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THE EPOCH TIMES

# CHINA INSIDER

Tyler Behrends (R) and Brian Maschke bring an overdose victim into a hospital in Rockford, Ill., on July 14, 2017.

## Colonizing the Mind

How Beijing snuck into Africa through TV and Film **6**

# CHEMICAL WARFARE

HOW CHINA IS USING FENTANYL  
TO DESTROY THE US

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Paramedics help a man who is overdosing in the Drexel neighborhood of Dayton, Ohio, on Aug. 3, 2017.

## OPIOID CRISIS

# China Is Using *Fentanyl* as 'Chemical Warfare,' Experts Say

BOWEN XIAO

Behind the deadly opioid epidemic ravaging communities across the United States lies a carefully planned strategy by a hostile foreign power that experts describe as a "form of chemical warfare."

It involves the production and trafficking of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that caused the deaths of more than 32,000 Americans in 2018 alone, and fentanyl-related substances.

China is the "largest source" of illicit fentanyl in the United States, a November 2018 report by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission stated. That same commission said that since its 2017 report, they found no "substantive curtailment" of fentanyl flows from China to the United States. They also noted that in "large part, these flows persist due to weak regulations governing pharmaceutical and chemical production in China."

President Donald Trump has continued to increase his crackdown on fentanyl—he recently ordered all U.S. carriers to "search for and refuse" international mail deliveries of the synthetic opioid pain reliever. Trump specifically named FedEx, Amazon, UPS, and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS).

Jeff Nyquist, an author and researcher of Chinese and Russian strategy, said China is using fentanyl as a "very effective tool."

"You could call it a form of chemical



Jeff Nyquist.

warfare," Nyquist told The Epoch Times. "It opens up a number of opportunities for the penetration of the country, both in terms of laundering money and in terms of blackmail against those who participate in the trade and become corrupt like law enforcement, intelligence, and government officials."

China also uses the money generated by the importing of fentanyl to effectively "influence political parties," according to Nyquist.

"It opens doors for Chinese influence operations, Chinese People's Liberation Army, and intelligence services, so that they can get control of certain parts of the U.S.," he said.

In August, Trump called out Chinese leader Xi Jinping, accusing him of not doing enough to stop the flow of fentanyl, which enters the United States mostly via international mail.

Liu Yuejin, vice commissioner of the China National Narcotics Control Commission, disputed Trump's criticism, telling reporters on Sept. 3 that they had started going after illicit fentanyl production, according to state-controlled media. China also denies that most of the illicit fentanyl entering the United States originates in China.

"President Xi said this would stop—it didn't," Trump said on Twitter on Aug. 23.

Overdose deaths from synthetic opioids such as fentanyl surged from around 29,000 in 2017 to more than 32,000 in 2018, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Not all opioid-related deaths in the United States can be blamed on China's fentanyl export policies, as some come from prescription overdoses, according to Dr. Robert J. Bunker, an adjunct research professor at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute.

But Bunker told The Epoch Times that China is still "greatly contributing" to America's opioid epidemic. Bunker described how Beijing is using the trafficking of dangerous drugs to achieve its greater Communist Party goals.

"Contributing to a major health crisis in the U.S., while simultaneously profiting from it would in my mind give long-term CCP plans to establish an authoritarian Chinese global system as a challenge to Western liberal democracy," he said via email.

"[It's] a win-win situation for the re-

gime," he continued. "In fact producing and sending fentanyl to the U.S., which could be considered a low-risk policy of 'drug warfare,' is very much in line with the means and methods advocated in the 1999 work 'Unrestricted Warfare.'"

The book mentioned by Bunker is authored by two of China's air force colonels, Qiao Liang, and Wang Xiangsui, and published by the People's Liberation Army.

Recent cases of fentanyl-related overdose and deaths are linked to "illegally made fentanyl," the CDC has said. Fentanyl has been approved for treating severe pain for conditions such as late-stage cancer. Fentanyl is 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine. It is prescribed by doctors through transdermal patches or lozenges.

A USPS spokesman told The Epoch Times they are "aggressively working" to add in provisions from the STOP Act. The Synthetic Trafficking and Overdose Prevention legislation, signed in 2018 by Trump, aims to curb the flow of opioids sent through the mail while increasing coordination between USPS and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

USPS has notified China's postal operations that if any of their shipments don't contain Advance Electronic Data (AED), they "may be returned at any time," the spokesman said via email. CBP is also notifying air and ocean carriers to confirm that 100 percent of their postal shipment containers have AED before loading them onto their conveyance.

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### Recent Seizures

In August, law enforcement seized 30 kilograms (around 66 pounds) of fentanyl, among other narcotics as part of a major arrest operation over the course of three days. As a result, officers arrested 35 suspects for "conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute large amounts of heroin, fentanyl, cocaine, and cocaine base."

G. Zachary Terwilliger, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, said in a statement that the amount of fentanyl seized was enough to "kill over 14 million people." One of the suspects in Virginia had ordered the fentanyl from a vendor in Shanghai and was receiving it at his residence through USPS, according to the indictment.

"The last thing we want is for the U.S. Postal Service to become the nation's largest drug dealer, and there are people

way above my pay grade working on that, but absolutely, it's about putting pressure on the Chinese," Terwilliger said.

CBP Enforcement Statistics reveal that fiscal year seizures of illicit fentanyl spiked from about one kilogram (2.2 pounds) in 2013 to nearly 1,000 kilograms (2,200 pounds) in 2018. The number of law enforcement fentanyl seizures in the United States also vaulted from about 1,000 in 2013 to more than 59,000 in 2017.

Also, in August, the Mexican navy found 52,000 pounds of fentanyl powder in a container from a Danish ship that was coming from Shanghai. The navy intercepted the unloaded 40-foot container on Aug. 24, at the Port of Cardenas.

"There is clear evidence that fentanyl or fentanyl precursors, chemicals used to make fentanyl is coming from China," Dr. Andrew Kolodny, co-director of Opioid Policy Research at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, told The Epoch Times.

Two commonly used fentanyl precursors are chemicals called NPP and 4-ANPP. In early 2017, journalist Ben Westhoff started researching the chemicals, finding many advertisements for them all over the internet from different companies. He later determined a majority of those companies were under a Chinese chemical company called Yuancheng, according to an excerpt from his upcoming book "Fentanyl, Inc.: How Rogue Chemists Are Creating the Deadliest Wave of the Opioid Epidemic," an excerpt of which was published in The Atlantic.

### Fentanyl Analogs

One of the concerns related to the production of illicit opioids is the creation of fentanyl analogs, products that are similar to fentanyl and also simple to make.

"You can very easily manipulate the molecule and create a new fentanyl-like product that hasn't been banned, that's not technically illegal," Kolodny told The Epoch Times. "Some of the manufacturers, the folks creating the drugs, are aware of that."

"We saw this with other synthetic drugs that are abused in the U.S., when law enforcement make the drug illegal or when they ban the molecule," he said. "In some cases, fentanyl analogs are even stronger than fentanyl. There's an analog called carfentanil, which is even more potent than fentanyl."

Carfentanil has a quantitative potency "approximately 10,000 times that of morphine and 100 times that of fentanyl," according to the National Center for Biotechnology Information.

Just one microgram is needed for carfentanil to affect a human. The drug is "one of the most potent opioids known" and is marketed under the trade name Wildnil "as a general anesthetic agent for large animals."

"Sometimes, it's hard for law en-

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Dr. Robert J. Bunker, adjunct research professor, U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute



A fatal dose of fentanyl displayed next to a penny.

It opens doors for Chinese influence operations, Chinese People's Liberation Army, and intelligence services, so that they can get control of certain parts of the U.S..

Jeff Nyquist, author and researcher, Chinese and Russian strategy

forcement to keep up with the chemist," Kolodny added.

A bill dubbed the SOFA Act or the "Stopping Overdoses of Fentanyl Analogues Act," has yet to pass Congress. The act was introduced in May by Republican senators and would give law enforcement "enhanced tools to combat the opioid epidemic and close a loophole in current law that makes it difficult to prosecute crimes involving some synthetic opioids."

Kolodny said pharmaceutical industries have been lobbying to stop any legislation meant to restrict fentanyl analogs "because these are products they are trying to bring to market."

In August, an Oklahoma judge ordered Johnson & Johnson to pay \$572.1 million to the state for deceitfully marketing addictive opioids. The sum was less than what investors had expected, according to Reuters, which resulted in shares of the multinational corporation rising in value.

"We should be doing everything we can to keep fentanyl out of the country," Kolodny said. "We should be doing everything we can to ban fentanyl analogs."

### Billion-Dollar Grants

As part of the Trump administration's latest efforts to combat the opioid crisis, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on Sept. 4 announced nearly \$2 billion in funding to states.

The funding would expand access to treatment and also support near-real-time data on the drug overdose crisis, according to a release.

In announcing the move, White House counsel Kellyanne Conway told reporters

in a conference call that their administration is trying to interject the word "fentanyl" into the "everyday lexicon" as part of their efforts to increase awareness.

Data suggests that of the approximately 2 million Americans suffering from opioid use disorder, approximately 1.27 million of them are now receiving medication-assisted treatment, according to the HHS.

"Central to our effort to stop the flood of fentanyl and other illicit drugs is our unprecedented support for law enforcement and their interdiction efforts," she said.

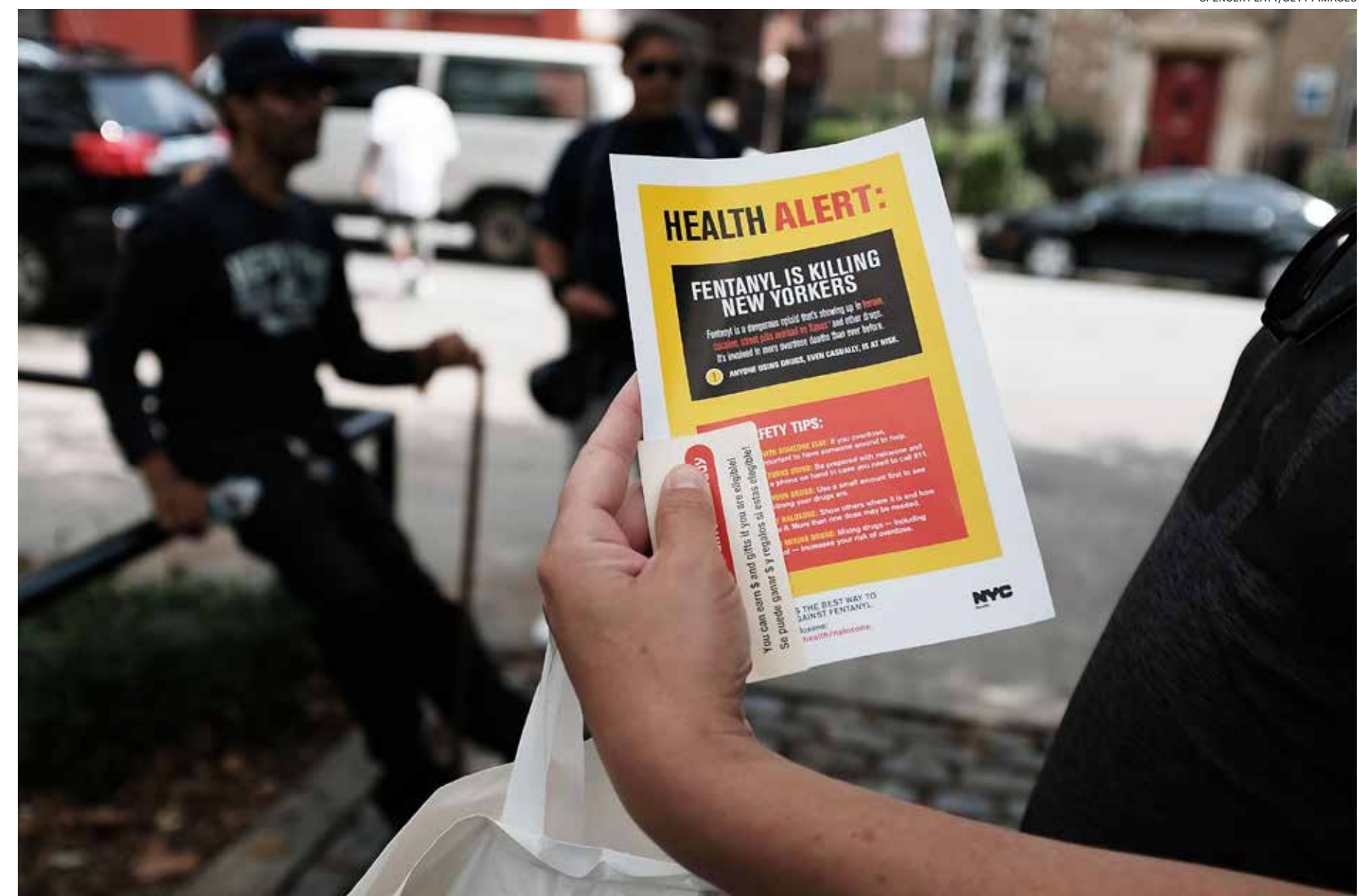
Conway then brought up the DHS seizures of fentanyl in 2018, which totaled an equivalent of 1.2 billion lethal doses. "Ladies and gentlemen, that is enough to have killed every American four times," she told reporters.

Just weeks ago, the White House released a series of private-sector advisories aimed to help businesses protect themselves and their supply chains from inadvertently trafficking fentanyl and synthetic opioids.

The four advisories aim to stem the production and sale of illicit fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, and other synthetic opioids. The advisories focus on the manufacturing, marketing, movement, and monetary aspects of illicit fentanyl.

In March 2018, the Interior Department created a task force aimed to specifically combat the crisis on tribal lands. Since then, the department has arrested more than 422 individuals and seized 4,000 pounds of illegal drugs worth \$12 million on the street, including more than 35,000 fentanyl pills.

Conway, on the conference call, described the epidemic of pain relievers as an "opioid and fentanyl crisis."



A heroin user reads an alert on fentanyl in New York on Aug. 8, 2017.



Customs and Border Protection officers seized 100 pounds of Fentanyl shipped from China, in this photo released June 28, 2018.

## OPINION

# US Needs Alternatives to China's Rare Earth Monopoly

As the trade war goes on, China threatens to deprive the US of critical elements its economy and its military can't do without



A cyclist wears a protective face mask while riding along a dusty road where dozens of factories processing rare earths, iron, and coal operate on the outskirts of Baotou city in Inner Mongolia, northwest China, on April 21, 2011.

JAMES GORRIE

Many consider China's vast portfolio of U.S. Treasuries as their not-so-secret weapon in the ongoing trade war. And it some ways, that is certainly true. China could decide to liquidate much or all of its U.S. bond holdings in response to rising tariffs and use other tactics, like currency devaluation.

But such a move would damage their economy along with America's. The Chinese are smarter than that.

## China State Media Hints at Embargo

Besides, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has another, more tangible ace up its sleeve. As unbelievable as it sounds, China holds a near global monopoly on the supply—or more accurately, the processing capacity—of rare earth elements (REE).

Should China decide to impose an embargo against the sale of REEs to the United States, the American economy and the U.S. military would be scrambling to replace them, at least in the short run.

That's not overstating this situation, by the way. As Foreign Policy magazine recently observed, "Beijing could slam every corner of the American economy, from

oil refineries to wind turbines to jet engines, by banning exports of crucial minerals." The list of REE-critical products includes smartphones, special alloys, navigation systems, and much more.

China, of course, is well aware of this. In fact, China's state-run media have been promoting an embargo, or leveraging the threat of one, in response to the U.S. tariffs on Chinese products, and specifically, against the U.S. blacklisting of Huawei, China's biggest telecom equipment manufacturer and a leader in 5G networks. Since all media in China is controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it's a certainty that this message is being sent to U.S. trade negotiators directly from the CCP.

## China Made This Play Before

If China does stop selling REEs to the United States, it wouldn't be the first time they've played that card. In 2006, China began limiting its exports of REEs, reducing them by 40 percent until 2010. The reduction caused the prices of non-China-sourced REEs to skyrocket. China also took advantage of its market dominance and stopped selling to Japan in retribution for a maritime incident.

After the United States, along with Japan and Europe, prevailed against China in a WTO fight in

2015, China dramatically dropped its REE prices and drove the only active REE processing plant in the United States, Molycorp, into bankruptcy. At that time China produced 95 percent of the world's rare earth metals.

## How Did We Get Here?

But how has the U.S. allowed itself to be put in such bind? Wouldn't it make sense to have secured an American or at least a friendly source of these REEs on which so much of our military preparedness and our economy are reliant? Shouldn't that have been a priority, say, decades ago?

Actually, it was. But that changed in 1980, when rare earth mineral mining and processing came under the purview of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Regulatory guidelines became increasingly restrictive, driving up costs, steadily decreasing U.S. producers' competitiveness. By the mid-1990s, the U.S. was no longer producing RREs.

## Rare Earth Elements Aren't so Rare After All

Fortunately, REEs aren't rare at all. In fact, they're actually quite plentiful around the world, even in

the United States. The 17 elements that are categorized as REEs have magnetic and conductive aspects and are typically unearthened as a result of mining operations, but most are present in only small amounts. There are few, if any, specific "rare earth mines."

The costs and health risks of producing REEs are in the processing. For instance, since toxins and radiation are a by-product of processing REEs, many Western nations' environmental and labor laws make processing them both costly and a health risk to miners. It has been easier much cheaper for other nations to let China produce them, since neither health codes nor environmental standards are significant factors there.

## An REE Shortage Crisis?

But the costs of allowing China to gain the upper hand in the world's supply of REEs are now becoming clear. If China does in fact restrict REE sales to the United States in the near future, it would certainly impact both the consumer product markets and the military.

The key question is, how long it would take to bridge the supply gap and find alternatives?

One mitigating factor is Australian-based Lynas, the world's only major rare-earth producer outside of China. It has partnered

with Texas-based Blue Line to establish U.S. operations by 2021. However, the United States still lacks any REE processing capacity, representing a critical and ongoing vulnerability in its military capabilities.

But the news isn't all bad. The Mountain Pass mine in California is currently being prepared to ramp up REE processing operations by 2020. Coincidentally, Mountain Pass was previously owned by Molycorp, which had invested over \$1.5 billion in the processing project, before being forced out of business by China in 2015.

The critical role that REEs play in both military and consumer products is impossible to overstate. The U.S. economy is dependent upon a steady and dependable supply. If America is to be successful in its bid to roll back China's power and influence over the rest of the world, ensuring its own supply of strategic REE is not just an option, it's a necessity.

*James Gorrie is a writer based in Texas. He is the author of "The China Crisis."*

*Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

## ANALYSIS

# China Loosens Lending Restrictions, Turns on Debt Spigot

FAN YU

News Analysis  
China announced fresh, deep cuts to bank reserve requirements in an effort to provide more economic stimulus and increase liquidity as economic slowdown worsens.

The People's Bank of China (PBoC) said on Sept. 6 that it would cut the amount of reserves banks are required to hold—the required reserve ratio (RRR)—thereby increasing the ability to lend by 900 billion yuan (\$126 billion).

The decision came days after Washington hit Beijing with a new round of 15 percent tariffs on about \$112 billion of manufactured goods such as apparel and shoes, potentially hurting small-scale Chinese manufacturing firms.

The cuts aren't unexpected following the recent State Council meeting, when authorities called for more economic stimulus—in fact, it's the third time the PBoC has cut the RRR this year. But the latest round of cuts is the most aggressive since at least 2015, and

**The latest round of RRR cutting is another stimulus aimed at supporting the manufacturing sector by funneling liquidity to smaller firms.**

lowers RRR at all banks by 0.5 percent effective Sept. 16, and by 1 percent at some city commercial banks to be enacted in two phases in October and November.

Beijing authorities had to do something in light of the economic and political environment. China is mired in a trade war with the United States, and various economic indicators are at multi-year lows, ahead of the all-important Oct. 1 National Day holiday. Bloomberg reported on Sept. 2 that several experts—including Bank of America, Oxford Economics, and Bloomberg Economics—have all cut their 2020 China GDP growth forecast to below 6 percent, a psychological threshold that the Chinese Communist Party had set to meet its goals ahead of its 2021 centenary.

The latest round of RRR cutting is another stimulus aimed at supporting the manufacturing sector by funneling liquidity to smaller firms. Last month, the PBoC replaced its key lending rate with a different benchmark lending rate called the loan prime rate (LPR), in an effort to lower real bor-

rowing costs for small and mid-size companies.

## Measured Framing

Interestingly, the PBoC made sure to emphasize that it doesn't intend to flood the market with stimulus. "The cuts are not flooding the economy with stimulus, and the stable monetary policy orientation has not changed," according to a follow-up statement posted by the central bank on Sept. 6.

The tone of its statement is reminiscent of the U.S. Federal Reserve's recent "mid-cycle adjustment" messaging. The PBoC noted that the 900 billion yuan of liquidity will be offset by the September tax collection period, which will be a cash drain on enterprises, effectively causing the total liquidity of the bank system to "remain basically stable."

The measured framing of the latest cuts is in line with Beijing's carefulness in its recent easing efforts. The RRR cuts are theoretically depreciative to the yuan currency—which is currently below 7 per dollar—and



A man walks past the headquarters of the People's Bank of China, the central bank, in Beijing on Sept. 28, 2018.

given that Washington has already labeled Beijing as a currency manipulator, the PBoC doesn't want to suggest further currency depreciation. So far, it has refrained from cutting its benchmark interest rate, although the previously discussed August LPR reform was effectively a rate cut.

## Eyeing Debt Defaults

Naturally, higher lending activity will lead to a greater number of defaults. Beijing has shown a greater appetite to let companies default on their debt. Official data showed that the value of bond default was 44 billion yuan (\$6 billion) in the first half of 2019, com-

# Report Analyzes China's Twitter Influence Campaign

FRANK FANG

An investigation by an Australian think tank found that Beijing bought Twitter spam accounts to spread misleading information about not just the Hong Kong protests, but also multiple events dating as far back as 2015.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), a nonpartisan defense and strategic policy think tank, recently released a report analyzing Twitter accounts the company suspended in August and their 3.6 million tweets, which were published between December 2007 and May 2019.

In a blog post on Aug. 19, Twitter announced that it had suspended 936 accounts originating from China that were "deliberately and specifically attempting to sow political discord in Hong Kong, including undermining the legitimacy and political positions of the protest movement on the ground." The company also released data related to those accounts.

Hongkongers have staged mass protests since June in opposition to a now-withdrawn extradition bill that would allow the Chinese regime to seek extradition of individuals to be tried in mainland China, where there is no rule of law.

ASPI found that "the amount of content directly targeting the Hong Kong protests makes up only a relatively small fraction of the total dataset released by Twitter, comprising just 112 accounts and approximately 1,600 tweets, of which the vast majority are in Chinese with a much smaller number in English," the report stated.

The report surmised that due to the predominant use of the Chinese language in those tweets, their target audiences were likely Hongkongers and the overseas Chinese diaspora. Twitter is banned inside mainland China.

Aside from Hong Kong, the report found that the accounts were involved in past operations, including attacking Gui Minhai, a Hong Kong bookseller who was abducted by Chinese authorities in 2015 for publishing books critical of Chinese leadership. In 2018, those accounts posted messages attacking Chinese human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng.

## Campaign

The Chinese information campaign targeting Hong Kong protests was "hastily constructed" and "blunt," relying on repurposed spam and marketing



People use their phones as they sit on a railing in Kowloon, Hong Kong, on Feb. 27, 2019.

accounts to disseminate information. According to the report, the accounts are usually easily and cheaply purchased from online resellers.

There was no "sophisticated coordination" among the actors behind these Twitter accounts, indicating that the campaign wasn't planned in advance.

"Many of the accounts we looked at were very 'spammy' and could clearly be picked out as they didn't look like real people," Tom Uren, senior analyst in cybersecurity at ASPI and one of the authors of the report, said in an email interview with The Epoch Times.

The report stated, "This was the quintessential authoritarian approach to influence—one-way floods of messaging, primarily at Hongkongers."

Due to the quick pace of events unfolding in Hong Kong, it likely made it more difficult for Beijing to build up an "influence infrastructure," leading to them relying on existing accounts, according to the report.

Uren said the report findings are significant because it shows that China is among "a list of states we know are trying to covertly manipulate Western social media: Russia, Iran, and now China."

Uren offered suggestions on how to

defend off influence operations, including by making advertising and political donations transparent on social media platforms, and establishing standards of cooperation with social networks.

## Hong Kong

The report noted that influence operations related to the Hong Kong protests began on April 14, when an account named @HKpoliticalnew posted a tweet about the extradition bill. On June 14, there was a significant spike in the number of tweets published by the 112 accounts that ASPI analyzed as part of the Hong Kong influence campaign.

June 9 marked the start of mass protests, when more than 1 million people took to the streets to call for the bill to be withdrawn from consideration by the city legislature.

Then on June 12, peaceful protests descended into chaos at around 3 p.m. local time, after some protesters tried to break through police lines outside the legislature building. Local police used tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, and bean bags in an attempt to clear protesters from the streets.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam sus-

ended the bill indefinitely on June 15. On Sept. 4, she announced that the bill would be formally withdrawn, but protesters said they would continue to appeal for their other demands, including an independent commission to investigate instances of police violence.

Another tweeting spike took place July 1, when roughly 550,000 took to the streets, according to march organizers. The ASPI report found that tweets in English also began that day, possibly in response to international attention on the events in Hong Kong.

The report summarized that there were three main narratives from the tweets: condemnation of the Hong Kong protesters; support for the Hong Kong police and "rule of law"; and a conspiracy theory about Western governments fomenting the protests. Beijing has consistently pushed this narrative since it spoke publicly about the protests in July.

For example, one tweet read: "Hong Kong SAR [special administrative region] police headquarters were surrounded and attacked. Who were the people wearing black? They were acting under the direction of western anti-China forces. They're manipulating things behind the scenes."

banking system aren't as widely reported. Through August, borrowers have missed repayments on a record 32 billion yuan (\$4 billion) of private bonds in 2019, according to a Sept. 4 Bloomberg report, which cited data from China Chengxin International Credit Rating Co., a Chinese credit rating firm.

So will the increased lending bring the results Beijing seeks?

Some experts don't believe greater lending activity would materially boost economic activity. ING Greater China Economist Iris Pang believes that the ongoing trade war and lack of

demand don't support companies expanding production and hiring more employees.

Instead, Pang believes the RRR cuts will help alleviate a different problem. Companies will "repay debts with these new loans, which will save some interest costs and avoid defaults on payments." This makes sense given that the PBoC has reformed the interest rate system and borrowers could see up to a 1 percent decrease in interest on loans by some estimates.

"But this would not boost economic activity," Pang noted.

Workers build an electric bus at a factory in Liaocheng City, Shandong Province, China, on Dec. 12, 2018.

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## CHINESE INFLUENCE

## COLONIZING THE MIND

# How Beijing Snuck Into Africa Through TV and Film

DOMINIC KIRUI

**A**INAMOI, Kenya—On a fine Saturday afternoon at Ainamoi shopping center in Kenya's Kericho County, Leonard Biegion takes a few colored chalks and sketches the names of the current and upcoming films he's showing on a board outside his video store.

Today, a Chinese film named "Twins Mission" is showing in Mandarin, but with a comic translation by a local DJ in Swahili and Sheng (Kenyan slang).

The 35-year-old father of three has been in the video business since 2004 and says that most of his customers prefer watching Chinese movies either with subtitles or with a local translation.

Long before the arrival of and switch to digital television in Africa, many families and local cinema halls were already viewing and showing Chinese movies. Young men and women would pay as little as 5 Kenyan shillings (5 cents) to enjoy a kung fu movie that would probably be in Mandarin.

"They want to follow movies about Chinese culture and way of life. Sometimes you find a movie about a very valuable artifact that used to exist and an actor is tasked with finding it and bringing it back to the present day, where it's kept and treasured," Biegion said.

Biegion is nicknamed Bruce Lee, and says that the name came about long before he ventured into the film-showing business.

"I used to wear a black belt and a t-shirt tucked in, and when I played pool, I won just like Bruce Lee had done in one of his movies. This is how I got the name and it has stuck with me for close to 20 years," Biegion explained.

## Chinese Soft Power

Watching Chinese movies might seem like innocent fun, but experts say it's a clever method that the Chinese communist regime has used to gradually advance its soft power penetration in Africa.

"The media is a very powerful tool that can be used for propaganda by politicians and government at large. This is because people believe what they are told by those they trust," said Dorcas Kebenei, a communications lecturer at Kabarak University, located in Western Kenya.

"Governments take advantage of the media to influence decisions of the common people. This follows the agenda-setting theory that media sets the agenda for the day. Media uses persuasive techniques to change people's attitudes, and in the Chinese case, the government will show the good roads they have constructed, including SGR [standard gauge railway] and other new technologies. The messages are presented in a pleasing manner."



Leonard Biegion writes the name of an ongoing Chinese movie at his video store at Ainamoi shopping center on Aug. 23, 2019.

**China has attractive issues like culture, which is well embedded in Africa. ... On the other hand, China's 'help' for Africans is questionable as the Africans will have to pay either in kind or in cash.**

Dorcas Kebenei, communications lecturer at Kabarak University

Faith Bett watches TV with her two children in Kenjoiyet village, Kericho County, in Kenya on Aug. 26, 2019.

## StarTimes

In Kenjoiyet village, Faith Bett is enjoying an evening news program with her two children. They are connected to digital television via StarTimes, a Chinese media company founded in 1988 by Pang Xinxing, a Chinese businessman.

"We watch and know many things about China and other parts of the world just in the comfort of our own home. I love to follow Chinese Asian politics through CGTN [China Global Television Network], because some of the news anchors there are as popular as they were on Kenyan television before they went there," Bett explained.

In East Africa, StarTimes has a dedicated Swahili channel named StarTimes Swahili. It shows Chinese kung fu movies and soap operas, all fully translated into Swahili so that viewers can understand what the characters are saying.

"At night, we enjoy a Chinese soap opera in Swahili. We used to watch Mexican and Filipino soaps back in the day, but not many would understand English so well. There is a lot of comfort in watching a soap opera in Swahili. We get to learn more about Chinese love and relationship issues," Bett said.

## Neo-Colonialism

In December 2015, during the sixth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Johannesburg, Chinese leader Xi Jinping announced an ambitious project to reach 10,000 impoverished villages in Africa

with digital television. The StarTimes digital television company was awarded the contract to undertake the project.

"China has carried out image-building strategies which are seen to be creating economic relations," Kebenei said. "China has attractive issues like culture, which is well embedded in Africa. ... On the other hand, China's 'help' for Africans is questionable as the Africans will have to pay either in kind or in cash."

In June last year, the Chinese government, working in partnership with Kenya's Ministry of Information, Communications, and Technology, launched the 800 Villages Digital Television Project. Through the project, 16,000 individual homes across all 47 counties in the country will be connected to satellite television via a satellite dish, a high-definition set-top box, or other devices.

StarTimes Kenya was awarded the contract at a cost of \$8 million, paid for by the Chinese government.

"China's intention appears to be the reduction of the digital divide by providing access to satellite television under the pretext of supporting the entertainment industry and boosting the socioeconomic development of the community," Kebenei said.

"This gives China a platform and therein tools for spreading their messages and brainwashing Africans towards accepting their policies and governance, more like neo-colonialism."



## PROPAGANDA

# Host of China's Overseas Propaganda Network Interviewed on CNBC



Liu Xin, a television host on the overseas arm of China's state broadcaster CGTN, speaks on CNBC's "Squawk on the Street" on Sept. 3, 2019.

CATHY HE &amp; EVA FU

A

Chinese state-media host echoed the Chinese regime's propaganda in depicting the Hong Kong protesters as "rioters," during an appearance on U.S. cable television on Sept. 3.

Liu Xin, the host of a talk show on China Global Television Network (CGTN), the overseas arm of China's state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV), was interviewed on CNBC's "Squawk on the Street" program to discuss the ongoing Hong Kong protests and the U.S.-China trade war.

The state-media host first made headlines in June when she went head-to-head in a live televised debate about the U.S.-Sino trade war with Fox Business Network host Trish Regan.

Liu was introduced by CNBC host Seema Mody as "host on China Global Television Network, or CGTN, which is run by China's Communist Party." At the end of the interview, Mody thanked Liu for "providing the perspective of the Chinese."

CGTN is a registered agent of a foreign government under U.S. law. According to CNBC's website, the cable television channel entered into a collaboration with CCTV's business channel, Global Connection Show, in June 2010, allowing CNBC's market updates to be broadcast to 400 million households across China.

## Hong Kong

When asked about the crisis in

**Their goal is to... convince those who are outside of Hong Kong that the protesters are essentially criminals that are trying to overthrow the government, in league with the United States.**

Robert Spalding, former National Security Council official and senior fellow at the Washington-based think tank Hudson Institute

Hong Kong, Liu called a portion of the protesters "rioters" and "offenders." Those people "commit violence," she said, and should be regarded differently than the peaceful protesters.

Anger over a now-withdrawn controversial extradition bill has plunged the city into its biggest political crisis, as millions have turned out for rallies and protest marches in recent months.

"We see the violence they are committing," Liu said. "We see the destruction they are inflicting on public property, and the interruption of daily life of the Hong Kong people, shutting down the metro and disrupting the airport."

Liu stopped short of mentioning allegations of police brutality of the city's police force, the crux of escalating tensions between protesters and police over the past few weeks. Her comments are in line with the Chinese communist regime's aggressive rhetoric condemning the protesters, repeatedly depicting them as "criminals," "rioters," and "radicals" deserving of punishment.

On Sept. 3, Yang Guang, spokesperson for the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, China's top agency for handling Hong Kong-related issues, made a distinction between peaceful protesters and what he called "uncompromising mobs," defining "the violent protesters" as those being used by "foreign forces and Hong Kong separatists" who want to control Hong Kong.

"Over the past two months, some

radical people have taken up the banner of 'five demands,' recklessly carrying out violent crimes in disregard to the bigger picture of the peaceful lives of Hongkongers and the prosperity of Hong Kong," Yang said at a Sept. 3 press conference. "This is not expressing some so-called requests; it's a blatant 'political threat.'"

Liu also said the Chinese military troops on stand-by in the city of Shenzhen, which borders Hong Kong, were positioned there for the purpose of "deterrence."

"The violence and the rioters definitely should not think about ever spreading to the mainland, because there they will be met with a very strong reaction," Liu said.

CNBC did not respond to a request for comment.

## 'Bizarre' Interview

Robert Spalding, a former National Security Council official and senior fellow at the Washington-based think tank Hudson Institute, told The Epoch Times that the CNBC interview was "bizarre," adding that he's never seen a representative of Chinese state media interviewed as a commentator on U.S. television.

Spalding said Liu's interview indicates that the Chinese regime is hoping to reduce international support for the protests in Hong Kong.

"Their goal is to... convince those who are outside of Hong Kong that the protesters are essentially criminals that are trying to overthrow the government, in league with the United States," he said.

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