasingly illegal due to international sanctions over the war, so China's banks happily comply by shifting to the yuan. Russia has few other places to sell energy, so Beijing enjoys a buyer's market.

China previously purchased about 1 percent of its coal from Russia (approximately 30 million tons), for example, but if the Ukraine invasion continues, Russia will be forced by sanctions to attempt to shift 38 percent of its coal exports (approximately 76 million tons) from Europe and Ukraine, to Asian markets.

But two of China's largest state-owned banks now limit foreign currency loans for the purchase of Russian commodities. The offshore unit of the Industrial & Commercial Bank of China Ltd., for example, stopped the issuance of U.S. dollar-denominated letters of credit for purchase of Russian raw materials. However, yuan-denominated credit is still provided to some clients.

China purchases approximately \$60 billion of energy annually from Russia. Chinese steelmakers and power plants, which normally import extensive quantities of coal from Russia, are looking for alternative suppliers as their bankers advise halting purchases due to the risk of secondary sanctions against China.

China's increased purchases of grains and soybeans puts upward pressure on world prices, which are now becoming unaffordable to the globe's poor. As reported by Bloomberg on March 3, China imported \$34 billion of agricultural products from the United States in 2021.

Since November, in part as a result of what a December Nikkei report calls the regime's "hoarding," the price of soybeans increased almost 50 percent. Grain exports from Russia and Ukraine have ground to a halt because of the war and sanctions, increasing prices even more.

China, which has about 18 percent of the globe's population, has stockpiled over half of the world's grains, increasing prices so much that it is "dropping more countries into famine," according to Nikkei. While the rest of the world descends into war and chaos, China has wheat stockpiles for a year and a half, an official at China's National Food and Strategic Reserves Administration told reporters.

China is not just buying foodstuffs, it is buying entire companies, including a European meat processor in 2021 and a leading dairy in New Zealand in 2019. Between 2020 and 2021, the United Nation's food price index increased 30 percent.

The Beijing regime is also a gold bug. It mines much of its own, and purchases more on international markets. While officially Beijing holds 1,948 tons of the precious yellow metal, most analysts estimate reserves of between 10,000 and 30,000 tons, well above U.S. reserves of 8,133 tons. With so much gold, China could in the future back the yuan with gold, displacing the non-backed U.S. dollar.

China needs food and commodities for its economy, as do all countries. Its demand is a pull factor for more supply to emerge, which means more jobs globally. But China's approach is unscrupulously competitive, deceitful, and authoritarian, including through attempts at theft of natural resources and the monopolization of the scarcest commodities, for example.

If the world allows the regime to continue down its unethical path of self-aggrandizement, we do so at our own future peril.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-is-hoarding-commodities_4315859.html

Western Elites Unite to Condemn Putin—Would They Do the Same to Xi?

Dominick Sansone

March 4, 2022

Commentary

The Western world has united in its condemnation of Russian military action in Ukraine. Government officials, media pundits, business leaders and tech tycoons have all been quick to denounce what they perceive to be Moscow's aggression against its neighbor Ukraine.

Such a fact would seem to be reassuring for those who support a unified front against extraterritorial aggression by revisionist powers. That means that should another major military force seek to expand its borders or rectify historical grievances—say, the Chinese regime forcibly seizing Taiwan—a similar outpouring by a coordinated anti-aggressor coalition of business and political interests can be expected. Right?

Not quite. Those who believe that the world would come down on Beijing as adamantly as it has on Moscow should temper their predictions.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has certainly been in ill repute among establishment figures in U.S. and European politics for some time. In power since the turn of the century, opinions of Putin in Western elitist circles have steadily declined throughout the years. With plenty of other contributing factors, some major events include the following: the 2008 Russo-Georgian war; the passage of an anti-LGBT propaganda law in 2013; the 2013-14 Euromaidan movement in Ukraine, as well as Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine; and the alleged Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

These developments were certainly disturbing to liberal democratic sensibilities; however, don't let Western reactions lead you to believe that just because they purport

to denounce tyranny in Russia, this will always be the standard reaction to geopolitical power politics everywhere. This is especially true in regards to China, where the response would certainly be qualified by important factors, primarily in the economic realm.

To establish a baseline, consider these key economic indicators. The European Union—one of the most outspoken critics of Putin's move into Ukraine—has 11 times the GDP of the Russian Federation, as well as 3.5 times the population. Once the United States is factored into these numbers, the imbalance is significantly exacerbated.

The comparisons with China are quite different. In terms of GDP according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), the United States and the EU both land around \$20 trillion each. China, at around \$24 trillion, is larger than either separately, and still over half of the two combined. This presents a much more formidable economic force than the Russian Federation.

In terms of population, China (around 1.4 billion people) is still almost 2 times larger than the United States (around 330 million) and the EU (around 450 million) *combined*. Military and political considerations aside, the business world following a similar reaction to Chinese aggression as it has to Russia would equate to shutting the door on billions of potential consumers.

Patterns of trade are equally alarming. Russia is the EU's fifth largest trading partner, and the United States' 23rd largest. China, on the other hand, was the EU's single-largest trading partner and the third for the United States (although China was the number one country from which the United States received imports—for example, the most goods flowing into this country from foreign shores were Chinese).

Of note, Russia is the top source of imported gas for both Europe and the United States. Sanctioning Russian oil and gas has largely been avoided due to the deleterious effects it would have on U.S. and European energy security (or, rather, energy prices). The two regions have largely taken steps to reduce their ability to independently produce energy from dirtier sources—although some are now arguing for a change in strategy, with Putin single-handedly shaking the world awake from its climate dream.

The efficacy of sanctions is questionable in general, but targeting the sector that the Russian economy is built on would likely be the most effective approach. China, unlike Russia, is a preeminent economic partner for both the United States and the EU. If this is the level of resolve that we demonstrate toward a minor economic player, what type of response would China expect to see?

It should also be noted that although this article discusses widespread condemnation, a major section of the international community has not been as quick to sever ties with Moscow. Most prominently, there have been reservations among Middle Eastern countries. Russia's firm bilateral relationship with Syria was cemented in the crucibles of Damascus' own civil war, and Moscow's support for authoritarian regimes has reverberated throughout the region.

The Kremlin is a firm ally for those who value order and stability above foreign Western notions of human rights and liberal democracy. Iran is another major regional player that is firmly in the latter camp. While denouncing violations of state sovereignty, it is more likely to commiserate with a government that claims to have had its hand forced by the intervening Americans.

Additionally, the gas exporting Gulf countries have remained mostly neutral in their statements as they share important economic relations with Russia. Moscow as a major oil exporter plays an important role in OPEC Plus and its deliberations over oil production levels.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been continuously expanding China's economic reach throughout the world, as it seeks to increase its geopolitical influence. One of the primary avenues through which it has done this is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as "One Belt, One Road") investment project. Beijing floods developing countries with readily available capital that often leads to defaults and subsequent debt traps. This provides significant leverage over foreign economies and political administrations.

Should CCP leader Xi Jinping move to retake Taiwan, or commit to any other type of contentious foreign policy decision, it is easy to see many of the 141 BRI member states either abstaining from or voting no to a United Nations resolution condemning such an action. Conversely, many may actually express explicit support for their economic big brother in Beijing.

CEOs and Big Tech giants have gladly jumped into the current fray over Ukraine to denounce vague concepts of authoritarianism and despotic behavior. They may believe in what they say, but at the end of the day it is much more likely that it is their bottom line—not any abstract value assessment—that will likely dictate their business decision-making.

For example, consider a recent announcement by Apple that it has "paused all product sales in Russia" and removed Russian state-funded media from their App Store outside

of Russia. Jason Snell at Macworld puts together an excellent assessment as to whether large tech companies such as Apple would have the same response toward China in the event of Beijing seizing Taiwan. Snell doubts it, and I agree.

Supply chain considerations over factors such as product assembly and various other steps in the production process make Apple largely dependent on China. This is an important consideration across not only the extent of the tech field, but for the production of many other products as well. One need only look at the persistent and pervasive supply chain problems that the United States has had to deal with over the CCP virus pandemic.

A large part of this has had to do with the reliance of U.S. companies on China in their supply chains. Beijing's "zero-COVID" policy and its decision to often shut down production in reported areas experiencing an outbreak of the CCP virus are indicative of the type of danger that U.S. companies face by their overreliance on China.

Many in the Western world have been outraged over Putin's actions in Ukraine. The social media hashtags and public outpour of support for Kyiv has been constant since the announcement of the "Special Military Operation." This outcry has been supported by the U.S. political establishment and its allies in the mainstream media.

Without questioning the authenticity of these heartfelt cries for peace, one is left to wonder if the same reaction would ensue should the economic heavyweight China make a similar move in its perceived sphere of influence.

Unsurprisingly, many of these Twitter commentaries have been accompanied by a call for the downfall of Putin from the Kremlin. With the amount of vested interest that Western elites across the spectrum—politics and media, business and finance, sports and culture—have in China, would the response to Beijing's aggression be met with similar calls for Xi's head?

I wouldn't bet on it.

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Beware of the Long-Term Implications of a Sino-Russian Alliance

Jack McPherrin

March 4, 2022

Commentary

As anticipated, Vladimir Putin has invaded Ukraine. As also anticipated, the West has responded with economic sanctions.

U.S. sanctions alone include: asset freezes on Russia's primary financial institutions and key elites; restrictions upon these same banks from making transactions in U.S. dollars; substantial limitations upon debt and equity financing; import and export controls over military products and critical technologies; and prohibitions upon the Russian Central Bank from using its international reserves.

Most severe is the commitment to removing Russia's primary banks from the SWIFT network—the Western-dominated financial messaging consortium facilitating international transactions.

Russia's economy is already experiencing a substantial downturn. Putin knew this would happen, as the West continuously threatened these exact sanctions as a deterrent.

Putin invaded anyway. What does this tell us?

Some believe it tells us he didn't expect such stiff resistance, and would have behaved differently if he knew the damage the Ukrainian military might inflict upon Russian forces. This explanation is insufficient, as sanctions will remain in place as a punitive measure long after Kiev is likely taken. The speed at which Ukraine falls will have no impact on the Russian economy.

Some believe it tells us that Putin felt pressured to be perceived as the victor in a tense international standoff, whether out of pride or fear of losing prestige in Moscow. Yet, he

could have salvaged this by simply seizing Luhansk and Donetsk and declaring victory. Instead, he went for Ukraine's throat, and shows no signs of stopping.

Some believe this illustrates that Putin has lost his grip on rational thought; that he's reacting emotionally; that he's perhaps even insane. While possible, this is unlikely—Putin is a former KGB lieutenant colonel, and has always had a reputation for dispassionate action predicated upon cold, hard, and often ruthless logic.

So, what might have led such a man to feel comfortable launching a full-scale invasion of a sovereign country, knowing full well that international condemnation and isolation would swiftly follow?

Putin, like any autocrat, would be emboldened by the existence of an escape hatch, provided by the sheltering embrace of a powerful international player. He would act in such a fashion if he felt comfortable that his economy could survive, and even flourish, by replacing his ties to the West with new and strengthened ties to the East.

China, and its continuously growing network of allies and partners, represents that safe haven.

Just weeks ago, on the eve of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, Putin and Chinese Paramount Leader Xi Jinping released a highly publicized joint statement announcing a substantial strengthening of their economic and political partnership, recently dubbed by The Wall Street Journal as the "New Axis of Autocracy."

This China-centric axis has only become more apparent in recent weeks. It's not a coincidence Putin waited until just after the conclusion of the Winter Olympics to invade. In fact, recent intelligence indicates that China pressured Russia to wait, clearly illustrating the intimacy of their relationship as well as China's foreknowledge of the attack.

Moreover, China and many countries within its sphere of influence have avoided characterizing the Ukrainian assault as an invasion, have refused to join Western sanctions against Russia, and have even condemned these sanctions as illegal.

While it's likely that Putin's brashness is predicated upon the tacit approval of the Chinese, it also serves as a flashpoint for the global financial system, with sanctions hastening the development of a Beijing-based, parallel financial system. Interestingly enough, it was 2014's sanctions developed in the wake of Putin's first Ukrainian foray

that sparked the greater Sino-Russian synthesis, with Russia using Chinese assistance to help weather the storm.

In the time since, Russia and China have each developed alternatives to SWIFT in order to cast off the yolk of Western financial leverage. Russia created the System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS) in 2014, and China closely followed suit with its Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS).

Though SPFS is serviceable—and has just been officially launched by the Central Bank of Russia to help avoid the brunt of the sanctions—it's CIPS that has exponentially expanded. As of March 3, China's network now includes nearly 1,300 financial institutions from more than 100 different countries.

Russia and China are already discussing merging their nascent systems, which together would create a truly viable alternative to SWIFT and allow Russia to evade much of its current economic pain.

Yet, the ramifications of this transcend sanctions evasion. CIPS exclusively settles international payments in the Chinese yuan, supporting China's long-term goal of subverting and supplanting the U.S. dollar as the world reserve currency. Sanctions against Russia, according to a capital markets analyst quoted by Reuters, will therefore be "a milestone event that will accelerate the process of de-dollarization. Although it's hard to replace SWIFT in the short term, this incident is very beneficial to yuan's globalization over the long run."

The yuan has already risen substantially in popularity with Russian financiers, with Chinese bonds comprising 13.1 percent of Russia's currency reserves as of 2021, compared to only 0.1 percent four years prior. This has corresponded to a significant decrease in dollar-backed securities.

Sanctions will almost certainly galvanize further interconnectivity. And, Russia would add further to China's already powerful global influence, including countries such as Pakistan, North Korea, Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela, as well as increasingly strong relationships with India, South Africa, and Brazil. These countries and many others, some of whom are ostensibly close U.S. allies, have significant ties to CIPS.

China's goal is undoubtedly to eclipse the United States in power and influence. Replacing American dollars with Chinese yuan is one of their principal mechanisms for achieving this.

It would behoove us to tread very carefully, lest we directly cause the collapse of dollar hegemony, and suffer the incalculable domestic ramifications.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/beware-of-the-long-term-implications-of-a-sino-russian-alliance_4316981.html

Is Beijing Nervous as Switzerland Adopts EU Sanctions Against Russia?

Li Zhengkuan

March 4, 2022

Commentary

If the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is still contemplating on how the world will react if it launches an attack on Taiwan, perhaps the current Swiss sanction on Russia could serve as a warning.

So far, the European Union, the United States, and Japan have announced to ban Russian banks from the SWIFT financial network, and have frozen an estimated \$640 billion of Russia's foreign exchange reserves. At the same time, the United States has vowed to track down the assets of Russia's oligarchs globally.

Even Switzerland abandoned its traditional neutrality and adopted all financial sanctions imposed by the EU, including freezing the assets of key players in the Russian government and oligarchs in Switzerland. This move may not have much impact on the situation of the Russian-Ukraine war, but it scares the CCP.

Swiss National Bank data show that "Russians held nearly 10.4 billion Swiss francs (\$11.24 billion) in Switzerland in 2020." In contrast, the assets of senior CCP officials in Switzerland far exceed this amount. The difference is not several times, but hundreds of times!

The 2018 UBS/PwC Billionaires report indicated that "Chinese billionaires increased in number to 373 in 2017 from 318 in 2016 and their wealth rose by 39 percent to USD 1.12 trillion." This means that the combined assets of just four Chinese billionaires will greatly exceed Russians' total assets in Switzerland in 2020.

A report by UBS and PwC in 2020 recorded a combined wealth of \$1.7 trillion owned by 415 Chinese billionaires.

In fact, the data are just part of the overseas assets of the CCP dignitaries.

As exposed by WikiLeaks, Chinese corrupt officials “have more than 5,000 personal accounts in Swiss banks, two-thirds of whom are central-level officials from the level of vice premier, bank governors and ministers to central committee members.”

Many Chinese reports have also revealed the huge sum of money kept by the CCP overseas.

For example, Jiang Jiemin, former chairman of PetroChina, provided former security czar Zhou Yongkang and his family access to vast embezzled sums of around \$10 billion, funneled through Swiss banks, the Hong Kong media Apple Daily reported in 2013.

Miles Guo Wengui, a wealthy Chinese businessman in exile, revealed in April 2019 that former CCP leader Jiang Zemin’s family may possess as much as \$1 trillion in shadow assets and laundered at least \$500 billion overseas. Guo, who also goes by the name Miles Kwok, fled China in 2015 and now lives in the United States. He is known for his connections to retired CCP officials, particularly those associated with Jiang.

Hong Kong media Open Magazine reported that Liu Jinbao, the former vice chairman of Bank of China, confessed in prison that Jiang transferred more than \$3 billion to Bank of China Grand Cayman Branch between May and September 2002, ahead of the national meeting of the CCP’s rubber-stamp legislature on Nov. 8, 2002.

Swiss banks have been the first choice for corrupt CCP officials, as well as terrorists and criminal groups, to hide their dirty money. Switzerland manages as much as one-third of the world’s wealth.

Although Swiss banks abide by a code of silence and have gained the reputation of discretion, they gradually adopted common reporting standards as part of efforts to crack down on tax evasion and fraud.

With the Swiss government joining the EU in imposing sanctions on Russia, the move sends a message to corrupt CCP officials: your money is no longer safe in Switzerland. It would also make the CCP think twice about invading Taiwan, as China would suffer

devastating consequences from international sanctions. Just that thought would bring nightmares to corrupt Party officials.

Li Zhengkuan is a freelance writer who covers China's affairs. He started contributing to The Epoch Times in 2020.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/is-beijing-nervous-as-switzerland-sanctions-russia_4316593.html

China Engulfs the Gulf: Should the US Be Concerned?

John Mac Ghlionn

March 6, 2022

Commentary

In January of this year, the foreign ministers of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, along with Nayef Falah M. Al-Hajraf, the secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council, paid a visit to China.

They made the trip for one reason and one reason only: to discuss furthering trade and security agreements with Beijing. As Axios reported at the time, the “flurry of visits by Gulf officials is part of China’s push for deeper involvement in the Middle East. For Beijing, the Gulf in particular is key to its energy supply and increasingly to its geopolitical influence.”

China has spotted an opening, with “Washington focusing on the Indo-Pacific, and with U.S.-Saudi relations under strain,” the report said. Moreover, “there is a perception among Gulf leaders that the U.S. is slowly but surely pulling out of the region.”

Some U.S. officials, according to Axios, are extremely “concerned about the degree to which China seems to be moving in.” As they should. Slowly but surely, China is engulfing the Gulf. As China moves in, it looks to push the United States out and further cement its geopolitical footprint.

Before going any further, it’s important to get our definitions in order. By the Gulf, I am referring to the Persian Gulf region, which includes Iran, Oman, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Iraq. As the Persian Gulf region

contains half of the world's oil reserves, the importance of this area cannot be emphasized enough.

To really understand the significance the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) influence in the region, it's best to look at each country on an individual basis.

Saudi Arabia, as CNN reported in December, is now actively manufacturing ballistic missiles with the help of the CCP. At the recent meeting in Beijing, according to the South China Morning Post, Saudi's foreign minister discussed deepening "strategic cooperation" in the Gulf region, "where U.S. dominance is showing signs of retreat."

China's interest in the UAE, meanwhile, is already well-known. As The Wall Street Journal reported in November of last year, the Biden administration was understandably alarmed by reports that the CCP was secretly building a military facility at a port in the Emirates.

Beijing, we're told, is "ready to work with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to enhance political mutual trust and strengthen practical cooperation in various fields under the framework of jointly building the Belt and Road." Such "practical cooperation" involves the development of "satellite navigation, high-speed railway, automation, sea-rice, and smart robots."

With Bahrain, according to Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, "Beijing is willing to be a long-term and reliable strategic partner" and "deepen mutual trust and friendship." The CCP promises "to provide vaccines to Bahrain, work with the Gulf Arab country to keep international anti-pandemic cooperation on the right track, and ensure scientific and fair research on global tracing of virus origins."

If Wang is interested in tracing the origin of the latest virus that brought the world to its knees, I have a question for him: how about taking a trip to Wuhan? There appears to be a lab responsible for some rather interesting research situated in the city.

The CCP has made similar promises to Oman and Kuwait, signing a five-year cooperation plan with the latter.

In Iraq, Chinese companies have agreed to build at least 1,000 schools in the war-torn country. Iraq, like 70 percent of the world's other countries, is a member of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as "One Belt, One Road").

Then there is Iran, *the* problem child of the region. Of course, one cannot discuss Iran without discussing nuclear weapons. With U.S. President Joe Biden's Iran policy failing, and China reaffirming its opposition to U.S. sanctions, there's ample reason for concern. Iran is, after all, a country run by a brutal, somewhat unhinged regime. This, perhaps, explains its love affair with China, another country run by a brutal, somewhat unhinged regime. Recently, China and Iran teamed up with Russia, another country with a supposedly unhinged leader, to engage in war games. The unholy trinity appears to have the United States in its crosshairs.

Across the entire Gulf region, as we can see, Beijing's presence can be felt. More concerningly, the CCP's presence is growing. As I have discussed before, China already controls vast portions of the African continent. It also controls vast portions of Latin America. Now, it is engulfing the Gulf region, turning powerful nations against the United States.

Before we know it, communist China may very well control the world. That's the plan, one imagines.

John Mac Ghlionn is a researcher and essayist. His work has been published by the New York Post, Sydney Morning Herald, Newsweek, National Review, and The Spectator US, among others. He covers psychology and social relations, and has a keen interest in social dysfunction and media manipulation.

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China's Ballooning Defense Budget

Beijing leads an arms race in Asia that could spark war over Taiwan

Anders Corr

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News Analysis

China's defense budget will likely increase by approximately 7.1 percent this year, more than last year and the year before, and more than its expected GDP increase.

Beijing is apparently on the warpath, even as U.S. defense budgets have declined over 10 percent over the last decade, and could decline further under President Joe Biden.

The numbers that the regime provides for its defense spending, approximately \$229 billion this year, are not trusted by most serious defense analysts and many diplomats. They expect the real numbers to be much higher. The same goes for China's self-reporting of how many nuclear weapons it has, considered by military experts to be grossly underreported.

The Danger of a PLA Surprise Attack

Like Putin's war in Ukraine, be prepared for an unfortunate surprise. Eastern Europe wasn't engulfed in war when Moscow claimed it was just a series of military exercises. Then came Feb. 24's attack on democracy that shook the world.

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) is fast on the Russian military's heels. The PLA is developing and building nuclear warheads, hardened missile silos, hypersonic missiles, stealth fighter jets, aircraft carriers, and amphibious landing craft, which the

regime is apparently planning to use to conquer Taiwan, the South China Sea, Japan's Senkaku Islands, and large swathes of Indian territory in the Himalayan mountains.

If they take these territories, it will only whet Beijing's thirst for more.

The regime funds more fundamental defense-related science and technology development that some analysts suspect includes banned chemical and biological weapons.

Beijing, Moscow, and Pyongyang are already making veiled threats, with weapons of mass destruction, against the United States and allies like Australia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Japan.

Much of Beijing's defense spending is geared to defeat the U.S., British, Australian, Japanese, Taiwanese, and Indian militaries—all are actively working, sometimes well together and sometimes not, to defend their territories and allies.

America Forced to Forward Deploy to Asia

The U.S. military has been forced by Beijing's belligerence to forward deploy to the Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, South Korea, and Japan to defend these areas from China, Russia, and North Korea, which never really ended their belligerent approach after North Korea's 1950 attack on South Korea. That Korean War that resulted has never officially ended. The Armistice of 1953 is just a pause in hostilities.

The two main defense groupings that Beijing has set itself against are AUKUS, composed of Australia, the United Kingdom, and United States, and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the "Quad"), composed of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. These are defensive alliances that grew, reluctantly, out of the increasing need in recent years to improve deterrence against Beijing.

China Leads Global Defense Spending Increases

China's total increase of 7.1 percent in defense spending for 2022 is in line with its approximate 7 percent to 8 percent increases between 2016 and 2021. Between 2012

and 2015, the increases were even higher, at between approximately 10 percent and 12 percent, if China's official figures are any indication.

This year's Chinese defense budget increase is well above Beijing's targeted economic growth of approximately 5.5 percent. China's economic growth has fallen from its recent high in 2007 of 14.2 percent to 2.3 percent in 2020, according to the regime's self-reporting. Yet its defense spending continues a meteoric rise, compared to its neighbors.

The notion that a dictatorship's defense expenditure growth should be at or above its GDP growth only makes sense if the regime is seeking the territory of neighbors. That growth then fuels arms races, which is currently the consequence in Asia.

While the global average change in defense expenditures in 2021 was negative 1.8 percent, Asian military spending increased an average of 2.8 percent. An analysis of relative defense expenditures shows that China is the main aggressor and leading this sorry trend.

Between 2010 and 2020, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, North American defense budgets fell by almost 11 percent, while Central and East Asian defense budgets grew by 60 percent. Southeast and South Asian defense budgets grew by approximately 40 percent, and European defense budgets grew by about 14 percent.

As a percent of GDP, U.S. defense budgets have decreased from a high in 1967 of 9.4 percent to 3.4 percent in 2019. Yet China's propaganda consistently paints the United States as the aggressor.

Instead of seeing the American peace dividend as an opportunity to de-escalate global military tensions, Beijing and Moscow have trumpeted the "decline of America" and seen it as an opportunity to grab territory from neighbors.

As a result, the United States may have to abandon its post-1972 attempts at peace and engagement, which is a dangerous necessity in the era of nuclear weapons.

The likely U.S. defense budget for 2023 will exceed \$770 billion, driven just a bit higher year-over-year, even under a Democratic administration. The need to protect democracy in both Europe and Asia simultaneously is severely straining America's

patience and the U.S. economy, which is sinking further into debt. In 2020, U.S. government debt reached almost \$28 trillion.

The debt could eventually force the United States into relinquishing its role, since World War II, as a global guarantor of peace. This would be severely destabilizing, and force allies to increase their defense budgets significantly, or get taken over by Moscow and Beijing in the decades to come. Or the United States could seek alternative revenue sources for its provision of the global public good of security, for example, through a global tax of 30 percent on China's \$4.6 trillion in annual trade.

The Primary Threat to Taiwan

Taiwan appears to be the main object of Beijing's aggression, perhaps because it illustrates, for the world, the economic success that China could be if Beijing chose the path of democracy. Given the importance of Taiwan to the potential democratization of China, we cannot afford to be caught flat-footed as in Ukraine.

We must be ready to match and exceed anything that Beijing has to throw at this island democracy, which former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited this month. He rightly said that the country should be recognized for what it is—a sovereign and independent state.

It should also benefit from an official defense agreement with the United States, forward deployment of U.S. and allied troops on the ground, as well as an independent nuclear deterrent. We must pull out all the stops for Taiwan's defense. It is that important to the future of global democracy.

Yet the same cowardice in Washington, which led to a failure of deterrence in Ukraine, is leading to a non-recognition of Taiwan that opens the way for Beijing's aggression. That would more surely draw us into war than a policy of peace through strength taken now, while we still can.

The sooner we strengthen democracy's defenses in Taiwan, the Senkakus, and the South China Sea, the better, as China's defense spending increases yearly. The longer we wait, the more powerful the PLA is, and the harder it will be to recognize Taiwan or other objects of Beijing's aggression as more than a region that, like Hong Kong and

Crimea, has been brought under the thumb of the dictators and is being used against democracy, instead of in its defense.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinas-ballooning-defense-budget_4320049.html

CCP Exposes Its Fascist Nature Through the Chained Woman Case

Xiang Yun

March 8, 2022 Updated

Commentary

For more than 20 years, she was chained, beaten, and gang raped. Her teeth were pulled out with pliers and the tip of her tongue was cut off. She was treated as a birthing tool and bore eight children. She likely suffered more than what we know, but the regime will not tolerate the revelation of any more details. However, what we do know is enough to suffocate any conscientious mind.

The outraged public forced the Xuzhou city government to respond. But, several official statements were ill-logical and conflicting, their only purpose was to stop more truth from being told. Reluctantly, a provincial level investigation team was dispatched. But the first task of the team wasn't to find the facts about the perpetrators of the crimes, it was to find out who leaked the photo of the marriage certificate that clearly showed the chained woman was not the woman on the certificate.

Two young ladies wanted to visit the chained woman in Xuzhou, but the police kidnapped them like the mafia would do, and charged them with the crime of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”—a typical allegation towards any Chinese who tries to exercise their right to find the truth.

Among the demands for truth, we didn't hear comments from any Chinese public welfare organizations. All we heard was more more details about the police going after truth seekers.

Subsequently, there was a large-scale deletion of internet posts, deletion of online accounts, subpoenas, telephone warnings and threats, some universities and units

receiving verbal notices of “no discussion,” and so on—typical shady tactics used by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The 1989 publication titled, “Ancient Sins—Documentary of Women Trafficking in China,” which detailed the kidnapping of 48,100 women in just the six counties of Xuzhou, in the three years from 1986 to 1989, was removed from bookshelves.

The CCP’s state media, on the other hand, was overwhelmingly silent.

Dongji Village, where the chained woman was found, is now surrounded by iron walls, and all roads are strictly guarded. No one is permitted to enter the area, even if you are well prepared with documents necessary for travel during the pandemic, such as a negative nucleic acid test.

This fascist act by the CCP is blocking people from pursuing the truth and exposing the inhumanity, something that matters a great deal to hundreds of millions of Chinese people.

None of the entire CCP machinery spoke up for the victim—not the bureaucratic agencies, not the media, not the grassroots governments, not the social elites.

The crime of human trafficking has been rampant under CCP rule because the CCP has never cracked down on the criminals, even though reports of missing people have been constantly heard, and even footage of criminals conducting kidnaps in broad daylight posted online.

For such crimes to exist the CCP’s permission or endorsement would be required in China today. When the crimes of human trafficking have clearly formed and operated as a large national network, shouldn’t we ask how this happened?

When the regime started a campaign to crack down on underworld forces in 2018, it claimed the key emphasis of the was targeting the crime protection umbrellas. The size and ubiquity of human trafficking in China clearly shows the existence of a large umbrella, which the special campaign hasn’t targeted. Why?

At a superficial level, it is because the victims are civilians who pose no threat to the regime’s power or its vested interest group. But, public opinion about the chained woman has a different take this time. Local authorities’ statements only drew much wider criticism and cries for truth.

The cover-up of the chained woman incident exposes the CCP's fascist face and cannibalistic evil nature. People need to wake up and see that even clamoring and winning glory for today's China is deceiving innocent people both domestically and internationally, and whitewashing the evil conduct of the CCP.

The demise of the CCP is no longer wishful thinking.

In June 2002, deep into the Zhangbu River Valley of Pingtang County, Guizhou Province, a local Party cadre found a naturally formed boulder, inscribed with six Chinese characters that said "Death to the Chinese Communist Party," inside the local National Geology Park. Chinese experts confirmed that it was a rock formed more than 270 million years ago, and verified that the boulder fell from the cliff on the left bank of the river valley about 500 years ago.

Just as I was ready to conclude this article, the local provincial investigation report was made available. As expected, we didn't hear a word from the chained woman, whose true identity remains a mystery; all else was as stated in previous official reports, except for the so-called punishment of 17 relevant staff, in residence registration, marriage certification, and family planning, for negligent oversight.

If anyone accepts this token treatment of the chained woman incident, I would encourage people to read The Epoch Times editorials entitled "Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party" and "The Ultimate Goal of Communism."

These publications will help remove the toxic ideology instilled by the CCP from people's minds, will prevent the innocent souls from being deceived by the specter, and gain the blessing of God.

Xiang Yun is a freelance writer who has contributed to the Chinese edition of The Epoch Times since 2020.

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The Chinese Regime Treats Disabled People Abysmally—So Why Is It Hosting the Paralympic Games?

John Mac Ghlionn

March 8, 2022 Updated: March 9, 2022

Commentary

The 2022 Winter Paralympic Games are currently underway. This multi-sport event, currently taking place in Beijing, is scheduled to last from March 4 to March 13.

A whole host of athletes with a range of physical and mental impairments are competing, including paraplegics, quadriplegics, and amputees. In short, the Games cater to people with a range of disabilities.

It's odd, then, that China should host such an event. After all, this is a country where people with disabilities are treated abysmally.

China is home to at least 85 million disabled people. That's more than the population of California, Texas, and Illinois *combined*. The types of disabilities include visual and auditory impairments, as well as mental and speech impairments. Many of these people are maligned, mocked, and mistreated. Some are treated like caged animals.

As someone who lived in China up until very recently and witnessed many horrors firsthand, the horrific treatment of people with disabilities is not surprising. China's human rights record is, for lack of a better word, appalling.

In a rather sobering essay for Aeon, James Palmer discussed the injustices faced by those with disabilities in China. Raised pathways for the visually impaired, he wrote,

“often lead into dead ends, bollards, trees or open pits, or else spiral decoratively but misleadingly.” As for wheelchair access ramps? Well, they are “non-existent, especially outside Beijing or Shanghai.” What about guide dogs? They “are effectively forbidden from most public spaces.”

Palmer also criticized the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), whose many pledges often “go unfulfilled across the country.” Although laws state “that children with special needs are entitled to proper schooling,” no provisions for funding actually exist. Outside of the major cities, local authorities “regularly turn away children, telling them to go to ‘special facilities’ elsewhere.” But such facilities are few and far between, and tend to be “far out of their parents’ financial or geographical reach.”

In China, even the Paralympians that win medals for their country are mistreated. The author Emily Feng recently wrote a piece on Ping Yali, China’s first ever Paralympic gold medalist. After winning a gold medal at the 1984 Paralympic Games, which took place in Los Angeles, Ping fell on extremely hard times, both psychologically and financially.

According to Feng, the athlete “was paid just a fraction of what Olympic athletes were paid.” In a desperate attempt to make a living, Ping, who suffers from a rare birth defect of the eye that results in blindness, opened a massage parlor. That’s right—a blind woman who brought glory to China was left with no option but to open a massage parlor.

Disabled people often find themselves segregated, sidelined, and prevented from interacting with those without disabilities. According to Feng, only about 400,000 of China’s 80-plus million people with disabilities, “or, less than half a percent,” attend “public schools with non-disabled people.”

Which begs the question (yet again), why is China allowed to host the Paralympic Games?

Well, with corruption, it seems, the Paralympic apple doesn’t fall far from the Olympic tree. The International Paralympic Committee (IPC), just like the International Olympic Committee (IOC), appears to be inherently corrupt.

As the journalist Nick Butler has noted, the IPC is largely dependent on the IOC, “their big brother,” for “choosing, preparing for and—to a large extent—financing the Summer and Winter Games.”

As corrupt as the IOC is, at least its members recommended that Russian and Belarusian athletes should be prevented from participating in the Games (due to the invasion of Ukraine). The IPC, however, went against the recommendation, instead allowing both countries to send their athletes to Beijing. On March 3, a week after Russia invaded Ukraine, that decision was reversed. What took so long?

Is there any major organization that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) hasn't corrupted? From the United Nations to the World Bank Group, the NBA to the IOC, the CCP appears to have considerable global influence.

More worryingly, the CCP appears to have global appeal, especially to major organizations that value money over morals. These organizations, either unwittingly or otherwise, are helping Chinese leader Xi Jinping and his colleagues to paper over considerable cracks, the type of cracks that people like the above-mentioned Ping slip through.

Although Xi recently claimed "that persons with disabilities are equal members of society" and serve as an "important force for the development of human civilization and for upholding and developing Chinese socialism," his words ring hollow. Talk is cheap, especially in communist China.

Xi claimed that no disabled individual "should be left behind in China's drive to build itself into a moderately prosperous society."

Sadly, for the tens of millions of disabled people across the country, including those of whom have won gold medals for their country, Xi's promises of inclusion are little more than a cheap, painful lie. Propaganda masquerading as fact. Empty words masquerading as solemn declarations.

In a perfect world, no one deserving of help would be left behind. But we live in imperfect times. That's why China, a country where disabled people are treated in the most shocking ways imaginable, was awarded the Paralympics. Nevertheless, no one should be fooled by the charade currently taking place in Beijing.

John Mac Ghlionn is a researcher and essayist. His work has been published by the New York Post, Sydney Morning Herald, Newsweek, National Review, and The Spectator US, among others. He covers psychology and social relations, and has a keen interest in social dysfunction and media manipulation.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/the-chinese-regime-treats-disabled-people-abysmally-so-why-is-it-hosting-the-paralympic-games_4320921.html

A Financial Iron Curtain

Brian McCarthy

March 9, 2022

Commentary

With war in the headlines and market volatility at an extreme, you might have missed this tidbit in Monday's Epoch Times, entitled "China, Russia Trade Surges Amid Ukraine War": China's "exports to Russia rose by 41.5 percent in the first two months (of 2022) compared to the previous year to \$12.6 billion, topping growth with other countries, while imports from Russia rose 35.8 percent, customs data showed.

"After developing close ties in recent years to align against the United States and its allies, Beijing and Moscow announced earlier last month a "no-limits" partnership and no 'forbidden' areas of cooperation."

As if to reiterate the point, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated on Monday (as reported by Xinhua): "No matter how precarious and challenging the international situation may be, China and Russia will maintain strategic focus and steadily advance our comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era."

The financial sanctions enacted against Russia are unprecedented in scale and scope. While the ejection of seven Russian banks from the SWIFT global messaging network and the sanctions of five Russian banks by the U.S. Treasury Department will cause severe disruption to Russian trade, the big hammer was the freezing of the bulk of Russia's \$630 billion in foreign exchange reserves across all major currencies. All major currencies except one, that is. Russia's reserves denominated in Chinese Yuan remain unencumbered.

Despite the market-unsettling package of sanctions, the Western allies have actually stopped short of the true "nuclear option" in global finance: full secondary sanctions. The sanctions on Iran, for instance, prohibit transactions with any entity that does U.S. Dollar business with the sanctioned entity. The Russian sanctions do not yet impose that restriction.

Think of a secondary sanctions regime as forcing everyone to pick a side. The United States effectively tells global financial institutions that if they deal with the sanctioned entity they cannot in any way touch the U.S. financial system. It's us or them. To truly put a stranglehold on the Russian economy the United States would threaten secondary sanctions on any Chinese banks that deal with Russia.

But if the United States told the Chinese banking system that "it's us or them," who would China choose? They'd likely call our bluff, continue supporting their Russian partners, and watch the U.S. coalition crumble in the face of the economic catastrophe that would follow an attempt to cut China out of the global financial system. Russia and China together are "too big to fail."

This creates the potential for a gaping hole in the anti-Russian sanctions regime. China's trade statistics for 2021 show \$67.56 billion of goods and services flowing from China to Russia and \$79.32 billion flowing the other way. Russia has some \$77 billion in Chinese Yuan foreign exchange reserves, which are more than ample to facilitate significantly expanded bilateral trade.

While the disruption in global commodity markets is now at an extreme, as the media spotlight dims (as it inevitably will) expect China to act with increasing alacrity to arbitrage heavily-discounted Russian commodities, substituting away from alternative sources and helping to stabilize global prices.

There is also nothing to stop China from importing goods essential to Russia's economy, and then on-selling them to Russia at a mark-up. Expect both sides of the China-Russia trade accounts to balloon in the coming months.

The Chinese and Russian economies share an elegant symbiosis: the "commodity superstore" coupled with the most finely-tuned manufacturing powerhouse the world has ever seen, and one which is notoriously commodity-dependent, at that. That they're both authoritarian in political orientation and share a common geopolitical foe makes this a match made in heaven (or in hell, depending on your perspective).

China undoubtedly envisions greatly expanding a new, Sinocentric trading bloc. With recent events, the internationalization of the Chinese Yuan (an effort I have long been skeptical of) has gone from a pet project to an existential task. China's need to develop global financial plumbing that insulates it from U.S. soft power is now a matter of the utmost urgency.

Instead of asking, China is likely to start insisting that much more of its trade is denominated in yuan. Whether the sellers of the Yuan-denominated goods and services to China decide to invest in Yuan-denominated assets (or sell their Yuan for Dollars or Euro) is of secondary importance. China's first order of business will be to establish the financial plumbing as a "backup system," in the case of their finding themselves on the wrong side of Western sanctions.

That said, the desire of global sovereigns to hold yuan assets will likely rise as well. This is not a result of the RMB becoming more attractive as a store of value, but of the dollar becoming less so. The big knock on the yuan as a reserve currency is that a central bank could find its assets seized if their government ended up on the Chinese Communist Party's bad side. What's now obvious with the freezing of the assets of the Central Bank of Russia is that any nation at risk of crossing the United States is in a similar predicament with regards to the U.S. dollar.

Any nation that wants to maintain flexibility in global trade in the wake of a possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan must now consider establishing connections to the emerging Sino-Russian trading block. That means not only establishing networks for yuan settlement but, especially in the case of countries running trade deficits with China (i.e., most), also maintaining significant yuan reserves for liquidity purposes in the event of global finance moving to "dual track" systems.

In considering the potential size and scope of this Sinocentric finance bloc, include any number of pariah regimes like Iran and Venezuela, and myriad emerging markets along the Chinese "Belt and Road." We have the makings of an alternative economic and financial block that, while it might not rival the West in terms of economic output in a non-polarized world, could surpass the West in its degree of economic self-sufficiency in a polarized one.

Once a Sinocentric bloc is established with a greater hope of self-sufficiency in a bifurcated world than the Western powers could harbor, the power to cleave the system will rest in the East, not the West. The global balance of power will have shifted dramatically.

If and when the financial iron curtain is drawn across the global economy, we may well find we're on the weaker side of it this time.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/a-financial-iron-curtain_4324536.html

Putin Is Beijing's Plaything

China's 'unlimited' support gave Russia greenlight to invade Ukraine

James Gorrie

Writer

March 10, 2022

Commentary

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Contrary to the popular narrative coming from Moscow, neither the United States nor NATO are at fault for the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In fact, other than Russian President Vladimir Putin himself, Beijing—not Washington—bears much of the blame for Russia's invasion.

That will become evident in a moment.

But first, let's look at a few reasons that Putin has given for his invasion of Ukraine.

Putin's Realpolitik Rationale

One explanation is Putin's *realpolitik* view of international relations. Put simply, realpolitik views the world through a balance of power lens, and often in zero-sum terms, wherein one nation's gain in power is another's loss.

Balance of power analysis typically maintains that the more centers of power there are, the more difficult it becomes to maintain a balance among the nations and, therefore, the more unstable the world becomes. Such a state of "multipolarity," is inherently less

stable than either bipolarity, exemplified by the Cold War between the United States and USSR, or unipolarity, typified by the post-Cold War position the United States has enjoyed for the past three decades.

In this new multipolar era, nations' security challenges are more complex, making the world less stable. That's why multipolarity typically increases the odds of war breaking out. History bears this out, as both World Wars occurred in eras of multipolarity.

Putin's Fictional Non-Expansion Agreement

Thus, Putin views Ukraine's westward tilt as an increase in NATO's power at the expense of Russia's, as well as a violation of treaties signed by the United States, Russia, and others.

He's half right. On the one hand, adding former Soviet nations—such as Hungary and Poland—added power to NATO. On the other hand, according to former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who was personally involved in the negotiations, NATO expansion eastward was never discussed nor disallowed.

“The topic of ‘NATO expansion’ was not discussed at all, and it wasn't brought up in those years. I say this with full responsibility. Not a single Eastern European country raised the issue, not even after the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist in 1991. Western leaders didn't bring it up, either,” Gorbachev told *Russia Beyond* in an interview on October 2014.

Thus, no such agreement was ever made or even discussed. Putin is lying about NATO violating a treaty that never existed.

Ukraine's Interest Is Economic Growth

But even though Ukraine is not a NATO member, its national interest is in economic growth, not military power. If it were the latter, it would not have voluntarily given up its nuclear missiles three decades ago.

Still, Kyiv's preference to be aligned with the richer, liberal West than it does to Putin's autocratic, nuclear-armed Russia, which itself is an economic basket case, is a *de facto* loss for Russia.

The reality is that Ukraine can benefit from the West without being a member of NATO. In fact, NATO has no plans to put missiles in Ukraine.

Putin Clings to China for Relevance

Thus, Putin's real fear isn't of Ukraine's defection to the West, but rather Russia's declining economic power. Invading Ukraine is one way to capture economic output and resources.

So too, however, is aligning itself with China.

Beijing's pre-Olympic declaration of "unlimited support" for Moscow didn't happen in a vacuum. There is no question that China knew of Russia's planned invasion of Ukraine.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping blessed Putin's plans with promised access to Chinese capital, markets, and diplomatic cover for the invasion.

The timing of their mutual alignment is less important than the fact that both agreed to it. Russia's Ukraine invasion is an immediate outcome of China's support.

Now, with the West strangling the Russian economy in virtually every quarter—including access to \$630 billion in U.S. financial institutions, SWIFT access denial, and Western corporations divesting from Russia, as well as the announced U.S. boycott of Russian oil—Moscow needs Beijing's support now more than ever.

Putin Is Beijing's Useful Idiot

Furthermore, as noted in my prior post, Russia and China are busy setting up an alternative, non-dollar-denominated global financial system. This will purportedly help the Russian economy become immune to U.S. sanctions, but little else.

The truth is that neither Ukraine nor U.S. sanctions pose the greatest threat to Russia. Putin's authoritarian regime and its economic and foreign policies are what are destroying the country.

One other truth is that the longer Putin stays in power, the more Russia will need China, and Beijing knows it.

Thus, the China-Russia relationship is less of an equal partnership and more of a junior-senior one, with Beijing on top.

How could it be any other way?

What does Russia have to offer that China can't?

Why would China have any long-term plans to share global hegemony with Russia?

Not a chance. Russia is a dying country, fearful of falling behind the world in economic and technological power because it is.

Russia Is Beijing's Proxy

Still, Beijing is smart enough to leverage Putin's weakness and megalomania by supporting his ambitions of reconstituting the Russian/Soviet empire, even though everyone, except perhaps Putin, knows that such revitalization will never happen.

China is leveraging the partnership by having Russia wage a proxy war against U.S. interests (NATO) in Europe. Putin, acting like Beijing's useful idiot, is doing what China cannot do in Europe, which is to help dethrone the United States on the global stage.

Want more proof of the unequal alliance?

Beijing is benefitting from Russia's economic pain by buying its oil at a fraction of what the Europeans pay because it can dictate those terms.

And Russia is good with that, clearly demonstrating where the balance of power lies in its new, "unlimited" partnership with China.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/putin-is-beijings-plaything_4326599.html

Failures of Russia's Airborne Forces in Ukraine Are a Jolt for China

Rick Fisher

March 10, 2022

Commentary

It would appear that Russia's decades-long investment in strategic mechanized airborne forces has died in the battles over the Hostomel/Antonov airport near Kyiv, which has major implications for the Airborne Corps of China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF).

In the early hours of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 4, 300 elite assault troopers in about 30 helicopters, from the Vozdushno-desantnye voyska Rossii (VDV), or Russian Airborne Forces, attempted to capture the Hostomel or Antonov Airport near the capital city of Kyiv.

By capturing this large airport, the Russian Army hoped to pour in large Ilyushin Il-76 transport aircraft ferrying more troops and light armored vehicles to achieve an immediate strategic and psychological victory by "decapitating" the Ukrainian government and capturing its capital.

However, at Hostomel, poor leadership resulted in the decision to strike with Airborne Special Forces troops that did not have specialized lightweight armor vehicles. This was compounded by the loss of helicopters and a failure to quickly reinforce the VDV's "bridgehead" with heavier armored units.

Attacked by the 4th Rapid Response Brigade of the Ukrainian National Guard, and by BM-21 artillery rockets, the overwhelmed VDV troops fled.

This early victory provided a major psychological boost to the Ukrainian defenders and demonstrated to the world that Russia's massive forces were not invincible. It also encouraged most European capitals, even the perennially neutral Germans, to begin making new commitments of political and military material support for the Ukrainians.

Hostomel was captured by a Russian mechanized armored force on Feb. 25, but on March 3, a VDV 31st Guards Assault Brigade apparently failed in its effort to advance the Russian Army's goal of surrounding Kyiv.

They did not get far. According to Ukrainian government sources, 50 VDV troops died in two days of fighting just a few blocks into the adjacent town of Bucha, where 20 of their vehicles were destroyed by Ukrainian defenders.

Videos of the March 3 battle posted on Ukrainian websites showed many destroyed and burning specialized VDV lightweight assault vehicles, like the BMD-2, a 30mm cannon armed infantry fighting vehicle that can carry six armed troops and at 8 tons can be dropped out of an Il-76 heavy transport aircraft.

Images of many other destroyed BMD-2 vehicles demonstrate the utter uselessness of its aluminum armor against modern soldier-launched guided anti-tank weapons, like the American FGM-148 Javelin with a deadly tandem warhead, or the Swedish-British NLAW of which Britain gave 2,000 to Ukraine.

Fighting in Bucha saw the Ukrainians also dispatch the newer 13.6-ton BMD-4A armed with a 100 millimeter anti-tank missile launching gun. Other images show abandoned BTR-MDM dedicated troop carriers that are based on the chassis of the BMD-4A.

While much of the poor performance of the VDV in Ukraine is due to parlous leadership, the failure of its lightweight vehicles is likely a shock to the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Since the late 1990s, the PLA has used Russian instruction, training, and technology to build its Airborne Forces as a light, mechanized force capable of strategic missions.

As was the Russian intent, the PLA hopes that it can capture civilian and military airfields near Taiwan's capital city of Taipei in order to "decapitate" its national leadership and produce a rapid conquest of the democratic island nation.

In order to pacify Taiwan, the PLA needs to transport millions of troops and occupation forces, meaning, the capture of airports is essential to China's success.

By 2004, PLA Airborne units were being equipped with the 8-ton air-droppable ZBD-04, an aluminum armored and 30mm cannon armed infantry fighting vehicle patterned after the BMD-2, which the PLA did not want to purchase.

But at the 2018 Zhuhai Airshow, the PLA revealed both a new 100mm gun armed version of the ZBD-04, and that it had developed an air-droppable six-wheel small truck capable of firing 107mm artillery rockets. This truck may soon also be armed with a 122mm artillery system and the long range HJ-10 guided anti-armor missile.

The show also revealed the Norinco VN-3, a 5- to 6-ton four-wheeled, 30mm cannon armed, very lightweight infantry fighting vehicle, which can be expected to be produced in several versions.

The PLA Ground Force has also invested heavily in helicopter-borne Air Assault brigades and has developed a family of six- and eight-wheeled 1- to 2-ton all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), transportable by helicopter.

The Norinco Lynx family of ATV fighting vehicles, versions of which can be armed with heavy machine guns, 107mm artillery rockets, and 82mm or 120mm mortars, turn heliborne forces into very lightweight, mechanized units.

But Norinco's ATV fighting vehicles lack armor protection for their crew, and the larger VN-3 and ZBD-04 vehicles also feature lightweight armor that is highly vulnerable to modern U.S. and Western guided anti-tank missiles.

According to open-source reports, Taiwan may have purchased about 1,000 Javelin anti-tank missiles that would be deadly to PLA Airborne and Air Assault brigade mechanized forces.

Taiwan is building its own lighter, soldier-launched anti-armor weapons, but likely requires many thousands more of these, and missiles like Javelin, to put the fear of a Ukraine-like disaster into the PLA Airborne Corps and Air Assault units.

It is also likely that following the Russian VDV failures in Ukraine, the PLA Airborne Corps will be investing heavily in active protection system countermeasures to defend against anti-tank missiles.

The PLA may also transport larger numbers of its heavier 30-ton medium-weight combat vehicles to support its airborne forces, which already equip many PLA Ground Force medium-weight brigades.

But for now, the PLA appears to be ignoring the bad news from Ukraine.

On March 2, a show about military issues on Chinese state television ran a segment showing lightly armed Airborne Corps troops conducting a night jump from their relatively new Xian Y-20 heavy transport aircraft—even in Ukraine, similar Russian airborne forces have already met repeated disaster.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/failures-of-russias-airborne-forces-in-ukraine-are-a-jolt-for-china_4329678.html

China Bet on Russia: Why Does the CCP Think It Will Always Win?

Guermantes Lailari

March 10, 2022

Commentary

Most people know that Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin have a special relationship.

China and Russia sealed that relationship by issuing a 5,000-word Joint Statement on Feb. 4 (a few weeks before the Russian invasion of Ukraine). They also signed a \$117.5 billion petrochemical deal, and had a photo op at the beginning of the Winter Olympics.

There appears to be two possible outcomes regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine: Putin forces Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to renounce any future Ukrainian intent to join NATO or any Western alliance; or Russia fully withdraws.

How is it that with either outcome, China wins?

Russia Wins—China Wins

First, if Russia achieves its objectives in Ukraine, it is clear that severe sanctions against Russia were ineffective because the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) did not enforce sanctions against Russia, due to commitments laid out in the Feb. 4 Joint Statement.

Second, Russian reliance on China to mitigate the sanctions effects enabled China to control Russia's currency. In effect, the CCP will have its hands around Putin and the Russian economy's neck—a good position for a formerly feudal communist state. To punish China for supporting Russia would probably be too painful for the rest of the world economies to implement because of the many co-dependencies.

The only way for Putin to remove the CCP from determining Russian foreign and domestic policy is to withdraw from Ukraine, and to accept harsh sanctions to rebuild Ukraine and the embarrassment of failure—all of which could lead to Putin's demise or at least loss of power. In other words, in Lorenzo Dow's famous words, Putin is "damned if you do and damned if you don't."

Russia Loses—China Wins

If Russia is forced to withdraw from Ukraine, Russia will have to continue to deal with the harsh sanctions and, like Germany after World War II, will have to pay costly reparations to Ukraine. This situation will greatly weaken Russia, and China could take advantage of these circumstances by forcing new Russian trade concessions.

For example, Russian natural resources could be taken over by the CCP as payment to stabilize the ruble. Other resources, such as the massive water reserves close to the Russia-China border, could be sold to China at a depressed price.

Finally, if and when Putin is removed (through natural or unnatural causes), the CCP could install a puppet leader to facilitate Russia becoming subservient to CCP diktats. In this scenario, "greater China" would become mostly self-sufficient (Xi's dual-circulation economic strategy could be employed to its maximum extent), and the rest of the world would have an uber-superpower to deal with.

Needed: Wise Leaders

In summary, based on the above analysis, "Russia loses and China wins" appears to be a likely scenario since the Russian military has captured only a small amount of Ukrainian territory since Feb. 24. The Ukrainian military appears to be fighting fiercely and is being resupplied by NATO and others.

The rest of the world should ensure that whatever the outcome, Russia does not become a vassal state of China. It is possible that the CCP determined that regardless of the outcome of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it planned to win.

We must learn from the mistakes of World War I and prevent Russia from imploding by stabilizing its economy and encouraging it to join the rest of the free world, just as we did to Japan and Germany after World War II.

Without some very wise leaders seeing the folly of further humiliating a weakened Russia, we will end up with an over-empowered CCP, which would have disastrous consequences for the foreseeable future of mankind.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-bet-on-russia-why-does-the-ccp-think-it-will-always-win_4327134.html

China Hacks America Again

Millions vulnerable, including states using agricultural software

Anders Corr

March 11, 2022

News Analysis

China is hacking into state governments in the United States, stealing sensitive data, and propagandizing the world with disinformation that favors Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The regime most recently hit at the heart of America, in part, by using an obscure livestock app called USAHERDS. Cowboys everywhere should strap-on their chaps, saddle up, and get ready to rumble.

The most recent hacks could have targeted any state government in the United States such as Texas, Nebraska, California, or Alaska. Few know which states were breached, as the American company that discovered the breaches is keeping mum. The company is called Mandiant, which Google will purchase for \$5.4 billion, according to a March 9 announcement.

What we do know is that the hackers left digital fingerprints that have APT41 written all over them. APT41 is China's regime-backed hacking group, made infamous when the U.S. Justice Department indicted five of its members in 2020.

APT41 hacks for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), but also for criminal profit, across the United States, Europe, and Asia. France, Britain, Australia, and Chile are all targets. The CCP hackers conduct cyberespionage and cybercrime, including ransomware and the theft of virtual currency. They go beyond normal methods to insert their code surreptitiously into automatic updates to software you may already have on your computer.

Most recently, the hackers used vulnerabilities in normal programs that professionals use, including not only USAHERDS, used by 18 U.S. states, but Log4J, loaded on millions of computers worldwide that run online services.

“It’s very unnerving to see this group everywhere,” Mandiant analyst Rufus Brown told Wired Magazine. “APT41 is going after any external-facing web application that can give them access to a network. Just very persistent, very continuous targeting.”

Naive institutions that didn’t take quick action after a Dec. 10 warning from the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), likely got hijacked. The warning probably alerted some of the CCP’s hacker army as well.

Within hours they set about using the vulnerability for its own malign purposes, including “credential harvesting” that steals passwords and “backdoor code” implantations that provide hackers with ongoing access to victimized computers.

While much of the world focuses on the cyberthreat from Russia, given the Ukraine invasion and recent warnings from the government about an increased Russian hacker threat, the latest APT41 hack should remind us that the bigger long-term danger emanates from Beijing.

The CCP buys its way into computers as well, most recently by purchasing 21 Facebook ads in Azerbaijan, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and likely, many other countries. These ads repeat Russian propaganda about the Ukraine war, including anti-NATO messaging.

Another CCP campaign augments Russian conspiracy theories about “dangerous” U.S. biolabs in Ukraine. This propaganda could be part of a false flag operation to blame the United States for any future use, by Russia, of chemical or biological weapons.

On March 9, the U.S. State Department denied the allegations. “The United States does not own or operate any chemical or biological laboratories in Ukraine, it is in full compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention, and it does not develop or possess such weapons anywhere. It is Russia that has active chemical and biological weapons programs and is in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention.”

The American public needs more transparency about not only the threat from Russia, which is increasingly serious, but from China as well. The U.S. State Department should

denounce not only Russia, but China for its Ukraine-related propaganda against the United States.

Google should also be more transparent, fully disclosing to the public the states that APT41 breached to put them on public notice: improve cybersecurity or get voted out of office.

The Chinese regime's global hacking and propaganda campaigns make clear that its organizations are criminal actors coordinating with other rogue states against democracy. Their links to Russia, Iran, and North Korea—all of which use hacking and propaganda as tools of illiberality—show that we need better protections of American and allied businesses and local governments. We should more effectively exclude these countries' hackers from the global internet.

The U.S. Justice Department's indictment of the five APT41 hackers in 2020 was in absentia, meaning that none of them were around to actually get convicted and serve time. Clearly, such symbolic slaps on the wrist are ineffective.

It's time for the spirit of the American cowboy to bring out bigger guns: economic sanctions against the entire Chinese economy, only to be removed when the regime stops its hacking of America's information privacy and ends its dangerous propagandizing, once and for all.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-hacks-america-again_4328650.html

China's Complex Russia Calculation

Beijing pays lip service to the West as it continues to enable Russia's military operations

James Gorrie

Writer

March 14, 2022

Commentary

Beijing is trying to play a clever game by supporting Russia's war in Ukraine while balancing its actions and rhetoric, in light of the West's surprisingly strong reaction to the invasion.

Make no mistake about it, although progress has been slower than anticipated, barring any unforeseen developments, Russia will prevail in this conflict with Ukraine. Furthermore, Beijing will not condemn its Russian partner after describing the partnership between the two nations as "rock solid."

Beijing is, therefore, attempting to maintain credibility in the West, where its economic interests are enormous, and with its expansive and forward-looking alliance with Russia.

A Mixed-Bag Alliance

That said, Beijing's support for Moscow is complex, with a blend of advantages and disadvantages.

For example, Beijing wants to minimize the economic impact of the sanctions on Russia, and yet will not go as far as sacrifice its own economic interests to help Moscow

weather the sanctions. That's understandable. With its diminishing foreign currency reserves and shrinking markets in Europe, China itself is becoming more economically vulnerable.

Furthermore, no matter how much it tries to play both sides, Beijing has lost much of its goodwill with Europe and the West through its toxic trade policies, rampant technological theft, as well as its support of Russia's invasion.

No one seriously believes Beijing's assertions that it wants peaceful coexistence or to move beyond a "Cold War mentality" as it fully supports an unprovoked war in Ukraine. The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) objective is to replace America and rule the world, and everybody knows it.

Russia Embraces China

At the same time, the invasion has driven Russia deeper into China's arms. That shouldn't surprise anyone, least of all either nations. They formed their alliance well before the invasion and likely planned it together as a pushback against U.S. power.

But now that it's under extensive economic sanctions from the West, Russia needs China more than ever. More than 300 Western corporations have withdrawn from Russia in the past two weeks—from airlines to fast food, to internet firms—crushing the Russian economy.

For example, Moscow is relying upon China's telecom giant Huawei to fill the digital isolation gap left by Western internet service providers. Russia has virtually nowhere else to turn for internet service and other necessary digital capabilities.

Possible Ukraine Outcomes

In a geopolitical context, the outcome in Ukraine could go a few different ways. A destabilized Europe with strained U.S.-relations and diminished U.S. influence, for example, could be a big win for both Beijing and Russia. It could render NATO irrelevant if non-existent.

If, however, NATO somehow grows stronger and helps Ukraine to repel Russia, it could quickly expand the war. Indeed, Russian President Vladimir Putin may already be doing so with up to 16,000 Syrian fighters on their way to Ukraine. But if Ukraine somehow remains independent, it would lead to further losses for both Beijing and Moscow in terms of European market access and influence around the world.

Such an outcome may well depend on Europe's desire or capability to push back against Moscow and the ability of the United States to strengthen the Atlantic relationship rather than looking weak on the world stage.

A third and very favorable outcome would be for Russia to consolidate its gains in Crimea, establish client states in Luhansk and Donetsk, and enforce neutrality of what's left of Ukraine. This would give Russia a big win without triggering a wider conflict and NATO a way out.

Advantages Accrue to Both Moscow and Beijing

One advantage that the invasion does give China, however, is insight into how Beijing may prepare for, or even avoid, the problems that Russia is dealing with, should the Chinese regime invade Taiwan. The extent of that advantage is not clear, however.

Another advantage is the fact that trade between the two has skyrocketed by almost 40 percent over last year, to about \$147 billion. It's a crucial, mutually beneficial relationship. As the world's largest importer of food, China needs Russian food and its resources. Recent trade deals include China importing Russian oil, gas, coal, and grain. As the world's largest wheat exporter, it's more critical for Russia more than ever.

Conversely, Russia needs China's financial assistance, as well as its high-tech expertise and consumer products. For example, China's UnionPay payment system, which competes with Mastercard and Visa, is being adopted by Russia.

At the same time, the Russia-China axis is strategic in scope, intended to challenge the current liberal order led by the United States in Europe and in the Asia Pacific region, both militarily and economically. China's cross-border interbank payment system (CIPS) is designed to replace the SWIFT system. This would provide immunity to U.S. financial sanctions. Other nations wishing to avoid U.S. control over their economies will welcome an alternative to SWIFT, as well.

Conflicting Goals

As noted earlier, on the one hand, China is trying to balance its relationships with the current global leaders, and on the other hand, leverage its partnership with Russia. Some view Russia as the more powerful part of the alliance, but Russia's aggression belies its desperation, not its superiority.

One key point with regard to the power relationship is to consider in the China-Russia alliance is where the interests of each partner lie, both in the short and long terms.

In the short term, Russia's interests include conquering Ukraine, resuscitating its economy, and possibly conquering former satellites of the former USSR. China's interests are deposing U.S. global financial control and possibly taking control of Taiwan.

In the long term, Russia wants to dominate Europe, while China wants to push the United States out of the Asia-Pacific region as well as dominate Europe. That would include, by the way, Russia.

In the meantime, both nations face some similar challenges.

For example, at the macro level, both are facing stiff economic challenges. China desperately needs to shift its economy from debt-based real estate development to domestic consumption. Russia's economic implosion is vastly more dramatic and makes it the weaker of the two.

At the micro level, both governments essentially rule their respective countries via dictatorship.

Perhaps not so coincidentally, both have grown more isolated on the world stage. As noted in an earlier post, Chinese leader Xi Jinping hasn't left Beijing in over two years. He may well be facing internal challenges within the CCP. Meanwhile, Putin is holed up in a mountain bunker.

As in all wars, there are outcomes both anticipated and unexpected. But ultimately, it appears that China—not Russia—has the most to gain and to lose from the war in Ukraine.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinas-complex-russia-calculation_4332044.html

China's Tech Companies Amplify Russian Propaganda on Ukraine

Punish them in the markets—and with sanctions

Anders Corr

March 14, 2022

News Analysis

China's state media, including its most serious news outlets, the People's Daily and China Daily, are amplifying Russian propaganda on the war in Ukraine, including anti-American and anti-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) narratives.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has gone so far as to compare the situation to Taiwan and justify, in the nationalist tabloid Global Times, an invasion of that island democracy.

The CCP-controlled media in China labels Vladimir Putin's invasion a "special military operation" to stop what Moscow's disinformation calls a "genocide" of Russians in Ukraine and "NATO expansion" that supposedly threatens Russia and China. This propagandistic twisting of the truth whitewashes Putin's bloody and unprovoked war against a sovereign state into something one might expect a doctor to perform.

Here the CCP's disinformation is at its worst, given that Moscow has destroyed multiple hospitals in Ukraine, including children's and maternity hospitals. Beijing is using its power of censorship to misuse its own tech companies, forcing them to scrub Chinese social media of attempts by regular Chinese citizens to provide alternative perspectives, including by drawing attention to the bombing of these hospitals, along with the destruction of schools and apartment buildings.

China's propaganda apparatus is, perhaps most flagrantly, promoting Russia's story that the United States funds a Ukrainian biological weapons lab in the country. A favorite technique of Russian propagandists is to twist the truth of a legitimate story, for example, the statement by U.S. Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland about a biological lab whose materials would be dangerous if captured by Russians, to falsely claim that the lab was engaged in U.S.-sponsored weapons research. This claim is of course false, and Nuland said no such thing.

Central to China's take on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, from its official statements to its censored and filtered social media, is an anti-American and anti-NATO subtext.

"In diplomatic statements and social-media discussions alike, Russia's war on Ukraine is rationalized as a necessary step for resisting Western (and mainly U.S.) aggression," wrote Maria Repnikova and Wendy Zhou in the Atlantic on March 11. "Chinese officials have never explicitly endorsed Russia's invasion, but they have explained this conflict as reverberating from military escalation triggered by the United States."

U.S. officials rightly reply that Moscow is "flat-out" lying in its propaganda. But Russia's lies, when amplified by a global propaganda and disinformation network that is both diverse and layered in its approach, are pervasive enough to confuse the public in many countries—including democracies like France, Germany, Britain, Canada, India, Bangladesh, and of course the United States—to keep them from effective measures that unify the democracies and their allies, and contain Moscow and Beijing's violent and global ambitions.

China's tech giants—including Sina Weibo, Tencent, and ByteDance—are forced by the CCP to participate in the Russian disinformation campaigns by promoting Moscow's story and scrubbing any views sympathetic to Ukraine. Many of these companies enjoy large-scale investment from the West, including through passive institutional funds that supposedly subscribe to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles of investing.

But investors are starting to see the writing on the wall for China. Last week was one of the worst in a year for Chinese stocks and bonds, including the tech stocks that promote Moscow and Beijing's destructive propaganda.

Institutional investors in the United States and Europe are drastically reducing their exposure to Chinese assets, many of which could be delisted in the United States due to their failure to comply with Securities and Exchange Commission accounting requirements, or sanctioned for their participation in not only genocide against Uyghurs

and others in China, but now for deepening or continuing their engagement with Russia's economy.

This is added to downward pressure on Chinese assets due to increasing coronavirus cases, a housing slump, rising commodity prices, and problems for companies seeking to sell shares in Hong Kong. Chinese assets are also negatively affected by a more generalized downward pressure from monetary tightening by the U.S. Federal Reserve, which will pull money out of non-U.S. government assets internationally, and into the safe harbor of U.S. treasuries.

The Fragrant Harbor's Hang Seng Index was down 5.6 percent last week, with its tech stocks down 11 percent. Tencent and Alibaba suffered in the trading, which reflects regulatory overreach that is now extending to an increasingly recognized misuse of Chinese companies by the CCP for its propaganda purposes.

Chinese companies listed offshore are under both pressure from the United States, which wants more accounting transparency to the point of that required of all other publicly-listed companies, and Beijing authorities, who ironically see their own tech companies, when listed abroad, as a national security threat.

Along with the China's economic opening to Russia, while the rest of the world imposes economic sanctions, the promotion of Moscow's propaganda by the CCP should make very clear to which powers the Party and its tech companies have thrown their support: to the dictatorial and bullying regimes globally that commit evil against regular citizens in Ukraine, Taiwan, China, Russia, Iran, Venezuela, North Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and beyond.

It is time for investors to pull out of China and its allies entirely, as their money is being used to fuel the propaganda and war machines of two of history's worst dictators, Xi Jinping and Putin, and other lesser but allied dictators globally. Investment in these countries is increasingly bloody and a risk to democracies everywhere. It must stop.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/chinas-tech-companies-amplify-russian-propaganda-on-ukraine_4332949.html

The New Balance of Power: Its Risks and Opportunities

Bradley A. Thayer

March 14, 2022

Commentary

Vladimir Putin went to war to keep Ukraine under Russian control, and thus ensured that Russia would fall under China's control.

The Ukraine war was a war of choice for Russia and a profound mistake as Russia is now the weaker partner in a *de facto* alliance with Xi Jinping's China. The game is not worth the candle as he likely has already realized. But his decision to invade—or more accurately the Xi-Putin decision as China's support for Russia before the war was one of its causes—affects more than Russia and Ukraine, it also does the balance of power.

The classical European balance of power involved five great powers: Austria (Austria-Hungary after 1867), France, Great Britain, Prussia (later Germany after unification in 1871), and Russia. The key to success was to be in the group of three great powers against the two. This was exceedingly difficult to do, due to the duplicity of alliance partners and the changing interests of the great powers.

The logic of the balance of power also impacted U.S. strategy. At the dawn of the Cold War, U.S. diplomat and strategist George Kennan argued that there were only five centers of world power: the United States, the British Empire, France and Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union. His advice was that the United States and its allies had an overwhelming balance of power against the Soviet Union. If they could sustain this imbalance, the Soviet Union would be defeated.

The Balance of Power Today

Today, there are six centers of military and economic power in the world: the United States, the European Union, India, Japan and South Korea (U.S. allies in northeast Asia), Russia (as solely a military power), and China.

Before Xi's and Putin's decision to invade Ukraine, there were five centers of power balancing against China, with Russia leaning toward it. After Putin took his decision, the five centers of power now need to balance against the Sino-Russian alliance. As a result of Putin's strategic malpractice in Ukraine, what remains is a favorable balance of power for the United States, but it is not as positive as the balance was *ante bellum*.

But it must not worsen. The United States must husband its resources to ensure that the remaining centers of power remain aligned for favorability disposed to U.S. interests, and that no other centers of power join China and Russia.

There is always the risk that another center of power will join the China-Russia axis, accelerating a worrying trend already present under the Biden administration—the strength and determination of its strategic focus on China. A cost of the Ukrainian war is to confuse the Biden administration's already muddled strategic priorities and identification of the China threat as the existential threat to the United States. As a result of the war and its aftermath, the administration will have an excuse not to act immediately and strategically to capitalize on what Xi and Putin have provided the United States.

The Opportunities Xi and Putin Have Provided

Xi and Putin's actions have fortified the EU. The United States must act now to ensure that the animus against Putin is shared with Russia's ally, China. The EU has been slow to recognize the China threat. The Ukraine invasion compels the EU to recognize both threats and formulate a strategy in cooperation with NATO to protect against the threat from both.

The Sino-Russian threat is multifaceted. It is certainly a military threat, but of equal concern is Chinese penetration of EU politics, firms, and economic interests and trade

with China. The concern over Germany's energy dependence on Russian natural gas has rightfully received attention. But equally dangerous is the EU's economic dependence on China. When the Ukrainian war is ended by treaty, armistice, or long, grinding war of attrition, there will be strong temptation to return to cooperation with China and Russia.

Backsliding to the way things were done before the Russo-Ukrainian war cannot be tolerated. There is less danger that Russia will be forgiven because it was a belligerent. There is a greater danger that China will be accepted, as its culpability has not been prosecuted. To meet this threat, the United States must capitalize on Europe's moment of strategic clarity to secure the recognition within the EU that Russia and China are existential threats to Europe, the health of their societies and economies, and the Western order, and act accordingly.

Second, India is also a concern due to legacy of friendship toward the Soviet Union in the second half of the Cold War and its longstanding military procurement from the Soviet Union. In the chorus of condemnation of Russia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's voice cannot be heard. While ties to Russia are important, it is offset by the China threat. The stronger Putin is allied with Xi, the greater the decline in relations between Moscow and New Delhi.

Third, Japan and South Korea are strong allies, and the Xi-Putin invasion of Ukraine, as well as the recent election in South Korea, greatly aid the United States.

Fourth, the war compels a rapid U.S. response with its allies and friends in the confrontation with China, but also U.S. force structure and strategy. Putin's war in Ukraine has made the future of U.S. strategic planning more complicated because now the United States must confront China and Russia.

Russia is a secure source of energy for China, a valuable ally in intelligence cooperation, with Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, and North Korea, and as a conventional and strategic military partner. The tensions that do exist between China and Russia, for example, over their respective influence in the Central Asian republics, will be suppressed.

Russia is far from a perfect ally for China, but its military power, intelligence capabilities, diplomatic influence, and leadership in space and in nuclear technologies allow it to threaten Europe. This allows China to present the United States with a second front in Sino-American security competition and prevent the employment of Russian power against China.

Meeting the Challenges

This war is the most significant strategic challenge since the defeat of the Soviet Union and presents many risks for the United States. At the same time, it is also an opportunity to reforge existing alliance priorities and bring those states previously on the sidelines into the fight against China.

First, the United States and its NATO allies must change the orientation of the alliance. NATO must now explicitly become an anti-Chinese alliance as the threat to Europe now is the Sino-Russian alliance. To combat this, sustaining its deployments in Europe are necessary but not sufficient, and NATO must deploy to the Indo-Pacific. Permanent NATO force deployments to Taiwan and in the East and South China seas are necessary.

Second, deeper cooperation with India is necessary with the aim to create an alliance with New Delhi, would include military cooperation and war planning against China. These steps must include Australia and Japan, as well. The United States needs to work with Seoul to frame how it may assist in the struggle against China, and how it can aid the United States and Japan to defend Taiwan and keep the East and South seas from falling under China's control.

Third, the United States must prepare to do something it has not done since the Cold War—prepare to fight two conventional and nuclear wars with major adversaries, and to do so simultaneously. At present, the United States does not possess this capability and must expand its conventional and strategic forces, including missile defenses, to meet the challenge of two military peer competitors.

The dangers present in the new balance of power are the equal of the opportunities. It would take a bold and foresighted U.S. administration to act on those opportunities in the narrow window provided.

Otto von Bismarck said that “a statesman ... must wait until he hears steps of God sounding through events, then leap up and grasp the hem of His garment.” President Joe Biden's ability to leap is certainly less than Bismarck's. Those opposed to China's ambitions can only hope God's garment is so long as not to require an effort.

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Beijing Attempts to Use the National Security Law to Deny Democratic Freedoms Abroad

Peter Dahlin

March 15, 2022

Commentary

While the world's attention remains focused on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Beijing has seemingly decided to showcase the extraterritorial powers of Hong Kong's National Security Law (NSL) by targeting a UK-based NGO that acts as a watchdog for the deterioration of civil rights in Hong Kong.

In a letter to Hong Kong Watch (HKW) and its co-founder and chief executive officer, Benedict Rogers, the Hong Kong police stated that the organization is "Engaging in activities seriously interfering in the affairs of the HKSAR and jeopardizing national security of the People's Republic of China."

HKW disclosed the formal warning in a March 14 statement.

The letter accused the organization of violating Article 29 of the NSL, which criminalizes collusion with foreign forces to endanger national security. It also threatened Rogers with imprisonment unless he stops lawful and peaceful exercise of his democratic rights in his homeland of the United Kingdom.

The letter stated that HKW could face a fine of HK\$100,000 or Rogers could face three years in jail for the offense.

That the law, imposed by Beijing rather than Hong Kong's legislature, has these powers is nothing new, as acts that may endanger ill-defined "national security" of Hong Kong or mainland China. This applies even if such acts are based on the exercise of democratic

rights in other countries, and may be persecuted via fines, imprisonment, and extradition.

In short, that the law criminalizes freedom of speech by foreigners, in foreign lands, is not new. However, few had likely assumed that the Hong Kong police would expose this power so blatantly.

Aside from the preposterous idea that a foreign citizen, running a foreign NGO, should be accused of “foreign collusion,” the situation nonetheless illustrates just how sensitive Beijing and Hong Kong have become to the idea of political opposition to their ever more brutal rule. That the targeted activities are related to HKW’s work to bring about sanctions against Hong Kong officials may be a matter of coincidence, but considering the unprecedented sanctions being levied against Russia the last few weeks, it speaks volumes. Seeing the West, for once, acting in unison and with the strength of conviction, and using sanctions to severely damage the Russian state, must have riled up Hong Kong (and Beijing) officials to no small degree.

The letter admits to using the NSL to censor and block HKW’s website, stating clearly that, pursuant to Article 43, “the Commissioner of Police has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the publication of the website [HKW] is likely to constitute or to cause the occurrence of the Collusion Offence which is an offense endangering national security.”

It is no coincidence that the website being targeted is the primary information portal on the use of the NSL, and the use of political persecution by Hong Kong police against former lawmakers, protesters, and dissidents.

The letter gives HKW and Rogers 72 hours to delete it. “Should you fail to do so, further action will be instituted against you and ‘Hong Kong Watch’ without further notice.”

It is surprising that Hong Kong should take this action now as international criticism of the NSL has declined, and due to the invasion of Ukraine, is unlikely to be in the spotlight for some time to come. For Hong Kong to target HKW and Rogers at this time makes little sense, but the situation will inadvertently help the outside world to understand just how dangerous the NSL is and how it is laying the groundwork for the Chinese regime’s future and expanded international policing of political thought, even in the UK, around Europe, and, of course, in the United States. This action clearly shows how the laws of autocratic China are being used to curtail democratic freedoms around the world.

As for the outcome, Hong Kong's latest move is almost certain to have a "Streisand effect," emboldening not only HKW (and other NGOs working on similar issues), but also rallying political support behind them.

Rogers himself is clear. In response to the letter, he said, "Irrespective of this attempt to intimidate our staff and censor our website in Hong Kong, we will continue to be a voice for the people of Hong Kong."

He continued, "We will redouble our efforts to expand lifeboat schemes for those not covered by BNO [British National Overseas visa] and will continue to call for Hong Kong officials to face sanctions for their destruction of the city's autonomy and freedom."

Peter Dahlin is the founder of the NGO Safeguard Defenders and the co-founder of the Beijing-based Chinese NGO China Action (2007–2016). He is the author of "Trial By Media," and contributor to "The People's Republic of the Disappeared." He lived in Beijing from 2007, until detained and placed in a secret jail in 2016, subsequently deported and banned. Prior to living in China, he worked for the Swedish government with gender equality issues, and now lives in Madrid, Spain.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/beijing-attempts-to-use-the-national-security-law-to-den-y-democratic-freedoms-abroad_4335881.html

The CCP Attacked H&M, Which Immediately Caved

Anders Corr

March 16, 2022

News Analysis

The story of H&M in China is the story of a global brand getting bullied into not only silence on human rights issues, but likely active support for the priorities of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

H&M is a small entity compared with the CCP, which controls an economy of \$14.7 trillion (\$24.3 trillion when considering how far a dollar goes in China). H&M, a fast-fashion clothing manufacturer, has just about \$1.8 billion in annual revenue. H&M's leadership is desperate to increase that number by expanding in China's market. Doing so will increase its personal marketability and compensation.

Helena Helmersson, H&M's chief executive officer, made over \$14 million in compensation in 2020.

But to increase her earning power yet further through higher sales in China, she apparently must ensure that H&M appeases the CCP, which is a gatekeeper for the company's access to 1.4 billion Chinese consumers.

As detailed in a March 14 Bloomberg report by Yasufumi Saito, Daniela Wei, Jinshan Hong, and Anton Wilen, as well as prior reporting by The New York Times, H&M was doing fine until 2021, when the powerful Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL) found an undated company statement expressing concern about forced labor in Xinjiang, where an ongoing genocide is being perpetrated by the regime against Uyghurs and other Muslims.

On Sept. 15, 2020, H&M had already announced the termination of its relationship with a Chinese supplier accused of using forced labor. The company's stock was rising at the time, and didn't stop.

In March 2021, however, the CYL and official CCP media launched a campaign against H&M.

"Want to make money in China while spreading false rumors and boycotting Xinjiang cotton? Wishful thinking!" the CYL posted.

The post went viral, suddenly politicizing the wearing of H&M in a country where grades, jobs, and promotions depend on being political in just the right way—that is, in virtue signaling through public support of the CCP.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) attacked H&M verbally, and the company closed approximately 60 stores in China.

Between mid-March and April 1, 2021, H&M stock dropped over 12 percent, wiping out billions in shareholder value. That's the kind of fall that could get the CEO fired, so Ms. Helmersson was likely paying attention.

An online avalanche of criticism of H&M in China was of major concern. According to research by Ryan Fedasiuk and published by the Jamestown Foundation, the CCP's online propaganda drew from approximately 2 million paid internet "trolls" in 2021, plus approximately 20 million part-time volunteers, "many of whom are university students and members of the Communist Youth League."

A primary consumer base of H&M are youth seeking fashion at reasonable prices—getting targeted by the CYL hits at the company's core demographic in China.

But according to the latest Bloomberg report, the company's own research ascribes causality for the bad press and drop in sales to its own lack of support for the regime.

"An H&M review found the fast-fashion giant wasn't particularly valued by local authorities, according to people familiar with the matter who didn't want to be identified because of fears of reprisal," according to Bloomberg.

"The amount the brand paid in tax was not significant, and its failure to sponsor government-backed events was taken as a sign that building relations with the Chinese

Communist Party—arguably the most important force in Chinese business—wasn't a priority.”

In other words, H&M was not paying enough protection money (taxes) to the CCP, and not virtue signaling in a country where virtue signaling for a genocidal regime is necessary for success.

This is a potential explanation for H&M's trouble, which according to Bloomberg, H&M is working to fix. But there are others.

Business analyst Mark Tanner told Bloomberg that the Swedish government is one of the most publicly critical of Beijing. As a small and outspoken country, Sweden and its companies in China—like Canada and its company Canada Goose during and after the Meng Wanzhou crisis—were relatively easy targets for Beijing's retaliation. Meng, the chief financial officer of Huawei, was detained for almost three years in Canada on an extradition warrant from the United States for alleged fraud.

In early December, just a couple months after Meng was freed, CCP media claimed that Canada Goose was “discriminative” in its returns policy. Shortly after, its stock dropped over 20 percent.

H&M is licking its wounds in China by retreating from public view, donating to the “right” charitable causes (according to the CCP), and participating in the right CCP-supported trade show. One wonders whether H&M is also lobbying Swedish politicians to soften their criticism of Beijing. The regime has urged companies seeking China's favor to do so.

The unfortunate Swedish company, and its belated knuckling under to the regime, is being portrayed by Bloomberg as an object example of what not to do to succeed in business. The more successful business strategy in China, the authors appear to suggest, is that of Nike, Adidas, and Uniqlo—all of which “leaned in to the Party's focus on fitness and competition, sponsoring the national basketball and athletics teams as well as top athletes such as tennis player Li Na,” as well as investing “in state-run sports partnerships.”

The Bloomberg authors conclude, “H&M's experience shows that in an increasingly nationalistic China, which Xi is reorienting toward the [communist] principles of old after years of opening up to the West, global brands can't afford to ignore politics in China—or elsewhere.”

A businessperson reading the article is likely to conclude, with the authors, that public support for the CCP is necessary to succeed in China, which is necessary to succeed as a global CEO as China's economy and massive middle-class consumer base is growing so rapidly relative to the rest of the world.

But if Western business leadership continues to fall in line with the CCP, as they have been, the West's power, and its support for democracy, will continue to erode. Business will not effectively engage and change China. China will engage and change business, which has outsized political influence in Western capitals.

In other words, the more companies like H&M fall into the CCP's orbit, the more democracy and markets are at risk. With the downfall of markets, would come the near-permanent loss of shareholder value on a macro-economic scale. So companies, in the pursuit of short-term gains, are gradually destroying themselves, along with the freedoms that make them so efficient.

One of the only hopes in reversing this illiberal trend is the world's biggest democratic economies—including the United States, the European Union, and Japan—taking tougher action against Beijing, for example, by increasing economic sanctions and tariffs on China.

These measures should gradually increase until the regime not only improves human rights, which is insufficient since it leaves the regime in place, but democratizes itself, which would remove the CCP as a threat. China could then finally stand tall within the international community as a protector, rather than a destroyer, of human freedoms and political equality.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/the-ccp-attacked-hm-which-immediately-caved_4336190.html

Meanwhile, in the Russian Backyard Called Siberia...

Austin Bay

March 16, 2022

Commentary

Given the manpower and equipment advantages possessed by the Russian Army and Air Force, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Kremlin cronies expected Ukraine's defenses to swiftly collapse and capitulate.

The quick victory script read something like this: A precision Spetsnaz assassination kills President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as airstrikes smash Ukrainian air defenses and Russian paratroopers capture key transportation and communication nodes. Within 24 hours Russian mechanized combined arms battle groups smash into Kharkiv and Kyiv. Russian tanks line the cities' central squares as bewildered and frightened Ukrainians cower and capitulate.

Fair bet Putin calculated such a demonstration of fast, deadly Russian military power would send the message the world must once again fear Russia.

But it didn't happen. Russia underestimated Ukrainian will. Putin overestimated the readiness of his own troops—or perhaps his generals did?

Three weeks on, Ukraine's sweat-and-blood peoples' resistance continues. We've witnessed case after case of Russian strategic, operational, and tactical miscalculation—failures at all levels of warfare. The world sees video of Russian tanks in Ukraine, but they're stuck in mud or are smoldering wrecks along highways. As for precision, high-tech warfare? Not so much. Russian artillery pounds Ukrainian apartment buildings and hospitals into Stalingrad rubble as Vlad threatens NATO with nuclear attacks.

Vlad does have nukes. Ukraine had nukes until 1994, when it agreed to the Budapest Accord and gave them up for absolute Russian assurances of Ukrainian territorial integrity. The United States and UK backed the agreement.

Vlad busted the Budapest Accord. The United States and UK back the NATO treaty. In 2022 Vlad dreams of busting NATO—but Ukraine 2022 fights, and Russian might has not secured a draw, much less a stunning victory restoring Ukraine to the Russian empire.

Before launching the war, Putin, his pals and for that matter, his quasi-allies in China, should have examined the strategic downside of both Russian “non-victory” in Ukraine and even defeat in Ukraine.

It’s just possible his Chinese quasi-allies did consider these unpalatable alternatives—and they grinned.

Here’s why they might grin: The Russian Army’s slipshod combat performance definitely raises legitimate questions about the Kremlin’s ability to wage full-scale conventional war against a peer. Shift from Europe to East Asia and Russia’s military failure calls into question the vulnerability of the Kremlin’s greatest geostrategic treasure: resource-laden Siberia.

The Russians are loath to admit it, but for the first time in centuries, China possesses a more powerful military.

Communist China 2022 is bitten by the same savage imperialist bug as Putin. Beijing intends to restore the Chinese empire. And Beijing covets Siberia.

According to Beijing’s propagandists, Siberia belongs to China. The current border (approximately 2,740 miles) is an artifact of the 1860 Convention of Peking. The Second Opium War had weakened China. Czarist Russia was expanding. In 1917, the Bolsheviks acknowledged that czarist treaties forced on China were coercive and predatory. Russia, however, has never returned any Siberian territory.

China hasn’t forgotten. In a July 2, 2020, tweet, a Chinese state media official scorned Russia’s 160th anniversary celebration of the founding of Vladivostok. The official recalled that Vladivostok was a military harbor built on the Chinese city of Haishenwai, which was annexed “via (the) unequal Treaty of Beijing.”

In December 2019 Russian political scientist Andrei Kalachinski told the Estonian publication *Diplomaatia*: “If a large state (i.e. China) grows stronger, it is logical that it starts thinking whether it has handed over too many of its territories in the past two centuries. China has managed to get back nearly all the former colonies, such as Macao and Hong Kong. For China, Primorsky Krai (Vladivostok area) is a part of the former Manchuria (China) may deliver an ultimatum to us at some point on any old pretext. The British, the Germans, the Portuguese—all of them have left the former territory of China. Only the Russians have remained. It is good that we have remained, but the devil only knows (what may come of this).”

The devil also knows if Vlad’s Ukraine debacle whets China’s Siberian appetite.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/meanwhile-in-the-russian-backyard-called-siberia_4341551.html

Could China Use Ukraine War to Challenge US Dollar Hegemony?

Beijing is biggest winner in the Ukraine war and sanctions against Russia

Fan Yu

March 17, 2022

Commentary

Russia's war in Ukraine, and the West's response so far, has been a gift to China.

The West's strict sanctions on Russia have isolated the country from much of the world. It needs a financial lifeline.

The war in Ukraine, and the West's sanctions against Russia, is providing a unique opportunity for China to establish its currency in global trade and in turn destabilize the west. In other words, Beijing could now accomplish what it had wanted but was unable to achieve for years.

Sanctioning Russia isn't as simple as sanctioning Iran or North Korea. Russia is a major producer and exporter of commodities such as crude oil, gas, wheat, diamonds, and other minerals. Once upon a time, the value of paper money was derived from the commodities backing it.

With the sanctions in place, the global commodities market is now fragmented. For example, we have non-Russian produced oil whose price is skyrocketing while Russian oil has fewer takeout channels and can be bought at a significant discount.

Much of the ongoing discourse has been focused on the question of how much China can and is willing to help Russia. But I believe the question should really be: how far will China go to flout Western sanctions in order to help itself and weaken the United States?

Natural resources is a national security issue, a fact U.S. lawmakers spent years trying to dismiss but with the war in Ukraine, were only recently forced to recognize.

Beijing sees this clearly. China has been trying to secure energy supply for decades. Earlier this year China signed a 30-year gas supply deal with Russia's Gazprom. In February it reached a deal to increase wheat imports from Russia. Russia's status as an outcast gives China an opportunity to secure valuable commodities, while making Russia more reliant on China, its currency, and its financial network.

Let's get the obvious points out of the way. Beijing is under scrutiny, especially around whether its companies would violate "secondary" sanctions imposed by the United States, such as providing materials to sanctioned Russian firms. It's a legally gray area.

But China has extensive infrastructure in place to circumvent sanctions. Beijing has done it in the past with Iran. Its major international banks and corporations doing business in dollars and euros will not participate, or at least not openly. But the Chinese Communist Party has enough non-dollar-facing financial infrastructure in place and experience in creating off-balance-sheet vehicles to procure Russian commodities.

The bigger picture implications on future global trade are more worrisome.

Global sanctions have effectively frozen Russia's foreign reserves. In other words, Moscow no longer has access to its foreign currency reserves. This raises a key question for China and other countries less tied to the U.S.-Europe hegemony—if or when they run afoul of the West, would their accounts also be confiscated?

And given this risk, should they diversify some reserves away from the dollar?

Enter China and its currency (gold and bitcoin are other options, but the scope of this column is on China's currency).

China has been pushing the renminbi for international trade without much success, even after its Belt and Road program. China and Russia have been decrying the dollar as de facto global trade currency. Today, all commodities are priced in U.S. dollars, and for countries, there is no alternative (the TINA principle).

China could use this opportunity to finally create an alternative to the dollar hegemony and rewind the global economic backdrop to the Cold War era. To a third-party neutral country, the broken commodity market could induce the country to buy oil at a discount

from China than paying a premium for non-Russian-sourced oil. That could be the beginning of a new global order and everything China had wished for when it created its digital renminbi.

The financial magazine Barron's recently pointed out that this war has been "one of the few times that investors fleeing riskier assets have turned to the renminbi." According to Jefferies global strategist Sean Darby, Russia seems to have already "quasi" pegged the ruble currency to the renminbi since last year in the "first real evidence of de-dollarization."

And it's not just Russia. Saudi Arabia—whose relationship with the United States has cooled in recent years—is reportedly considering accepting the renminbi instead of dollars for oil purchases from China.

Respected Credit Suisse rates strategist Zoltan Pozsar took this a few steps further. In a March note to clients aptly titled "Bretton Woods III," Pozsar stated this is the start of a new global monetary order powered by Asian currencies backed by a basket of commodities.

The war and the West's sanctions on Russia will cause China to buy up and store commodities, in turn strengthening the renminbi (increasingly backed by real assets) and destabilizing the dollar (backed by only credit) while worsening the inflation crisis in the West.

In essence, it would severely hurt U.S. and European economies.

Fan Yu is an expert in finance and economics and has contributed analyses on China's economy since 2015.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/could-china-use-ukraine-war-to-challenge-us-dollar-hegemony_4340438.html

China, Russian Oil, and the Iran Nuclear Deal

Antonio Graceffo

March 18, 2022

News Analysis

In violation of U.S. sanctions, China has been purchasing Iranian oil. Now, the United States may lift the sanctions on Iran to replace oil lost from Russia, in which case China will have cheap oil from Russia.

The United States is leading a collaborative effort among its allies to cut off Russia's gas exports. This means that America must find a replacement for the 8 percent of its fuel imported from Russia, while Europe must find a replacement for roughly 30 percent of its energy imports. Consequently, the Biden administration is attempting to obtain oil from either Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, or Iran.

Venezuela is unlikely to comply with the U.S. request, as President Nicolás Maduro is Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest ally in the Americas. Additionally, the United States does not officially recognize Maduro as the president of Venezuela.

On March 6, the Biden administration dispatched U.S. senior officials to Caracas to discuss renewing oil imports. The delegation included Roger Carstens, the special presidential envoy for hostage affairs; Juan Gonzalez, the National Security Council's senior director for Western Hemisphere affairs; and Jimmy Story, the U.S. ambassador to Venezuela.

The fact that President Joe Biden did not send the secretary of state or the secretaries of trade, commerce, or energy was a bit of an insult for the Venezuelan regime. Biden also said that Venezuela would have to meet certain conditions for sanctions to be lifted, but he never said what they were.

So far, Saudi Arabia has also been unwilling to help. The royal family feels that Biden has snubbed them by refusing to talk to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Instead,

Biden has only had limited conversations with his father, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. Saudi Arabia is now meeting with China to discuss the possibility of settling oil sales in yuan, rather than dollars.

Currently, China purchases 25 percent of all of Saudi Arabian oil exports. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has helped Saudi Arabia manufacture ballistic missiles, as well as consulted on its nuclear program.

If yuan-denominated oil contracts are adopted, exports to China would increase dramatically, shifting Saudi Arabia deeper into the CCP's orbit. U.S.-Saudi relations are already threatened. Before Biden became president, he called the Kingdom a "pariah" for its alleged involvement in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The Saudis are also opposed to the Biden administration's consideration of removing sanctions from Iran, as Saudi Arabia would feel threatened by a nuclear-armed Tehran.

Iran's oil sales could be restored if the Iran nuclear deal is concluded successfully and sanctions are lifted. China, however, has already been buying oil from Iran.

In December, Beijing circumvented U.S. sanctions, purchasing 286,944 tons of Iranian crude oil, according to China's General Administration of Customs. It is estimated that China purchased more than 500,000 barrels per day on average between August and October. In order to thwart sanctions, the oil was labeled as coming from Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia.

At the time, Iranian oil was roughly \$6-\$7 per barrel cheaper than other Middle Eastern suppliers. And China was willing to risk sanctions in order to save money on oil. The shipments are now valued at \$1.3 billion a month (the bulk of which go to China), accounting for 6 percent of China's imports, according to Reuters. This income is crucial to Tehran, which suffers under isolating sanctions.

In January, China imported more than 700,000 barrels per day (bpd) from Iran, which was higher than the 623,000 bpd peak in 2017 before then-President Donald Trump renewed the sanctions in 2018. The sales were able to take place because the Biden administration has failed to enforce the sanctions.

With the Iran nuclear deal back on the table, it is possible that much of the oil currently being sent to China will be sold to other buyers, at market price. Iran has millions of barrels of oil stored offshore, which could flood into Europe and Asia if sanctions are lifted.

This would allow Iran to be able to sell oil on the world market, at the higher market price. Not only would this benefit Iran, but the increased supply would drive down global oil prices. Crude dropped below \$100 a barrel on March 14, on expectations that a resolution could be reached.

At one point, it looked like the talks would be completely derailed by Russian demands that future business between Russia and Iran be exempted from EU and U.S. sanctions. Western powers refused to meet this requirement, and Russia did not withdraw it. Therefore, the deal looked like it could be dead, with the sanctions remaining in place.

Another obstacle was that several of the European signatories said that the deal could not be signed until two British citizens were released from prison in Iran. Then on March 16, Iran freed the two Brits, sparking hopes that the talks were making progress.

After the prisoners were released, U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price seemed optimistic and said, "We do think that we would be in a position to close those gaps, to close that remaining distance if there are decisions made in capitals, including in Tehran."

If an agreement can be reached, Iranian oil could be used to reduce the deficit in the U.S. and European demand, eliminating their dependence on Russia. This would put the EU a step closer to halting the purchase of Russian energy, a sanction that would strike at the core of the Russian economy.

China will make up some of the lost revenue to Russia by increasing its energy purchases, but most likely at below market prices, as it did with Iran. And while Iran would be able to sell oil to Europe and the United States, it would presumably remain faithful to China, which supported the Iranian economy during its economic isolation.

Another benefit to the Iran nuclear deal, apart from lifting sanctions and using Iranian oil to fill the gap of Russian oil, is that the United States would be in a better position to prevent Russia from flouting U.S. sanctions by funneling cash and assets through Iran.

A potential sticking point, however, is that Iran has insisted that the United States remove the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization. The question remains whether this single issue is more important to Tehran than restoring the country's economy.

And finally, while the talks were in progress, Iran launched a ballistic missile attack on the U.S. consulate in the Iraqi city of Erbil, underscoring the danger of allowing Iran to develop nuclear weapons. U.S. Republican lawmakers have sworn to oppose any lessening of sanctions against Iran, as they want to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power.

If the United States finds a replacement for Russian oil, then China, as nearly the only buyer, can obtain cheap energy from Russia. If the United States does not find a replacement and the European Union does not block Russian oil exports, then China can continue to get cheap oil from Iran.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-russian-oil-and-the-iran-nuclear-deal_4344397.html

Volkswagen Panders to China

Profits overrule all else, including ESG, for the German company

Anders Corr

March 19, 2022

News Analysis

Volkswagen (VW) doesn't seem to care much about China's support of Russia during its Ukraine invasion. Neither, apparently, is the German company showing exceeding concern about the genocide in Xinjiang (where it has a factory that employs about 650 people).

VW is not quite committed to an increase of its manufacturing in the United States, where in 2021 it sold over 375,000 vehicles, plus additional "units" from its subsidiaries, Porsche, Audi, and Skoda.

China, on the other hand, is the company's "gold mine," according to a former executive quoted in a March 16 Financial Times (FT) article. VW deliveries in China peaked at approximately 4 million per year between 2017 and 2019. That number fell to 3.3 million in 2021.

VW is working to rebuild sales there, perhaps in vain given the increasing Chinese competition. The strategy for countering this in a nationalist state like China is to make VW more Chinese, and less German. So Beijing gets outward displays of allegiance—so much so that VW is the only foreign car company to get not only two joint ventures with Chinese state-owned enterprises, but a third, over which it has "majority" ownership.

That majority stake doesn't matter much in China, though, where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) knows how to tighten the screws on business of any "nationality" to get exactly what it wants.

Sanctions against Russia over the war in Ukraine are apparently making VW executives nervous about their business in China, which could also be economically targeted by democracies and their allies if Xi Jinping has his way and invades Taiwan. According to purported intelligence leaked from Russia, China had plans to invade this fall.

If Russia is any guide, that could mean that VW would have to pull out entirely from China, which would more than halve its profits.

This is probably the best explanation for why the company's CEO, Herbert Diess, is working to smooth feathers and double down on his commitments to making more money in China. He acknowledges that China now has greater leverage over the company than the other way around.

In 2021, Diess said, "China probably doesn't need VW, but VW needs China a lot."

That has changed since the early 1980s, when VW first entered China. Since then, at least some at the company realized that technology transfer made China "a ticking clock" that would eventually overtake VW with its own Chinese vehicle manufacturers.

Stephan Wöllenstein, the China director for Volkswagen, is apparently knuckling under to ubiquitous CCP demands to giving China more control. He said, according to the FT's Frankfurt correspondent, Joe Miller, that VW is quickly adapting to the need to gain from running the company more from within China, where VW's new software chiefs, for example, are now "mainly of Asian heritage."

Wollenstein said that VW gets "preferential treatment" in China, where its majority stake in a joint venture indicates the "specific trust that the Chinese government has in the Volkswagen group."

This year, Diess told the FT, "We will remain in China, we will invest ... we are there to stay." Despite VW's declining sales in the country, he believes it "will be by far the biggest growth market for the foreseeable future."

On March 15, Diess said, "If we would constrain our business to only established democracies, which account for about 7 to 9 percent of world population, and this is shrinking, then clearly there would not be any viable business model for an auto manufacturer."

Diess earns approximately \$12 million annually, according to Bloomberg. Apparently, pandering to a genocidal regime that pumps out most of the world's pollution is worth the money.

The CEO is supported by his board. The FT quoted a member who hoped that the Ukraine war would take the German government's focus off China. "They are very concerned now with the Ukrainian war ... this German government has become very fast, very pragmatic."

Germany and VW need to get with the times and support democratic rather than dictatorial countries as part of its environmental, social, and governance (ESG) commitments. That should mean pulling out of China entirely rather than continuing the technology transfer and building up the totalitarian country economically to the point of it being able to invade a peaceful neighbor like Taiwan.

But don't count on Volkswagen to do this by itself. The company's management is too focused on making short-term profits, and insufficiently concerned about the long-term effect of those profits on the viability of democracy globally.

To fix the issue, democratic governments in the United States and Europe could sanction or tariff companies more broadly that continue to collaborate with the CCP.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/volkswagen-panders-to-china_4344009.html

The Ukrainian War Will Be the End of Russia: Beijing Should Not Be Allowed to Profit

Joseph V. Micallef

March 20, 2022

Commentary

History will show that the Ukrainian war marked the beginning of the end of the Russian state.

Over the last two decades, Vladimir Putin and his cronies, a criminal conspiracy masquerading as the Russian government, have looted the Russian economy, destroyed the Russian middle class and have plunged millions of pensioners into poverty. For their grand finale, they are setting the stage for the eventual disappearance of Russian sovereignty—either by the dissolution of the Russian state or by the transformation of Russia into a Chinese vassal.

The prospect of de facto Chinese control of Russia's vast resources and territory should give the United States cause for concern. Such an outcome will eventually lead to the creation of a Eurasian superstate; the likes of which has not been seen since the Mongols swept across the Eurasian plain in the 13th century. All the more reason to ensure that Beijing does not accelerate Russian dependence by allowing Chinese companies to flout the sanctions regime.

It is imperative that the United States and its allies step in and sanction those Chinese companies that flout the sanctions that have been imposed on the Russian government and Russian companies. Sanctioning Russia while allowing Chinese companies to flout those sanctions with impunity will lead to the worst possible outcome for the United States and its allies.

Four weeks into the Ukrainian war, the conflict is going very badly for Russia. Gone is the prospect of a quick collapse of the Ukrainian military and an abandonment of Kyiv by the Zelenskyy government, paving the way of a pro-Russian government of national unity. Instead, the Ukrainian military rallied and posted a tenacious defense. In some cases, even going on the offensive.

The Russian military has failed to make any significant advances or capture any additional Ukrainian cities over the last two weeks. Indeed, for the first time since the conflict began, some military analysts are even suggesting what would have been inconceivable four weeks ago—that Ukraine could actually fight Russian forces to a standstill.

Instead, the Russian military has shifted to terror tactics of shelling and aerial bombardment of Ukrainian cities—a strategy that will do little to advance the war effort, given the Ukrainian resolve to resist the Russian invasion, and ensures that Ukrainians will harbor a multi-generation hatred of Russia, while the rest of Europe will harbor a multi-generational distrust of the Kremlin's intentions.

In the meantime, the Russian military has suffered staggering losses of men, equipment, and materials. The much-vaunted Russian air force has failed to sweep the sky over Ukraine of opposing air power, and the Russian advance has consistently been bogged down by logistical problems that are more characteristic of a third-world force than what is supposed to be a military superpower.

The strategy of “rubbleizing” Ukraine's cities will create a nightmare of urban warfare for Russian troops should they choose to invade the cities. It's questionable, given the progress to date, if the Russian armed forces have the military strength and logistical reserves to surround all of Ukraine's principal cities—especially Kyiv.

Even if they were to do so, they face the prospect of fighting another Stalingrad or a replay of the Warsaw ghetto uprising—only this time it will be broadcast across social media in real time. Indeed, from Russia's perspective, it is hard to see how the outcome could have been any worse.

Putin has threatened to deploy some 40,000 Syrian militia, and the Russian media's constant references to American funded “bio labs” in Ukraine, a claim also echoed by Chinese state media, has raised concerns that Russia may deploy chemical or biological weapons. Western military analysts have also expressed concern that the Russian military may deploy sub-kiloton “theater” nuclear weapons in a determined show of force.

It's hard to see how any of these actions will change the progress of the war given the Ukrainian resolve to resist. Indeed, all they will do is further inflame Western public opinion against the Kremlin.

At this point it is imperative that the United States takes the lead in identifying an off-ramp that can bring the conflict to a speedy close. Russia is now a pariah state, the Putin government toxic. Even if a peace agreement is reached, and/or Putin is eventually replaced, it will be years before Russia can expect to normalize relations with the United States and the European Union.

Moreover, the danger of dependence on Russia's energy exports has been driven home to the EU. Europe will aggressively diversify its sources of energy away from Russia.

On the other hand, neither is it in America's and the EU's interest to push Russia into China's open arms. Make no mistake, amid the chaos and destruction of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is Beijing that is emerging as the big winner.

By enabling Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Beijing has ensured the Kremlin's long-term dependence on Chinese support while at the same time positioning itself as an unofficial interlocutor between the United States and Russia.

China has little interest in a speedy resolution of the conflict in Ukraine. The longer the war continues, the more incensed public opinion in the West will be and the more dependent Moscow grows on Beijing's support. China has an agenda here also. It's not only about securing long-term supplies of Russian energy and minerals or replacing Russian influence in Central Asia.

How long will it be before China raises the delicate matter of those "unfair treaties," starting with the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1769), that were foisted on the Qing Dynasty by Czarist Russia between the 17th and 19th centuries, which saw thousands of square miles of Chinese territory transferred to Russia?

I have noted elsewhere that Russia has three possible outcomes: integration with the West, vassalization by China, or dissolution. The first outcome seems unlikely in the short term, even if the Russian people eventually succeed in excising the malignant cancer that is the Putin regime. The most likely outcome now is for Moscow to become an economic vassal of Beijing, or to try to go it alone until economic collapse leads to the breakdown and dissolution of the Russian state.

The United States and its allies need to ensure that the economic and political isolation of Russia does not play out in China's favor. It is imperative that Chinese efforts to assist Moscow in evading sanctions are met with equally steadfast U.S. and EU sanctions on China and its companies.

The Ukrainian war will lead to the widespread devastation of Ukraine's cities and tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of civilian casualties. Ukraine, however, will survive. Russia will not!

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/the-ukrainian-war-will-be-the-end-of-russia-beijing-should-not-be-allowed-to-profit_4347633.html

The Xi-Biden Call: What Needs to Be Said When a Gangster Is on the Line

Bradley A. Thayer

March 20, 2022

Commentary

Francis Ford Coppola's "The Godfather" has many lessons to teach us about international politics and the U.S. position in the world.

There is a scene where the Don, played by Marlon Brando, and his consigliere, played by Robert Duvall, are discussing the meeting they just had with New York's five mafia families. The Don reveals that he has just realized that the gang war the Corleone family was fighting with the Tattaglia family was orchestrated by the true power, Barzini.

As the Don dismissed Tattaglia as a "pimp," the Russo-Ukrainian war was made possible by the pimp Vladimir Putin, but by a true crime boss, Xi Jinping.

Like a crime boss in that great film, Xi is taking advantage of the opportunities provided. While the full attention of the United States should be focused on China, the war focuses U.S. attention on the Tattaglia of international politics, Russia. That alone is value, but is far from the war's only value to China.

The Sino-Russian entente provides the United States with a two-front war problem. The United States must expand its military presence in Europe from the Arctic to the Black Sea, while simultaneously confronting China globally. The entente allows China to present the United States with a second front in Sino-American security competition, and also prevents the employment of Russian power against China.

In fact, Russia would employ power if its grand strategic interests were advanced by Putin rather than advancing the folly of the Ukrainian war. The United States is thus

faced with the strategic problem of confronting a great power, Russia, while also fighting a peer enemy, China. This is a situation it has not faced since the Cold War.

The crime boss is also laying claim to new territory. According to Chinese accounts of the meeting, Xi stated the need for China to share the governance of international politics. The transit of the aircraft carrier Shandong through the Taiwan Strait is another signal to the United States that the Chinese regime is aggressive and risk-accepting in its competition with America, and is boldly the force for fundamental changes in world politics.

When you are speaking with a crime boss, you need to act accordingly, and heed the lessons taught by Mike Tyson: Everyone has a plan, 'til they get punched in the mouth." This is the time for the United States to seize upon the disorder created by the Sino-Russia entente to re-cast U.S. alliances, military forces, and society to meet the threats from these crime bosses.

New Opportunities for US Alliances

Regarding alliances, there is an opportunity to reforge existing alliance priorities and bring those states previously on the sidelines into the fight against China. The United States and its allies must remake the NATO alliance to include the Indo-Pacific as an area of operation.

Immediately deploy U.S., NATO, and other allied forces to Taiwan and India, and naval and air forces to the East and South China seas, and elsewhere in theater. Moving to put teeth into the relationship with India is essential. Similarly, augmenting Japan's conventional capabilities, and evaluating what role a nuclear Japan might play to help offset the two-front war danger is needed.

The U.S. Marine presence in Australia is important, but U.S. ground forces must also be far closer to China to deter its aggression against India or Taiwan.

This is the time to move to establish cooperation with Vietnam that will permit a U.S. military presence there, to work with Cambodia to move that government away from China, and to shore up the relationship with Thailand, a long-suffering U.S. ally.

Mongolia and the Central Asia states should have the ability to move out of China's and Russia's shadow, to become fully independent states.

US Nuclear and Conventional Forces Must Equal the Task

U.S. strategic and military forces are not ready to confront these two formidable threats. U.S. and allied naval forces cannot depend upon their superior quality as it is eroding, but also because numbers matter.

The United States does not possess sufficient naval assets and sealift to meet the threats it faces in all the world's oceans. Sufficient port facilities around the globe, control of the Panama Canal, and other strategic straits must be secured as they were in the Cold War to permit the U.S. Navy and its allies to transit the globe.

U.S. and allied landpower in Europe and the Indo-Pacific must be strengthened, including the deployment of more light and heavy conventional forces in both theaters. While already present in Europe, tactical nuclear weapons are needed in the Indo-Pacific.

This will require the return of a naval system retired in the Obama administration, TLAM-N, and the development of new tactical weapons to augment the ability of the United States' deterrence by denial strategy, that is ensuring that the enemy knows its military objectives will not be achieved. If deterrence fails, then tactical nuclear weapons would provide the United States with the ability to fight at a tactical level, that is, on the battlefield, without compelling escalation to the theater or strategic level.

Equally, U.S. and allied airpower must be able to meet the challenge of fighting two major wars at the same time against states that possess world-class air defenses, while U.S. and allied military and civilian space assets must be protected from inevitable attack.

US Politics, Economy, and Society Must Recognize the Enemy

Most importantly, U.S. politics, economy, and society are going to have to adapt as well to the two-front war threat. The Chinese regime has to be seen by the American elite as well as population as the Barzini of global politics who is able to undermine U.S. interests as long as the regime is not recognized as the ultimate enemy, pulling the strings of lesser powers.

The recognition of the Chinese regime as the enemy is still denied by many in American politics, society, education, finance, and media. Unless that changes, U.S. allies and military power will not be sufficient to save the United States.

Ultimately, the dangers present in the new balance of power are the equal of the opportunities. But the Biden administration must act with dispatch to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges posed by the gangsters it now must confront.

If the administration cannot or will not take the lead, then it falls to allied governments, including those in Australia, Japan, Poland, and South Korea, to demand—insistently and persistently—that the United States meets its obligations to confront and defeat the crime families now in control of these great civilizations.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/the-xi-biden-call-what-needs-to-be-said-when-a-gangster-is-on-the-line_4347878.html

The CCP's Struggle With Western Liberalism

Russia's difficulties in Ukraine may make Beijing think twice about its plans for Taiwan

James Gorrie

Writer

March 21, 2022

Commentary

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is closely watching the difficulty Russia is having in Ukraine and is taking notes.

And much is notable in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Effect

Many expected that a Russian victory over Ukraine would have taken just a few days. Certainly, it was not expected that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky—a former actor, comedian, and political neophyte who was elected in 2019—would stand up to Vladimir Putin's invading army.

But he did.

Today, almost a month later, Russia is still trying to prevail. Ukrainian resistance has proven much stiffer than Moscow bargained for.

The West's Big Response

Moreover, the West's reaction to the invasion is certainly greater than expected as well. The United States, Poland, Germany, and others have resupplied portable and highly effective anti-tank and anti-aircraft weaponry, medical supplies, and more that have helped thwart the Russian military's advances.

But by far, the most important factor has been the resolve of the Ukrainian people, led by Zelensky's undaunted leadership. Given Ukraine's past, it should not have come as such a surprise.

Bad Memories of Russian Rule

Millions of Ukrainians remember how life was as a Soviet state under Russia. With decades of communist rule still in living memory, Ukrainians have no interest in becoming a vassal of Russia once more. They enjoy the freedoms they have in their republic, flawed as it may be, with elections and a comparatively expansive menu of civil rights and economic opportunity.

Besides, Russia is no paragon of economic vitality. On the contrary, it's basically a nuclear-armed gas station that happens to sell military hardware alongside vast expanses of wheat and barley fields.

Why wouldn't Ukrainians fight to the death to keep from being Russified?

Putin's Western Nightmare and Military Weakness

The reality is that from 1991 until today, Ukrainians have become, for the most part, Westernized.

That's exactly how Putin sees it. His recent bemoaning of the negative influence that the West has had on Russian and Ukrainian culture says it all.

The irony is that Putin doesn't have to look as far as Ukraine to see the West's influence. It's there, within Russian society as well.

This fact may partially explain the less-than-stellar performance of the Russian army in Ukraine. By and large, it's much more probable that Russian youth are more interested in playing video wars than actually participating in one, particularly in Ukraine, where many Russians have close family ties.

Beijing Fears a Strong Taiwan

That brings us to China, Xi Jinping, and the rest of the CCP leadership. Taiwan is similar to Ukraine in several respects.

The nation is a longtime ally of the United States, with a Western outlook on life. It's a robust society based more or less on freedom, free markets, and democratic values. Economically, about two-thirds of the global economy relies on chips manufactured in Taiwan.

Memories of Mao—Old and New

Furthermore, most Taiwanese are the children or grandchildren of mainlanders who fled to the island of Formosa in 1949 to escape Mao Zedong and the bloodbath that accompanied the communist revolution in China. Though few Taiwanese from that era are still living, all have witnessed the CCP's crackdown on Hong Kong and the crushing of democracy and freedom there.

Plus, the Taiwanese can see the Chinese regime bullying and threatening other countries in the region, from the Philippines to Australia. Warplanes routinely violating Taiwan defensive airspace and naval wargames reinforce Beijing's intentions. In short, the Taiwanese society and economy has much in common with the West.

Beijing is likely considering all of these factors with regard to its plans for "reunification" with Taiwan.

Beijing's Fear of the West's Response

The CCP must be wondering, for example, just how determined would Taiwan's 23 million citizens be should China launch an invasion?

Would they put up fierce resistance like the Ukrainians? Would an armed civilian force greet China's People's Liberation Army (PLA)?

Or would it be a walkover?

Would Taipei order all critical chip factories and other technological assets destroyed, or would some kind of gradual reunification be negotiated?

The CCP must also be questioning how other nations might react if China were to attack Taiwan.

Economically, would the world boycott Chinese goods and services? Would nations in Asia and the West seize Chinese factories or freeze their assets?

And if so, would such a reaction be enough to make Beijing rethink its decision?

From a social impact perspective, the CCP may wonder just how much hardship a unified response against China's economy would cause the average Chinese citizen. How much pain are the people willing to bear?

Culturally, Xi has expressed concern about Western influences on Chinese social norms. He has warned the country about the West's influence in softening the masculine sensibilities, launching a masculinity campaign to counter the trend.

Would Invasion Trigger a Wider War?

The military impact is another big question mark. The United States' strategic ambiguity, for example, may become much less ambiguous. U.S. arms sales to Taiwan continue, and per President Joe Biden, U.S. policy toward Taiwan remains unchanged.

Much less ambiguous, however, is Japan's policy. Recall that Japan issued a white paper in 2021 wherein it explicitly states that its national security is directly linked to Taiwan's. As a consequence, Tokyo is rearranging its defense strategy with a focus on meeting the China threat.

Both Russia and China are realizing that engagement with the West is a two-way street. All the propaganda in the world can't compare to the dynamic attraction of freedom and economic vitality that the West provides. What's more, it doesn't take long to lose access to Western economies and their markets.

Both Moscow and Beijing have good reason to be concerned.

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China's State-Owned Enterprises Will Buy Russian Assets

Chadwick Hagan

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News Analysis

China's state-owned enterprises (SEOs) are coming to Russia's rescue. Beijing is pressuring SOEs to purchase goods from Russian companies and to make investments into Russian enterprises.

As sanctions take hold against Russia, companies in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe have been dumping Russian assets. China views this as a buying opportunity.

"Some Chinese investors believe that Russia now has no one else to turn to but China. So they believe that China stands to gain from its trade with Russia," said Hao Hong, managing director and head of research at BOCOM International.

Regardless, Russia desperately needs a partnership with China. Already accused of war crimes, economic reparations will be demanded at the end of this war.

According to the Brookings Institute, Russia has "about \$350 billion in available reserves mostly held by France (12%), Germany (10%), Japan (10%) and the U.S. (7%), with the rest scattered among many other countries."

It will be very hard for Russia to withdraw any reserves from Western markets and central banks until sanctions are lifted, and nearly impossible to move funds if Russia is found guilty of committing war crimes.

There are other strategies at play. In a March 14 op-ed in *The Hill*, strategists Marc Ross and Michael Keane wrote how Chinese leader Xi Jinping could very well have his

sights on Ukraine and Russia for the commodities supply. In theory, if Beijing secures Russia and Ukraine's commodity supply, then the regime will not have to worry about a disruption of commodities if it invades Taiwan.

Beijing could sidestep any economic sanctions, which is important because China receives the majority of its commodities from ocean trade, and there is persistent fear within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that an invasion of Taiwan would trigger global trade sanctions, including sanctioning seaborne trade.

Ross and Keane wrote: "Russia and China have an overlapping strategic interest in taking down the United States, as well as complementary business needs. China's simple business model is to buy and import commodities and then to make and sell mass-produced goods, which it exports to the world. In other words, China seeks to import every commodity traded on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and manufacture every good sold at every retail store in the Mall of America."

The combined commodity supply alone is in the tens of billions. Ukraine exports numerous raw materials (iron, steel, mining products, agricultural products), corn, sunflower seeds, wheat, rapeseed, barley, and sunflower meal. If Xi officially backs Russia, he would be securing a tremendous commodity flow for the CCP and ensuring the Russian economy does not collapse from the weight of the international sanctions.

Other countries are with China, too. Countries associated with China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI, also known as "One Belt, One Road") will most likely not sever ties with Russia.

India, a partner in the BRI, has yet to condemn Russia for the Ukrainian invasion. While New Delhi has long-standing trade relations with Moscow, it is dependent on Russian defense manufacturers for India's defense arsenal. Additionally, India recently purchased oil from Russia, with ABC News reporting on March 18 that "the state-run Indian Oil Corp. bought 3 million barrels of crude oil from Russia earlier this week."

Apart from economic aid, China could help Russia with defense. China could supply arms to Russia, much like NATO states have supplied Ukraine.

Drew Thompson, a former U.S. Defense Department official, told The Associated Press: "China probably wants to avoid high-profile or big-ticket arms sales to Russia in the midst of a conflict which would expose Beijing to international sanctions. Beijing would be more willing to provide spare parts, consumables, ammunition, and dual-use items

that don't contravene sanctions and could fall below the threshold of international reprisals."

When Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov spoke of a Russia-China alliance on March 13, U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan warned Beijing of consequences, stating that "there will absolutely be consequences for large-scale sanctions evasion efforts or support to Russia to backfill them."

Despite the international sanctions and condemnation of Russia, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China-Russia ties are as strong as ever.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in Hague ruled on March 16 that Russia "shall immediately suspend the military operations" in Ukraine. China's representative, Judge Xue Hanqin, dissented against the ruling.

President Joe Biden and Xi had a video call on March 18 and little was said of Russia. But according to a statement from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Xi expressed his belief that these conflicts are in no one's best interest.

As it stands, it seems Beijing does not wish to become directly involved in the Ukraine crisis, nor does it want to help Moscow evade sanctions, but China does wish to remain a competitive contender.

Chadwick Hagan is a financier, entrepreneur, author and columnist. He has managed businesses and investments in global markets for over twenty years. In 2020 his macroeconomics blog Chaganomics.com was archived by the Library of Congress Archive. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and is based in Atlanta and London.

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Why Chinese Companies Are Delisting in America

Chinese firms feel pressure from both Beijing and Washington

Milton Ezrati

March 21, 2022

Commentary

Chinese firms are delisting from American exchanges at an increasing pace. It is a complete reversal of a trajectory that up until recently saw China-based firms flocking to list their shares in the United States, Hong Kong, and elsewhere, both to raise their global profiles and to enlarge their sources of funding.

The new delisting trend, according to estimates prepared by the American Enterprise Institute, has already reduced the market capitalization of Chinese listings in America by 50 percent. Similar movement has taken hold in other Western stock markets and even in Hong Kong.

The presence of Chinese firms on these exchanges seems set to shrink much farther. It may even go to zero. Practically speaking, the trend may have little effect on financing, because direct American investment in China has risen rapidly enough to provide a substitute, at least until now.

The dramatic shift by Chinese firms has its roots in data. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has demanded more disclosure—more data—than in the past, while the authorities in Beijing have become increasingly secretive about giving data to anyone, much less the American authorities on Chinese business or Chinese life. Companies caught between such impossible demands have asked for concessions

from both the American and Chinese authorities and, receiving none from either, have had little choice but to delist.

From the American side, it is less a change in demands than a decision to enforce existing rules. What has changed is the zeal for enforcement at the SEC. For years, the authorities in Washington demanded full disclosure from listed Chinese companies, as it does from all listed firms, American and foreign. But when the Chinese firms showed a reluctance, the authorities took little action.

In response to the inevitable frictions, the Obama White House negotiated what it referred to as a “settlement.” It consisted of the SEC looking the other way. The Trump White House took a harder line. It gave the Chinese three years to fix the problem or be forcibly delisted.

In January this year, President Joe Biden’s SEC decided to enforce the Trump administration’s position. Given Biden’s vitriol against former President Donald Trump, there is considerable irony in this, but that sort of thing aside, the SEC is moving. Under what is called the Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act, the SEC now claims the unilateral power to forcibly delist any company that the Public Company Accounting Board says it cannot audit fully.

As Washington has gotten tougher about demanding information, Beijing has become increasingly concerned about what it calls “data loss.” Chinese authorities have always shown a reluctance to share information with anyone, especially foreign regulators. Beijing has always been happy to receive data from foreign investors entering the country but resisted any return outflow, even to the headquarters of the foreign investors and much less to a foreign government.

Such attitudes have hardened in the last couple of years under Chinese leader Xi Jinping. If in the past Chinese data reporting to the SEC was inadequate, what Beijing now allows will fall even shorter of legal requirements.

The delistings would be more of a problem for Chinese business were not that foreigners, especially Americans, have been sending huge flows of investment funds to China. To some extent, the American investors are sending funds to China to make up for the lack of Chinese investment options on American exchanges.

Whatever the reasons, the flow has grown huge. Little data is available for 2021, but in 2020 the \$1.15 trillion that Americans put into Chinese stocks and bonds in China dwarfed any previous flows. It was, in fact, more than three times the amount of just four

years before, an almost 33 percent annual rate of expansion. To encourage this trend, Beijing has given American brokers and investment bankers more freedom than previously to own their operations in China, though at the same time the Chinese authorities have increased their control of the American investment tools these firms have brought with them.

It should be apparent in this little drama that neither China nor Chinese business has lost out. A substitute investment flow has met the primary reason for listing on American stock exchanges in the first place. So far, neither the SEC nor the American government ever had objections to investment flows into Chinese firms, though that may change due to tensions over Russian sanctions.

All Washington has wanted to date is that Chinese firms to abide by the rules that applied generally. With the delistings, the Washington authorities are at least ridding themselves of what was a glaring and unfair double standard on disclosures. And if the American investors pouring their money into China do not worry over the secrecy, duplicity, or double standards imposed by Beijing, that is their business and possibly their loss.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/why-chinese-companies-are-delisting-in-america_4350348.html

China Lures the Saudis Into Its Orbit

China's budding relationship with Saudi Arabia threatens the US

Anders Corr

March 21, 2022

News Analysis

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is considering a major defection from its long-standing economic alliance with the United States. The likely winner would be China.

Having priced all of its oil in dollars since 1974, which has helped give the greenback massive value globally, the Saudis are softening to persuasion from Beijing, to start pricing some of its oil in yuan.

This fits the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) goal to become globally hegemonic, as oil pricing in yuan would increase the yuan's value and decrease the value of dollars, making it harder for the United States to issue debt and export goods. Countries around the world would start dumping the dollar as a reserve currency.

Inflationary pressure would lead to a downward spiral in the dollar's value. This would be a long process, but Beijing is now making headway in Riyadh, the Saudi capital. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), plus Russia, would likely follow the kingdom's lead, and start regularly pricing oil in currencies other than the dollar.

The KSA should be resistant to the move, however, as its currency, the riyal, is pegged to the dollar, its debt is priced in dollars, and it has extensive investment in the United States.

“The Saudi central bank had assets worth \$492.8 billion at the end of January, including \$119 billion in U.S. Treasuries,” according to Reuters. “The government had foreign currency debt—mostly in dollars—of \$101.1 billion at the end of 2021, while the Saudi sovereign wealth fund held \$56 billion in U.S. equities.”

While for the above reasons analysts say a major Saudi shift to yuan pricing is unlikely, some do admit the possibility of some Saudi oil pricing in yuan, which would be water over the dam, allowing for more such pricing, and pricing in other non-dollar currencies as well. Every purchaser of oil is likely to want oil priced in its own currency if it sees the floodgates breached by Beijing.

If Riyadh did move away from the dollar, perhaps also to a basket of world currencies, as was proposed decades ago, it would therefore be a major global change in oil pricing. The cause would not only be China’s rise, but the Biden administration’s deteriorating relations with the KSA, which throughout the Cold War helped the United States and its allies through oil policies that attempted to stabilize the price and maintain the flow.

After the 1979 revolution in Iran, which turned it anti-Western, the Saudis and most other Arab countries remained staunchly allied to the United States. Riyadh supported Washington throughout the Cold War, Iraq wars, and during the Afghanistan war. The United States also supported the Saudis during this period, defending the country, along with its Kuwait ally, from the Iraqi threat.

The Trump administration attempted to maintain a positive relationship with Saudi Arabia, visiting for photo shoots with the aging king, selling jets, and avoiding all questions of the country’s human rights abuse, including in the Yemen War, which is fought by Houthis backed by Iran. Almost no mention was made of the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, Turkey.

Democrats made much of this non-confrontational approach to the Saudis. But the Biden administration’s shift to a more confrontational stance is having negative second- and third-order effects on America’s weightier and less avoidable conflict with Beijing.

President Joe Biden has been publicly critical of Saudi Arabia’s de facto leader, the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud (also known as MBS). Perhaps due to the alleged human rights violations, Biden refuses to deal with the prince directly, instead demanding to deal with his 86-year-old father, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, who has already passed the baton.

This is insulting to the prince and other powerful Saudis, who are snubbing Biden. MBS himself is looking away from Washington and refusing to take the phone calls of Biden, who desperately wants him to increase the flow of oil to bring it down from its astronomical \$110 per barrel.

Riyadh is pointedly prioritizing other diplomacy, including with Beijing, Moscow, London, and Tokyo. The United States did manage to send a security adviser to Riyadh on March 15, including to discuss Yemen, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson flew in the following day. For damage control, the latter described Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which is also increasingly close to Beijing, as “key international partners” in weaning the world from Russia’s oil and gas. On March 17, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also begged for lower oil prices through an increase of Saudi supply.

MBS must realize that he has the world’s richest democracies over a barrel. He visited Beijing in 2019 and 2022, and invited Chinese leader Xi Jinping to visit Saudi Arabia this year. He has given tacit support for Beijing’s treatment of the Uyghurs, and for building a “strategic” partnership with the totalitarian behemoth.

Biden’s failure to effectively distinguish between authoritarian allies and adversaries in the overarching conflict with Beijing likely hurt his relationship with the Saudis.

His December summit of democracies and identification of authoritarianism as the “defining challenge” of the era is true, but saying so publicly could hasten a counter-alliance of autocrats, including our traditional allies, the Saudis. Beijing is now working hard to make this anti-democratic coalition a reality by bringing Riyadh into the CCP’s orbit.

By effectively binning U.S. allies—who admittedly have their human rights problems but are very regional—in with America’s most dangerous adversaries, led by a genocidal Beijing that aspires to global hegemony, the Biden administration needlessly drove the former towards the latter.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-lures-the-saudis-into-its-orbit_4347865.html

Sanctioning China: The Experts Weigh In

John Mac Ghlionn

March 21, 2022

Commentary

The month of March has seen the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union hit Russia with a whole host of economic sanctions, and further sanctions will likely follow. Now, though, it's time to turn our attention to China.

After all, Chinese leader Xi Jinping won't rest until his number one obsession, reunification with Taiwan, becomes a reality.

The invasion of Ukraine has awoken the world to the cruelty of war. But would the invasion of Taiwan elicit the same reaction?

Ian Bond, the director of foreign policy at the Center for European Reform, doesn't appear to think so.

He told me that although "Western unity has been a vital component in imposing tough sanctions on Russia," it might not "be so evident in the case of Taiwan—not recognized as a state by any Western country, and less important to most EU member-states than the PRC [People's Republic of China]."

He added that the "Taiwan issue has some resonance in a few EU member-states (for example, Lithuania), but few if any would be prepared to act as decisively against the PRC on Taiwan's behalf as they have against Russia on Ukraine's behalf."

Is Bond right? Would less people actually care? I think not.

However, the truth is this: to answer these questions definitively, the Chinese regime must invade Taiwan. Let's hope that we never have to answer these questions definitively.

By sanctioning Russia, what sort of message, either implicitly or explicitly, has been sent to China?

“What we have learned from the sanctions now imposed on Russia is that countries and organizations can act surprisingly decisively in a crisis,” he responded. Sanctions on China that “are unlikely (primarily, those that would result in the loss of supply chains that are important to the West) might still be imposed.”

According to Bond, we have “also learned that private sector companies can respond swiftly to public pressure, and reduce or end their operations in a market in order to save their reputations.” But he stressed, “Russia is much less important to most firms than China is (the only exception is energy firms).”

Bond finished by making a couple of highly pertinent points. Ukraine, he argued, has “benefited from a lot of public sympathy, in part because it was easy for Western journalists to get into the country at the start of the crisis.” In other words, “we know a lot about what’s happening on the ground,” in part “because of the geography.”

Moreover, “we can see refugees crossing the Polish and other borders. Refugees from Taiwan would find it much harder to escape, and even harder to make themselves visible to journalists.”

I also spoke with Richard Nephew, a senior researcher and security expert at Columbia University. Although Nephew doesn’t know if or when China will invade Taiwan (none of us do), he does “believe that they [the Chinese Communist Party] are watching the current crisis in Ukraine carefully, particularly to see how the United States and its partners might respond.”

How have the United States and its partners responded?

Nephew believes that those in Beijing are “getting a clear demonstration that the international partnership that they may have expected to be frayed after the last few years is far stronger than they suspected.”

Nephew expanded on this point by saying, “Japan and South Korea—among others—have joined the EU and the United States in imposing significant sanctions on Russia, at cost to themselves.” This, he believes, “strongly supports the contention that rumors of the demise of the partnership are greatly exaggerated.”

Separated by less than 100 miles of water, it's difficult not to see China invading Taiwan. However, as both Bond and Nephew pointed out, the united front shown by the United States and its allies in its response to Russian President Vladimir Putin may very well be enough to dissuade Xi from doing what he so desperately wants to do—to invade China's neighbor.

John Mac Ghlionn is a researcher and essayist. His work has been published by the New York Post, Sydney Morning Herald, Newsweek, National Review, and The Spectator US, among others. He covers psychology and social relations, and has a keen interest in social dysfunction and media manipulation.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/sanctioning-china-the-experts-weigh-in_4346463.html

China Remakes Global Markets

Christopher Balding

March 22, 2022

Commentary

Away from the battlefields of Ukraine, a battle is taking place on a global exchange for what exactly constitutes a market and their rules. China, long known for manipulating its domestic market and cheating on global markets, is taking that to a new level by protecting Chinese firms from trading losses.

The London Metals Exchange (LME) is a futures and forwards commodity market, which traces its origins back to the 16th century and trades primarily basic metals like aluminum, steel, and nickel. Since 2012, the LME has been owned by the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing (HKEX).

The HKEX counts as LME's effective controlling shareholder through near complete control of the board, the Hong Kong government. Hong Kong is now effectively run by the Chinese Communist Party and it must protect Chinese firms.

When the price of nickel nearly doubled in an hour on March 8, the initial thinking was this was some type of order matching or technical glitch and not a result of market fundamentals. However, news quickly started emerging that a major Chinese miner, Tsingshan Holding, had made an enormous, short bet that prices would drop. With the contract period closing, the company quickly tried to cover its contract and lost billions in the process, pushing the price higher rapidly.

Now approaching two weeks of minimal trading due to regular market shutdowns, the LME and HKEX are rapidly losing credibility as it appears they are halting trading to protect an effectively bankrupt Chinese firm. Traders around the world can tolerate a lot of risk and volatility, but they do not trade where they do not feel they are treated fairly. There are too many other venues.

So what are the potential outcomes with the LME shutting trading to protect a bankrupt Chinese miner?

First, this is a major legal and credibility risk to the LME and HKEX. Markets generally have wide latitude contractually to ensure smooth functioning markets. However, cancelling trades in the days leading up to the price jump, and even appearing to close markets to favor a specific player, likely changes historical precedent.

Affected traders are already retaining lawyers and working with other traders to pursue the market, bankers, and Tsingshan Holding. With brokers, banks, and even the market itself supposed to have measures designed to prevent these types of blow ups, the largely Chinese banks, brokerage, and market have not exercised the oversight they are generally supposed to maintain, exposing them to legal and credibility risk.

At the very least, this will be a major credibility hit to the LME. In a global market where traders can go to numerous major markets, it will be interesting to watch if trading volumes stay in London.

Second, this seems likely to significantly harm interest in working with Chinese counterparties in global financial market structures. Just as a Chinese firm offered to buy the Chicago Stock Exchange before being rebuffed, this is likely to harm any global interest in Chinese involvement in market activity. The Chongqing Casin Enterprise bid for the Chicago exchange fell apart in February 2018 due to security concerns, but behind the transaction were questions about Chinese market manipulation.

Traders can tolerate risk and volatility, but they will not trade where they think the market is rigged. Even a major Chinese shareholder seems unlikely to go forward in the years ahead for fear that pressure from Beijing will shut down markets to protect a Chinese firm. Traders need standard, transparent, and equitably applied trading rules, but China simply cannot provide that.

As a coalition of banks have stepped in to provide loans to the bankrupt miner, amazingly it not only refused to close its position, but increased its short position with the new funds. While trading was briefly resumed on March 16, before being shut down again, the exchange at best appears negligent in allowing such a high-risk participant to continue trading.

Even though global attention is rightfully focused on Ukraine, the events at the LME will likely resonate for a long time to come. While we have expected Beijing to cheat in global trade and intellectual property markets, China made sure foreign bankers made

money. By simply shutting down a foreign trading market to benefit a Chinese participant, LME and HKEX have permanently damaged their reputation.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-remakes-global-markets_4349020.html

China Implicated in Iran's Global Money Laundering

Iran's nuclear sanction-busting runs through Beijing and its closest allies

Anders Corr

March 22, 2022

News Analysis

China is implicated in Iran's international money laundering system, according to a new report by The Wall Street Journal.

The Journal "reviewed financial transactions for scores of Iranian proxy companies in 61 accounts at 28 foreign banks in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates totaling several hundred million dollars," according to the exclusive report, published on March 18.

"Western intelligence officials say there is evidence of tens of billions of dollars of similar transactions," it said.

All of the countries mentioned, plus the territory of Hong Kong, have close ties to Beijing. Hong Kong is under full control of the Chinese Communist Party, which abrogated the city's independent freedoms conclusively in 2017.

The magazine Foreign Policy has called Turkey a "Chinese client state."

The Singapore public is a global outlier in its support for China, with 64 percent having a positive view of the totalitarian country, compared with a median of 27 percent in all countries surveyed by the Pew Research Center in 2021.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is also close to Beijing, to the point of allegedly hosting a secret Chinese detention center and extraditing Uyghurs to China for the sole “crime” of practicing their Muslim faith.

A Bloomberg report in December noted that the UAE was purchasing Iranian oil in violation of sanctions, and enabling the Iranian oil trade with UAE-based financial institutions.

At the time, China had also stepped up purchases of Iranian oil. The Biden administration argued that a diplomatic approach was preferable to confronting Beijing about its support for Iran. The administration denied relaxing Trump-era sanctions.

The Iranian regime has confirmed much of the most important information in the Journal’s new report, having boasted publicly about its ability to conduct global trade, despite Western sanctions against its nuclear weapons programs.

In 2018, then-President Donald Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, which was agreed in 2015 and is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Trump reimposed sanctions on Iran, which President Joe Biden claims to have kept. But in response, Iran has been rebuilding its nuclear program, which is now close to the point of no return. Along with it getting closer to a nuclear bomb, Tehran’s demands have increased such that any new JCPOA deal would be better for the rogue state than would the original JCPOA.

Then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo attempted to reimpose United Nations sanctions on Iran in 2020 but was rebuffed by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. The Biden administration rescinded Pompeo’s attempt to reimpose U.N. sanctions in 2021 but unilateral U.S. sanctions remain in place. In an attempt to restart stalled nuclear talks with Tehran, the Biden administration moved to tighten the sanctions in December, but that has had no appreciable effect.

Ian Talley, the author of the new report, wrote that “Iran established a clandestine banking and finance system to handle tens of billions of dollars in annual trade banned under U.S.-led sanctions, enabling Tehran to endure the economic siege and giving it leverage in multilateral nuclear talks, according to Western diplomats, intelligence officials and documents.”

The Iranian network is composed of foreign commercial bank accounts, proxy companies registered internationally, regular companies that coordinate the illegal trade, and “a transaction clearinghouse within Iran.”

The success of the Iranian network must have provided an example to Russian President Vladimir Putin when he invaded Ukraine, as a means, enabled by Beijing, to maintain international trade while under sanctions. Iran is close to Russia, both of which are part of China's Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the closest that Beijing gets to an international alliance such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Turkey is a "dialogue partner" of the SCO.

Iran has sought membership in the SCO for 15 years and finally, in September, was fully admitted to the organization. The SCO is a loose group of increasingly rogue nations dependent upon China for trade due to their pariah status internationally.

Burma (Myanmar), sanctioned for its bloody 2021 coup and ostracized for its genocide against the Rohingya, could also be using international money laundering networks facilitated by Beijing. Burma's ambassador to China met with the SCO Secretary-General in February and pledged his full support to the organization.

In 2021, Iran signed a 25-year "strategic accord" with China for economic and military cooperation. It went into the implementation stage in January. Over the last three years, China has defied sanctions to purchase Iranian oil at a discount from global market prices. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has emphasized his "Asia-centric" foreign policy that benefits China.

Beijing need not be so devoted to Tehran, however, due primarily to China's economic power, massive global trade networks, and the dependency of the world on supply chains that reach into China's deep industrial and technological manufacturing base. As William Figueroa noted in *The Diplomat*, "Iran may be forced to 'Look East' in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, but the Chinese government continues to look in many directions at once."

The West keeps trying to convince China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea to play by international rules, like nuclear nonproliferation and a political evolution toward a better conception of human rights that were established after World War II to maintain international peace. But these countries, run by power-hungry dictators, keep refusing. The sincere attempts by democracies in this respect are a fool's errand, where the fool is told repeatedly to kick the can down the road.

With China's economic and military rise, however, the road is running out. It is time to toughen sanctions on all of these autocratic regimes, starting with their leading member in Beijing, and break the economic ties between them that enable their repeated and

egregious violation of the international norms meant to preserve peace and security globally.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-implicated-in-irans-global-money-laundering_4349236.html

It's On—China's Economic War on the West

Lockdowns across China inflict heavy damage on Western economies

James Gorrie

Writer

March 23, 2022

Commentary

What's really behind Beijing's "zero-tolerance" COVID-19 policy? Isn't the pandemic all but over, with the vast majority of variants becoming less lethal and a large percentage of populations either vaccinated or with natural immunity?

If all that's true—and it is—what's going on?

Follow the Science: Lockdowns Don't Work

China's lockdowns aren't about saving lives.

Following the so-called "science" behind locking down a city of 9 million people or a whole region of 50 million people after only a relatively small number of non-lethal Omicron cases is absurd.

It was unwise and ineffective two years ago, and it remains so today.

In fact, according to the latest science, lockdowns aren't a measure to contain a virus. A recent study by Johns Hopkins University shows that "lockdown policies are ill-founded and should be rejected as a pandemic policy instrument."

The Death Deception of the CCP

But wait, China's mortality statistics from the disease show that lockdowns do work. Based on Beijing's calculations, only 4,636 people have died from the CCP virus, compared to over 825,000 official CCP virus deaths in the United States, Forbes reported on Jan. 2.

That's an unbelievably enormous disparity. And that's precisely the point. It's unbelievable, as in not credible, or a complete fabrication by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

In a word, it's a lie.

The actual death toll is much higher, as it should be.

How do we know?

Several reasons. For one, China refuses to disclose its figures of excess mortality with the rest of the world. Extra mortality numbers are how the world determines the impact of a disease.

Another reason is that China's mortality rate rose above the global average for the prior decade. This was due to China's aging population. What's more, its reported non-coronavirus death rate between 2019 and 2021 accelerated six times faster than the preceding decade.

Why would Beijing withhold the actual data? What's to gain?

It indeed allows the Chinese leaders to claim superiority over all other nations in containing a disease they may have unleashed upon the world.

For example, according to the Forbes report, Beijing claims a CCP virus death rate 30 times lower than Korea's, 50 times lower than Singapore's, and 73 times less than New Zealand's. These nations also locked down, restricted movement, and were highly vaccinated.

Is that believable?

Of course, it isn't, unless no one in mainland China died from the virus after April 2020. That's when China's deaths reports ceased.

But according to The Economist, China's real death rate is underreported by *a factor of 17,000*. The truth is that China's case fatality rate (CFR) is actually 4.22 percent, compared to the global CFR of 1.36 percent.

That's right; China's death rate from the disease that originated in Wuhan is more than 300 percent higher than the rest of the world.

Lockdowns = Economic Slowdowns

Given that reality that Beijing is undoubtedly aware of, why lock down entire cities and regions?

As the Johns Hopkins study points out, all lockdowns accomplish is an economic slowdown. In other words, factories in China operate at a lower capacity.

The global economy, which relies on Chinese manufacturers, is negatively impacted in many ways. It starts with supply disruptions. When the flow of products from China slows, nations' economies reliant upon those products slows down.

General economic slowdowns bring their effects. Companies have fewer products to sell. With lower inventories, there are fewer products to sell, and revenues fall. With falling revenues, employees are let go. At the same time, prices rise because of scarcity, while increasing unemployment puts additional strain on social safety nets.

Hitting Advanced Economies Hard Is an Act of War

From medical equipment to personal protective equipment (PPE), many shortages impacted the world at the beginning of the pandemic, dramatically impacting Western economies. Chip shortages followed and continue to this day, affecting everything from cars to computers and more.

In 2022, China's "zero-tolerance" policy means shutting down supply chains by closing the country's busiest port after just one case of Omicron is reported.

The bigger picture is that China has significant veto power over the U.S. economy and is using it. What's more, the CCP leadership knows or thinks it knows that China can tolerate harsher economic conditions better than the United States.

They may not be wrong. In democratic societies, political pressure—if not unrest—often emerges for improving conditions. That can lead to social divisions, even social polarization, and the rising number of people undergoing economic hardship.

While the United States responds by subsidizing people's lost income, China subsidizes manufacturing jobs. Both are debt, but subsidizing productivity makes more sense than subsidizing idleness.

In other words, Beijing's lockdown policy for what is essentially a much less lethal variant doesn't make any medical sense. So why do it?

Because it does make sense in a strategic context. As the world's leader in manufacturing with over 28 percent of global factory productivity, China has the industrialized economies of the West at a critical advantage.

The CCP knows that even with reshoring and nearshoring efforts underway since 2020, the United States can't make it happen fast enough to offset the devastation of Beijing's chokehold on products that Western economies need to function and grow.

That's entirely the point of China's "zero-tolerance" policy. It isn't a defensive measure intended to limit the spread of a virus it may have created. Lockdowns are designed and implemented entirely as offensive strikes against the Western nations' economic viability.

In short, China's lockdown policy and the virus that gives it political cover are most accurately understood as ongoing and escalating acts of economic warfare against the West, particularly against the United States.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/its-on-chinas-economic-war-on-the-west_4356329.html

Tesla and SpaceX Are Apparently Compromised by China

A China critic may have lost his Senate seat as a result

Anders Corr

March 23, 2022 Updated: March 24, 2022

News Analysis

Elon Musk and his companies, Tesla and SpaceX, are under scrutiny for their billion-dollar links to China and their CEO's political support for the totalitarian country. Some of that support comes in the same breath as his denigration of the United States.

While the freedom that America gives business is legendary in attracting capital and helps American soft power, Beijing does no such thing. Instead, it requires major political and technological concessions from companies that want access to the massive Chinese market. The political concessions can include opaque campaign donations that remove China's top critics from elected positions in the United States.

This sets up a dynamic in which American politicians and businesses have little to lose when publicly snubbing Washington and everything to gain by embracing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), including by looking the other way while technology transfers to Chinese companies that could eventually out-compete Americans on the price of labor and depth of China's supply chains.

This is the China in which Tesla and SpaceX, both of which are supposed to be patriotic American companies, are operating today. Some of the technology that China seeks, which SpaceX possesses, is even classified.

The foreign suppliers upon which SpaceX relies, according to a March 20 Wall Street Journal article, could have ties to China, which would be a relatively easy way for Beijing to steal sensitive technologies that likely have major military and economic uses. Indeed, one of China's new rockets looks suspiciously like the SpaceX Starship.

Likewise, China seeks Tesla's advanced battery technology. "Tesla has developed advanced battery packets sought by the Chinese, and China has adopted a less-expensive battery technology championed by Mr. Musk," according to the article's authors, Brody Mullins and Susan Pulliam.

They note that U.S. lawmakers are concerned about Musk's close links to China. They should be concerned. Musk and his two companies appear to be hiding something. They did not respond to the Journal's requests for comment.

SpaceX could be partially owned by China, as was Tesla, last we heard. When China's Tencent bought 5 percent of Tesla in 2017, Musk tweeted, "glad to have Tencent as an investor and advisor to Tesla." In other words, a CCP-controlled company is advising Musk.

Tencent and the Chinese embassy refused to answer Journal questions. The White House failed to respond to a Journal question about security risks from Musk's ties to Beijing.

What is everybody hiding with all this silence?

The CCP has a massive lever over Musk, which is its gatekeeper power over one of Tesla's largest markets: China.

According to the Journal, this is "thanks in large part to support of China's Communist Party and Mr. Xi. Chinese authorities gave Mr. Musk low-interest loans, cheap land, and other incentives for a Shanghai facility that opened in 2019 where Tesla vehicles and battery packs are assembled."

When Tesla faced financial difficulties and manufacturing shortfalls in 2018 and 2019, Chinese banks provided two loans that included a \$1.4 billion figure.

Musk's pro-CCP signaling, and disdain for the spirit of American laws that support human rights, goes on and on. On the last day of 2021, Musk opened a showroom in Xinjiang, where there is an ongoing genocide against the Uyghurs. He did it weeks after

President Joe Biden signed a bill into law against forced labor from the region. Musk snubbed human rights and the president—all of America with him.

Musk has played host to China's ambassador in the United States, including inviting him to a Tesla factory in California. Musk fawned over China's supposed economic prosperity, which is lackluster compared to countries like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

He celebrated the CCP's 100th anniversary by tweeting, the "economic prosperity that China has achieved is truly amazing, especially in infrastructure!"

In July 2020, Musk did what should be unthinkable for anyone claiming to be a freedom-loving American. He praised China while denigrating America.

"China rocks[,] in my opinion," he said. "People there—there's a lot of smart, hard[-]working people ... whereas I see in the United States increasingly much more complacency and entitlement."

Musk goes beyond what sounds like CCP propaganda, however, to ensure that America remains vulnerable to China's technology theft through high-paid lobbyists.

In 2019, a staunch China critic and former Senator Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) attempted to require, through a provision in new legislation, that NASA consider whether space-launch companies, including SpaceX, have financial ties to companies from China, according to the Journal. While the Senate Commerce Committee agreed to the provision, SpaceX lobbyists successfully killed the bill.

Gardner lost his seat in the 2020 election to John Hickenlooper, who called China a "great nation" that does not seek global dominance. Hickenlooper raised over \$5.6 million in the 2020 election cycle and has close ties to the Musk family. He flew in a Musk private jet, donated to a Musk charity, and officiated at the wedding of Musk's brother, Kimbal. He was, as a consequence, investigated over ethics concerns.

American legislative processes are too vulnerable to corrupting influence from China-linked American CEOs, who have billions of dollars worth of business riding on, making it easy for China to import their technologies and ultimately destroy their companies and shareholder value.

Meanwhile, there is what should be considered a criminal silence from bought politicians who are supposed to protect the interests of voters rather than rake in money from lobbyists and unpatriotic campaign donors. There's too much of this omertà, which runs from the White House to China's embassy, and through businesses like Tesla and SpaceX.

Meanwhile, like former Senator Gardner, the good guys are finishing last and losing their seats.

Citizens in free societies have a right to know who owns their biggest corporations, who is donating to which political campaigns, and what technologies they are all bleeding to the enemies of democracy. Without more transparency, the CCP will continue to outpace America and destroy our freedoms.

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

https://www.theepochtimes.com/tesla-and-spacex-are-apparently-compromised-by-china_4350398.html

Russia-Ukraine War: ‘Kill With a Borrowed Knife’?

Guermantes Lailari

March 24, 2022

Commentary

What is Russian President Vladimir Putin doing in Ukraine? Who benefits from the war?

Everyone knows that Ukraine is a resource-rich country. Some business articles ask this question: “Are Ukraine’s vast natural resources a real reason behind Russia’s invasion?”

Let’s examine this pragmatic-realist view and assume that the invasion is to acquire Ukrainian resources. If this were the case, what evidence would we see? And who would want the resources?

What Are the Ukrainian Resources?

The world’s breadbasket: Ukraine is the largest distributor of wheat, barley, and corn; the primary grain source to Africa and the Middle East; and 9.3 percent of GDP.

- Arable land: No. 1 in Europe.
- Black soil: 25 percent of the world’s volume.
- Corn was already harvested this fall, but the cooling system to keep it from spoiling could be in jeopardy due to the war. Additionally, the ability to ship the corn from Ukraine is hampered by the dangerous routes to the ports. All shipping from Ukraine is on hold due to the fear of ships being attacked. According to recent reporting, the Russian navy prevents all ships with Ukrainian cargo from exiting the Black Sea.

- If Ukrainian wheat cannot be harvested in July, Africa, the Middle East (Lebanon-60 percent from Ukraine), South Asia, and other countries will struggle to find replacement sources. It takes a year to get fields ready to start new grain crops.

Gas, coal, and oil reserves: Ukraine has the second-largest untapped gas reserves in Europe. Coal reserves in Ukraine rank seventh in the world and account for about 3 percent of the world's total coal reserves.

Metallic raw materials: Ukraine has uranium, titanium, nickel, magnesium, mercury, copper, palladium, platinum, cobalt, etc.

- Iron: Fifth-largest world exporter.
- Lithium: Around 500,000 tons of lithium oxide—the largest source globally.
- Titanium: Up to 20 percent of the world's reserves.
- Gallium: Second-most in the world.

In other words, Ukraine would be a significant prize for any superpower to control.

Pre-2014 Russian Invasion of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine

Next, we examine the Crimea and the eastern Ukrainian provinces, specifically Luhansk and Donetsk. The link here shows maps of Ukraine before the Russian annexation of Crimea.

Russia added to its control three times the size of Crimea in terms of sea area, which is about the size of the U.S. state of Maine (36,000 square miles). Why is this significant? Let's examine the oil and gas fields in this new Russian-controlled territory.

Besides Russia's claimed historic rights to Crimea, the real reason could be Russia was jealous of the rich oil and gas fields on the Crimean Peninsula, in the Ukraine exclusive economic zone's gas and oil fields, and the EEZ's future potential fields. The Russians added a large section of the Sea of Azov to their claim. In 2018, the Ukrainian Energy

Ministry said that “Ukraine has lost 80% of oil and gas deposits in the Black Sea and a significant part of the port infrastructure due to the annexation of Crimea.”

Ukrainian Eastern Provinces

The link here shows the dominant resource available is mainly in eastern Ukraine. Clearly, the eastern provinces and a few western provinces are the richest in resources; the center is used primarily for farming.

Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) and Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR)

Examining the area controlled by the LPR and the DPR, these regions are the same areas that are mineral-rich. Furthermore, Ukraine has a much-reduced claim to the Sea of Azov. If Russia does not retreat from the territory captured in 2022 between Russian Crimea and DPR, Ukraine would no longer have any coastline with the Sea of Azov. In effect, Russia would control the Sea of Azov and all its resources.

This link here shows a map of LPR and DPR.

Russian Gas

A large amount of Russia’s gas pipelines feed not only Ukraine but also Europe. The map in this link here shows the paths that these pipes take. Three major Russian gas arteries flow through eastern Ukraine: one flows to southern Russia to the Black Sea, another flows to Crimea and Odesa, and the third major artery flows to Ukraine’s European neighbors (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, etc.).

Ethnic Russian Ukrainians

An additional factor related to Russia's affinity to Crimea and eastern Ukraine is that most people in these Ukrainian regions speak Russian.

Current Situation

The Russian military is not lacking in experience—Chechnya (1994-1996 and 1999-2009), Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014), Syria (2015-current). Its performance in Ukraine in 2014 was ingenious and well planned. The current invasion appears to be poorly planned and executed.

This link here shows a map of the Russian military's control of Ukraine as of March 23, according to the Institute for the Study of War and American Enterprise Institute.

Since Feb. 24, Ukrainians have been fleeing their homeland to nearby countries that have welcomed them. As of March 21, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that an excess of 3.5 million refugees have left Ukraine to neighboring countries, 2 million internally displaced, and over 12.65 million people are directly affected by the conflict out of 44 million Ukrainians. Although initially, Russia demanded that the refugees escape to Russia or Belarus, this demand has been rescinded.

Chinese 'Peacemaker'?

Europe and the United States are requesting the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to intervene between the Russians and the Ukrainians because they believe that only China can reason with Putin, China's position in the conflict appears to be neutral, and China is presumably friendly to both. All these reasons would make it an ideal negotiator. However, this course of action is dangerous for many reasons.

First, the CCP and Russia have signed many agreements over the last decade, making the CCP appear pro-Russian. For example, in May 2014 (during the Crimean War), Russia and the CCP signed several agreements, including a 30-year deal worth \$400 billion to deliver gas to China.

According to news reports at the time, “Russia reportedly lifted an informal ban on foreign ownership of strategic assets, apparently opening the way for Chinese companies to take part in developing the gas fields and pipeline.”

In February 2022, Russia and the CCP signed several agreements, including one in which Russia agreed to a \$117.5 billion petrochemical deal for the next 25 to 30 years. The CCP probably also got a great deal assuming it knew about the Russian invasion into Ukraine and exploited the knowledge that Russia would be under economic sanctions during the conflict.

The CCP also received a significant deal with the Iranians in 2020. The CCP signed a 25-year \$400 billion oil deal with Iran while it was under the most severe sanctions during the Trump administration. And according to Iranian officials, the CCP obtained heavily discounted rates.

In December 2013, the CCP and Ukraine signed ten agreements, including the “Joint Declaration of Ukraine and China to further deepen strategic partnership.” China agreed that it would provide a “nuclear umbrella” to protect Ukraine if a nuclear power used nuclear weapons against it.

This was a strange agreement since Beijing claims a no-first-use policy and would imply that it would get involved in a nuclear war protecting a country other than China. Why did the CCP sign such an agreement?

Perhaps because of Ukraine’s importance to the CCP regarding its resources and military technology. In 2021, China was Ukraine’s largest trading partner.

In addition to commercial ties, the CCP had military interests in Ukraine. For example, Ukraine provided jet engine technology that filled a significant gap in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force fighter development program, and a Ukrainian aircraft carrier later became the PLA Navy’s first aircraft carrier.

Second, the CCP could ask for pre-conditions for its involvement in the Russian intervention. For example, the CCP could request that the United States and Europe promise not to intervene in its takeover of Taiwan.

Third, if the CCP successfully convinces Russia to stop and/or withdraw, then it would be allowed to send its military forces under some sort of brokered truce into Ukraine to

keep the peace. This commitment would place the Ukrainians with two kleptocratic autocracies (Russia and China), coveting the Ukrainian resources.

Permitting the CCP's PLA personnel into Ukraine would be like allowing the fox in the hen house. If there were a political crisis in Ukraine, the role of the PLA would be questionable at the least and treacherous at worst.

Fourth, allowing Beijing to negotiate for Europe and the United States would allow the CCP to control the West's level of pressure on Russia. Ukraine has tremendous resources, but Russia has considerably more resources that the CCP would gladly exploit. Therefore, the CCP would be able to draw Russia into the CCP's web of control to either absorb it into the CCP "borg" or make Russia into a vassal state subservient to the whims of the CCP.

Fifth, in 1994, the following countries met in Budapest, Hungary: Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. They signed the Budapest Memorandum, which stated that Ukraine (3,000 nuclear weapons), Belarus (81 nuclear weapons), and Kazakhstan (1,4000 nuclear weapons) agreed to join the NPT and remove their nuclear weapons to Russia.

Russia, the United States, and the UK agreed to do the following:

- Respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine.
- Reaffirm their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine, and that none of their weapons will ever be used against Ukraine.

Clearly, Russia violated the Budapest Memorandum in 2014 and in 2022, as well as the intent of the CCP-Ukrainian 2013 agreement. Why would Ukraine trust Russia, the CCP, or any of the parties to these agreements?

Finally, since Putin and CCP leader Xi Jinping signed their Feb. 4 Joint Statement, they are committed strategic partners. Russia and China could surprise everyone and declare that they are forming a security framework that has as its core a NATO-like Article 5, that any attack on one is an attack on the other.

This step toward a kleptocratic autocratic security alliance would put the rest of the world on notice that any country not part of a security alliance with a nuclear-armed

state was “free game” for Russia and the CCP, especially countries close to their respective borders.

Based on the above analysis, could the CCP all along want Russia to take more of Ukraine so that China would have easier access to the rich Ukrainian resources and to block Europe and even the United States (and their respective companies) from benefiting from these resources?

In other words, did the CCP employ the famous third rule—“Kill with a borrowed knife” (借刀殺人 meaning, have someone else do your dirty work)—from the Chinese military classic, “Thirty-Six Stratagems”?

Did the CCP convince the Russians to attack Ukraine by signing commercial agreements in February, and is this why the Russian military is not well prepared?

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/russia-ukraine-war-kill-with-a-borrowed-knife_4347563.html

When China and America Were Friends

The Chinese Communist Party destroyed the goodwill that existed between the US and China

Stu Cvrk

March 24, 2022

Commentary

Communist China conveniently forgets the U.S.-China alliance during World War II.

With the constant drone of anti-U.S. agitprop from Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Chinese state-run media, a person might think that Chinese animosity toward America has always existed. The communists' venom and vitriol are blatant (examples here, here, and here), but they obscure that the United States and China were once friends and wartime allies—before the communists took over China in 1949.

Americans in China

Americans have been visiting, living, working, trading, and proselytizing in China from the earliest days of the American republic. The proselytizing aspect was critical.

During the Third Great Awakening (1855–1930), a period of maximum Christian activism in the United States, China was one of the countries targeted by American missionaries as part of a worldwide campaign that promoted Christianity and social change to non-Christian peoples.

The introduction of Christianity in China was a destabilizing factor, as Christian tenets conflicted directly with the patriarchal Confucianism that underpinned Chinese society,

culture, and government for millennia. As a result, social change came hard, but that did not deter generations of American missionaries from performing mission work in China. Chinese laws were increasingly liberalized over time to facilitate the admission of foreigners into the country.

Chinese resistance to foreign presence led to the Boxer Rebellion (1900–1901), during which “The Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists” (or “Righteous Hands”) targeted all foreigners, including Chinese Christians and American missionaries. After a joint U.S.-European military force defeated the Boxers, China was forced to repay the victorious nations, including the United States and Imperial Japan, further adding to Chinese resentment of the foreign presence in their country.

In 1908, as a gesture of goodwill to China, the United States remitted the \$11 million remaining from the “Boxer indemnity,” and the ruling Qing Dynasty used the remittance to finance the education of 50 to 100 Chinese students in the United States per year.

Enter the Imperial Japanese Army

Japanese aggression in China began in the early 20th century as part of their plan to develop a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere” dominated by Imperial Japan. Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 after the Mukden Incident. It is believed that Japanese army officers planted a bomb on a Japanese-owned railway in Mukden that precipitated the Japanese invasion.

The Japanese aggression led to the “Stimson Doctrine,” in which then-U.S. Secretary of State Henry Stimson declared that “the United States would not recognize any agreements between the Japanese and Chinese that limited free commercial intercourse in the region.”

In short, the Japanese occupation of Manchuria pushed China and the United States together as de facto allies, setting the stage for an alliance during the coming world war.

The Marco Polo Bridge incident at Wanping in July 1937 precipitated the start of World War II in Asia, after which the Imperial Japanese Army occupied much of coastal China and engaged in bitter reprisals against Chinese noncombatants.

The United States sided with China as an extension of the Stimson Doctrine and placed diplomatic pressure on the Japanese to restore the integrity of China's borders and sovereignty, which had no discernible effect on continuing Japanese atrocities, including the "Rape of Nanking" in December 1937 through early 1938 and the carpet bombing of Chongqing from 1938 to 1943.

Nanking was the capital of China at the time the atrocities were committed, and the Japanese executed an "estimated 150,000 male 'war prisoners,' massacred an additional 50,000 male civilians, and raped at least 20,000 women and girls of all ages," according to some historians.

It's noteworthy the Stimson Doctrine is eerily similar to the sanctions and other diplomatic measures placed on Russia after it invaded Ukraine. The ineffectiveness of the Stimson Doctrine in deterring a determined aggressor like Imperial Japan should have been a historical lesson learned that diplomatic and economic measures are futile measures against a determined adversary that only respects military force.

World War II Allies

After the Imperial Japanese Navy attacked Pearl Harbor, the United States and China formed an official wartime alliance in 1942. The United States provided considerable material support to China throughout World War II, including through an extension of credits to the Chinese government and via direct military aid without strings attached—delivered through overland and air routes. A central supply line was provided via air over the Himalayas from India to China throughout the war to support Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang-led Chinese Republic.

In addition, the American Volunteer Group (AVG) Flying Tigers were volunteer airmen from the United States and Britain. They manned the fighter aircraft that attacked Japanese bombers operating in East Asia during the early years of the war.

According to U.S. General Claire Lee Chennault, the founder of the AVG: "The group had whipped the Japanese Air Force in more than 50 air battles without a single defeat. With the R.A.F., it had kept the port of Rangoon and the Burma Road open for 2 1/2 precious months while supplies trickled into China ... [and] gave both Chinese and American morale an invaluable boost at a time when it was sagging dangerously low."

U.S. Marine Corps personnel represent Nationalist Chinese forces as Japanese officers sign surrender documents at the end of World War II in August 1945. (U.S. Marine Corps)

The Chinese helped Jimmy Doolittle's raiders, who survived the carrier-launched B-25 bomber attack on Tokyo in 1942 and crashed in Manchukuo, the "protectorate" in northeast China that the Japanese then occupied. Doolittle's raid and the assistance afterward provided to surviving U.S. airmen by local Chinese was dramatized in the 2019 remake of the movie "Midway."

Eventually, the Stilwell Road was completed, which provided the main overland resupply route connecting Assam, India, with Kunming, China, in 1944. Some 44,000 Chinese troops supported British and American forces in defeating Japanese army forces to enable completion of the 1,000-mile road used to supply China for the rest of the war.

The contribution made by the Chinese people in winning World War II in the Pacific is a largely untold story in the United States. The Chinese fought the Japanese army for eight long years, tying down and preventing the Japanese military from completing other operations, including the likely invasion of Australia and possibly even India. As the Russians fought the Nazis on the Eastern Front, the Chinese army inflicted large numbers of casualties on the Japanese during a bitter war of attrition that had racial overtones.

The Chinese themselves suffered enormous casualties during the war. According to World Population Review: "China is estimated to have endured the second-highest number of total casualties in WWII. As many as 20 million people died in China, including up to 3.75 million military deaths and 18.19 million civilian deaths," and 10 million died from war-caused famine and disease.

Contrast those numbers with the estimated 419,000 deaths suffered by the United States in battles fought in both the European and Pacific theaters of war.

American Sentiment on V-J Day

A lifelong friend recently provided a laminated edition of The San Francisco Chronicle of Aug. 15, 1945. The articles were a remarkable journey back in time to help ascertain

Americans' emotions, issues, and opinions at that seminal moment in history—the day after V-J Day (Victory over Japan Day).

Here are some of the articles and announcements contained in that issue:

- Multiple articles on Japan's unconditional surrender, including the text of President Harry Truman's announcement, and this quote from Japanese Emperor Hirohito: "We accept Potsdam. ... I do not want to turn the country into scorched earth."
- Japanese War Minister Korechika Anami committed suicide "to atone for his failure."
- Truman announced that General Douglas MacArthur was named Supreme Allied Commander and would formally receive Japan's surrender. MacArthur would later be instrumental in helping turn post-war Japan into a staunch U.S. ally.
- The U.S. monthly draft was cut from 80,000 to 50,000. Large military contracts were canceled, with the attendant fears of impending unemployment for thousands of workers (a significant national concern with memories of the Great Depression firmly in the minds of many Americans). Job controls were ended. Concern about future worker strikes was expressed in association with the "reconversion" of wartime to peacetime production.
- All U.S. censorship is to be ended. The U.S. government had an Office of Censorship during the war to preclude disclosing war-sensitive information that the enemy could exploit.
- Some bitter comments from men wounded in the war who were convalescing in U.S. hospitals: "Don't write a tear-jerker about us, but right now I'd sure like to have that leg back. Just for a little while." "I wish I could get happy like the rest of them."
- A banner article describes the USS Indianapolis' loss to a Japanese torpedo on July 30: "Down in 15 minutes" with the loss of over 1,000 men.
- The conviction of Marshal Henri Petain, the former head of Vichy France, for "crimes against France" and "collaboration with the Nazis."
- On a secret trip to Russia, General Dwight Eisenhower visited a Soviet collective farm and said that it reminded him of his boyhood days in Kansas (he was being diplomatic, of course).
- Captured German documents detailed the duplicity of Swedish banking house Wallenberg (through Stockholm's Enskilda bank) playing both sides during the war and accepting large commissions for safeguarding the stocks of German companies. (Consider this story in the context of the near-total financial sanctions on Russia; German business interests were not sanctioned by the Allies throughout World War II!)

- A long article summarizing the entire war in the Pacific that pulled no punches in describing atrocities and battles fought. As one example, the Hiroshima atomic bomb “was followed by a warning to ‘surrender or face annihilation.’”
- A comparison of the fighting styles and demeanor of the two 5-star flag and general officers in the Pacific: Douglas MacArthur and Chester Nimitz.
- A very interesting article highlighting the split between the Nationalist government in Chungking and Mao Zedong’s communist forces in north central China. General Chiang Kai-Shek was portrayed as a strong U.S. ally and the rightful head of the Chinese government, and the sacrifices of the Chinese people during the war were acknowledged. Meanwhile, the Chinese communists continued attacks on Japanese forces after the ceasefire was declared, with Mao ordering “the Eighth Route Army, the new Fourth Route Army, and the South China Anti-Japanese Brigade to attack Chinese positions in north China.” This willful violation of the ceasefire in pursuit of communist political objectives was the spark that ignited the Chinese civil war.

Conclusion

China and the United States were wartime allies during World War II, with America providing significant war material and logistics support to China from 1940 onward. Chinese forces bore the brunt of the land war in East Asia, suffering tragic losses, including millions of civilian deaths.

The goodwill that existed between the Chinese and American peoples was destroyed after the Chinese communists consolidated control of China in 1949. That mutual goodwill can be restored with the demise of the Chinese Communist Party—a mutual goal for all moral people in the world.

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https://www.theepochtimes.com/when-china-and-america-were-friends_4352737.html

China's Other Genocide: Against the Rohingya in Burma

The US has recognized the genocide against the Rohingya in Burma, but not China's culpability

Anders Corr

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News Analysis

After five years of terror against the Rohingya in Burma (also known as Myanmar), the U.S. government finally designated it as a genocide. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the determination on March 21 at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

The genocide designation took so long because Washington did not want to drive the Burmese regime further into the arms of China. Officials had hopes of instead easing the Burmese military junta from the illiberal embrace of Beijing.

But after a coup in February 2021, less than two weeks following President Joe Biden's inauguration, a deteriorating environment for the Rohingya, including additional murders, and a war launched by Russia that approaches a new genocide against Ukrainians, the Biden administration is changing its mind.

The murders, rapes, maiming, torture, and village burnings that occurred in Burma's Rakhine State since 2017 have resulted in the flight of as many as 1.1 million people. Over 900,000 now live in Bangladesh's refugee camps. Approximately 600,000 are trapped in Burma, where they face severe persecution by the military regime in a conflict environment.

Perhaps the current terror against Ukrainians, 10 million of whom have now fled a country with a prior population of just 44 million, spurred Biden's action on the Rohingya. Calling Russia's violence against the Ukrainian state and population—which Russian President Vladimir Putin would like to erase—a genocide would be the right thing to do.

We know genocide when we see it, and failing to label such mass forms of violence against civilians for what it is, gives the world an excuse not to take action and accept its responsibility to protect (R2P).

The Rohingya and Ukraine genocides now join the others currently ongoing against the Tigray people of Ethiopia, and the Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Falun Gong of China. Not all these genocides are presently recognized.

But what should be recognized is that all of them have top cover from Beijing. All the dictatorial regimes that impose genocide know that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)—which seeks to “cleanse” its population of all religious and linguistic diversity in favor of not just Chinese communism, but Han communism under the rule of one man: CCP leader Xi Jinping—simultaneously supports the “right” of other regimes to similarly repress diversity in their populations.

The CCP thus exports its acceptance of genocide to the dictatorships over which it has influence, including most obviously Russia, Burma, and Ethiopia. Who knows which other countries Beijing is now encouraging through its “realist” foreign policy that ignores ethics, norms, and human rights to engage in genocide. It could be Saudi Arabia, Iran, or Syria. It could be the Philippines. All have been particularly violent in their domestic or foreign policies.

What matters most for the CCP is power, and it has plenty of it to encourage the chaos and power vacuums globally into which it can step and “save the day” by offering itself as a “mediator.” Power grows from the barrel of a gun, according to Chairman Mao Zedong, and Xi is now making that real on a global level through encouraging massacres and genocides against its own and other populations.

On the Rohingya repression, China has worked to stymie U.N. sanctions that might otherwise have been imposed on the Burmese regime.

“China's aggressive support for and defense of the Myanmar military in international fora, such as the United Nations, provides the regime diplomatic cover,” according to Rachel Lambert at the Wilson Center's Asia Program in Washington.

By defending the Burmese regime, Beijing makes the Rohingya genocide its own.

Lambert noted in a 2022 article that China is even trying to use the crisis to sell its development exports to Burma and avoid any precedent of R2P against genocide.

“China certainly has economic and geostrategic interests in Myanmar: it has large investments in Myanmar and naturally opposes other nations increasing their influence in a close neighbor,” according to Lambert.

“However, Beijing’s interference in the plight of the Rohingya appears based fundamentally in concerns over setting precedents that could impact its own internal policies, particularly in Xinjiang.”

On a January 2021 trip by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Burma, the minister promised support to Burma’s handling of the Rohingya and other ethnic issues, along with progress on Burmese development projects that favor Beijing.

The two regimes agreed to launch a study of a possible rail link between Burma’s Kyaukphyu port and Mandalay, the country’s second-largest city. Thus, Beijing seeks to further tie Burma to its economy through the debt required to build the rail and an additional rail connection to its Yunnan Province. China already has a pipeline network that moves oil and gas to Yunnan from the Bay of Bengal.

As far back as 2018, the United States Institute of Peace noted that Beijing protects Burma from U.N. sanctions. The CCP regime has “offered rhetorical and material support for its handling of the so-called [Rohingya] terrorist attacks,” according to USIP.

Counter-terrorism was Burma’s excuse for its genocide against the Rohingya, just as it was the CCP’s excuse for genocide against the Uyghurs.

As with atrocities elsewhere, the genocide against the Rohingya attracted global opprobrium to Burma and forced the government into the arms of China. Knowing this dynamic, Beijing has had every incentive to support Burma in its repression, including promises of economic trade and diplomatic support at the United Nations.

It is long past time for the world to recognize how the CCP has had a horrific impact against peace and human rights not only in China but globally from Europe through Africa and into Southeast Asia. Once this is recognized, the world can finally start taking effective action in its defense, including through greater economic sanctions on Beijing.

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