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THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER

The Liaoning, China's first aircraft carrier, arrives in Hong Kong on July 7, 2017. The carrier made a five-day port call to mark the 20th anniversary of the city's handover to Chinese rule.

**Industry and State
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CHINA'S GAMBLE FOR

ASIA-PACIFIC SUPREMACY

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OPINION

China's Provocative Gamble for Asia-Pacific Supremacy

China aims to shift the balance of power in the South China Sea with its first Chinese-made aircraft carrier and advanced anti-ship arsenal

BONNIE EVANS

Commentary

As has been noted by many observers, the economic, financial, ethnic and civil unrest challenges that China faces are serious and growing. How will Beijing handle these internal challenges?

That remains to be seen. But if China's military build-up is any indication, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders may be tempted to "externalize" those challenges by confronting U.S. dominance in the region. Indeed, with respect to Taiwan, willingness to carry out a forceful unification has already been clearly and publicly stated by Beijing.

The Post-War Security Era Is Over

With last month's launch of its newest aircraft carrier, the Shandong, it's becoming clear that China is making a play for a bigger role in the future of the Asia-Pacific region, and specifically in the South China Sea. They're getting very close to realizing their goal.

Since the end of World War II, the Asia-Pacific region has relied upon American naval dominance to keep the sea lanes open. Just as importantly, American naval power has been key to Taiwan's security—as well as Japan's—against a bellicose China. America's unrivaled naval presence has led to vital and prosperous shipping to and from Asia to the rest of the world for decades.

But that era is ending.

Beijing's Growing Projection of Power

Today, China's foray into a strategic naval presence is directly challenging America's foreign policy and military alliances in the region. By undercutting the ability of the United States to deter and defend against their now-formidable naval power, China is threatening the viability of U.S. security arrangements with both Japan and Taiwan, and by extension, even Australia.

With two functioning aircraft carriers, China joins the United States and the UK as the only nations on earth with multiple, deployed carriers. That's a significant and strategic achievement that is not to be underestimated. China now has the ability to project very considerable military power throughout the region, extending northward all the way up to the Sea of Japan, and of course, much closer to home in the Strait of Taiwan.

With last month's launch of its newest aircraft carrier, the Shandong, it's becoming clear that China is making a play for a bigger role in the future of the Asian-Pacific region, and specifically in the South China Sea. They're getting very close to realizing their goal.

Rising Instability

But it's not only China's latest aircraft carrier that is destabilizing the regional status quo. In October, China unveiled advanced unmanned aerial vehicles (AUV), anti-ship cruise missiles and new editions of its hypersonic, anti-carrier missile systems. All of these weapons systems are intended to neutralize any naval advantages that the United States can bring to bear in the region.

The Dong Feng 21D, for example, is colorfully named "the carrier killer" in reference, of course, to U.S. aircraft carrier groups that operate in the region. It can hit U.S. warships within a range of 1,500 kilometers (932 miles). The equally provocatively mid-range missile, nicknamed the "Guam killer," refers to its ability to reach the large U.S. military presence on the South Pacific island of Guam.

But even more destabilizing is China's Dong Feng 17, a hypersonic missile with the reported capacity to make evasive



A Chinese navy formation during military drills in the South China Sea on Jan. 2, 2017.

STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

5G

Industry and State Dept Battle Over 5G Standards

BONNIE EVANS

WASHINGTON—In the push to develop 5G—the next generation of wireless networks, a gap has emerged between the priorities of industry and government.

Industry wants the government to take a limited role in export controls. Such controls, it argues, limit the ability of U.S. companies to participate in international organizations that set the standards for the architecture of 5G. That limitation, in turn, results in reduced access to foreign markets.

The government wants standard-setting to take into account U.S. values and security.

The arguments for these respective positions were laid out at a forum, "The Role of Global Standards in the Battle for 5G Leadership," held at the Hudson Institute on Dec. 17.

Participating in the forum were industry experts from Qualcomm, the China Center at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Semiconductor Industry Association (SIA), and Robert Strayer, deputy assistant secretary for cyber and international communications and information policy at the U.S. State Department.

The industry experts say that access to foreign markets is crucial for providing the sales volume that underpins research and development.

Research and development,

which accounts for approximately 20 percent of all industry spending, according to John Neuffer, CEO of the SIA, is in turn critical for having a leadership role in the international organizations that set worldwide standards for 5G.

Democratic Values

Strayer presented a different set of concerns.

While the United States wants "China to be part of the global standards development process," one concern is to ensure that "they're not trying to put a thumb on the scale to favor certain technologies that can lock us into technologies that won't be as productive in the future."

He said that while the U.S. government wants to see the best of standards-development bodies, it also wants the best uses of technology.

"We think that our democratic values are fundamental to informing how technology should be used, especially when it comes to facial recognition and artificial intelligence," he said.

"Unfortunately, we've seen cases like Xinjiang Province of China, where [Chinese telecom company] Huawei has worked with the local province on their security measures that include using facial recognition to identify leaders and then to imprison them in these internment camps."

"In the case of China, there's an

authoritarian government there that does not have the rule of law or an independent judiciary to stand between the company and the dictates of the Chinese Communist Party."

There are other indications of trust, too, Strayer said.

Look "at a company's past acts of respect for the rule of law. Do they have a history of corruption? Do they have a history of intellectual property theft?"

With Huawei, Strayer said,

"there's a long history of problems in both those areas."

Global Marketplace

But Susan Armstrong, senior vice president of engineering at Qualcomm, which sponsored the event, sees it differently.

Qualcomm wants to see a "standards carve-out," so that any global or U.S. company can participate, "regardless of who is in the room," she said.

"We are hoping ... to get clari-

fication from the Department of Commerce on what kinds of technical conversations we can have and what kinds of conversations we can't."

Armstrong said that the complex telecom systems "require years and years of upfront R&D." "You don't just float into the standards and make contributions without putting in that upfront investment in R&D," she said.

She added that she doesn't think it's "feasible" for the United States or China to go their separate ways in developing technologies and standards that are unique to themselves.

"You really want these market-

places to be global, and you really want to make sure that that money that comes in from having access to a global marketplace continues to fund R&D," she said.

In terms of Huawei, Armstrong said that "where there's a company like Huawei on the entity list, the unintended consequence of that is if U.S. companies are chilled from interacting with Huawei, for example in the standards-setting, that can cause fear ... of running afoul of export compliance rules."

The "entity list" is published by the U.S. Bureau of Industry and Security to name "certain foreign persons—including businesses, research institutions, government

and private organizations, individuals, and other types of legal persons—that are subject to specific license requirements for the export, re-export and/or transfer (in-country) of specified items," according to the bureau's website.

Scale

Neuffer of the SIA echoed Armstrong's theme.

"Technical folks from our companies go to these standard-setting bodies, and, with these export controls in place, sometimes they have to have a lawyer sitting next to them to tell them what they can engage and what they can't engage on," Neuffer said.

"Things that are public, basi-

maneuvers while traveling at several times the speed of sound. This would make it difficult, if not impossible, for U.S. missile defense systems to be effective against it.

Like China's aircraft carrier force, the development and display of these weapons raise the risk of confrontation, especially from Beijing. The geopolitical and military implications for the region are clear: the U.S. defense guarantees are no longer indisputable. In fact, in the minds of some allies, such as Japan, they are already in jeopardy.

"There is a possibility that if we do not acquire a more sophisticated ballistic missile defense system, it will become impossible for both the United States and Japan to respond," said Nozomu Yoshitomi professor at Japan's Nihon University and a former general in Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force.

Beijing Moving Against US Power on All Fronts

Such doubts about America's ability to defend its allies in the region have far reaching implications. They have already impacted how America conducts itself in the region, with changes in U.S. naval maneuvers reflecting this reality. Clearly, China's strategy is to shatter the existing U.S. alliances and force a strategic realignment throughout the region. Beijing wants all of the Asia-Pacific region to turn away from American security guarantees and acknowledge undisputed Chinese hegemony.

These military advances are key components of China's long-term strategic plans. But Beijing's plans began to materialize years earlier with its illegal annexation and militarization of the Spratly islands in the South China Sea. Now a forward military airbase, this too, is designed to undercut U.S. military and diplomatic power.

But there are economic advantages to exploit as well. Beijing has demanded that the islands extend China's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) up to 200 miles further out into the South China Sea. That not

only ignores neighboring nations' claims on the islands, but denies their fishing rights in those waters. Furthermore, Beijing is also advocating for nations to have control over any military operations with any nation's 200-mile EEZ in an attempt to hamstring American naval and military influence around the world.

Thus, China's pushback against the United States in the region is both strategic and tactical in military terms, as well as active on the diplomatic and economic fronts. But none of these developments help resolve the problems the CCP faces at home. Like nations often do, China may resort to foreign intervention to divert attention to those internal challenges.

Will Beijing use force, or the overt threat of force, against Taiwan?

Externalizing Its Challenges?

This is not hyperbole. Keep in mind that the Communist Party is a very small minority in China, and that its undergrowing pressures that it's finding hard to relieve. The foundation of the Party's legitimacy—a rising standard of life for an expanding middle-class—is starting to fracture. With food inflation, rising unemployment, persistent and widespread corruption and ungodly pollution among other problems, the fissures of dissatisfaction with China are widening.

At the same time, the Party's menu of options for solutions to their problems is shrinking. What's more, it's choosing the wrong options that are only worsening their problems.

As conditions continue to deteriorate, China could be tempted to engage in some very high-risk behavior.

In fact, it already has.

How will the United States respond?

James Gorrie is a writer and speaker based in Southern California. 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.



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES



KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES

In the case of China, there's an authoritarian government there that does not have the rule of law or an independent judiciary to stand between the company and the dictates of the Chinese Communist Party.

Robert Strayer, deputy assistant secretary for cyber and international communications and information policy, U.S. State Department

cally there can be engagement, but what's public is actually questioned."

The export controls that are there to protect U.S. national security actually "gum up the gears" of standard-setting, he said.

This puts American companies at risk of losing influence, market share, money for R&D, and ultimately, leadership in the industry, he said.

"Eighty percent of our consumers are overseas, and it's all about scale. If we don't have scale, we don't have money to pay for R&D. And one of the things that creates all that scale is that we have a global industry, and we have global standards to drive that global industry," he said, mirroring Qualcomm's arguments.

Trust

Strayer reminded the panel of the U.S. government's position.

"Trust cannot exist where telecom vendors are subject to an authoritarian government like the People's Republic of China, that lacks an independent judiciary or a rule of law that would prevent the misuse of data or disruption of critical infrastructure," he said.

"Given what is at stake in 5G, we must prevent any untrusted company, regardless of its national origin, from supplying technology for 5G networks."

"This is in part because the software on any network can be instantaneously updated, and there's no way to test or certify a way to assure yourself that there's not a compromise inserted into that software that's been updated."

CHINA ECONOMY

Storylines That Shaped China Business, Economy in 2019

FAN YU

News Analysis

The term 'decoupling' gained significance in 2019. On the surface, it's used to describe the reduction of interdependence between China and the United States in global trade and commerce.

President Donald Trump placed tariffs on Chinese goods to address a number of longstanding grievances against Beijing: currency manipulation, forced technology transfers, domestic subsidies, and cyber espionage against U.S. businesses, to name just a few. China has stepped up its domestic technology research, aiming to decrease reliance on U.S. technology and project global leadership in a few emerging fields such as blockchain, 5G wireless, and artificial intelligence.

But decoupling also aptly describes a different trend—that the United States and China's respective economies are undergoing changes differently. The U.S. economy, by all accounts, is booming. Even CNN's public poll (conducted by SSRS) finds that 76 percent of respondents believe the U.S. economy is either very good or somewhat good, the best rating in 20 years.

China's economic situation is different. "The downward pressure on the economy has increased," the state media Xinhua News stated earlier this month. China is experiencing its slowest economic growth in decades, and that pressure has partially fueled the need to come to a quicker trade agreement. Beijing is expected to strategically stimulate the economy as China braces for sub-6 percent nominal GDP growth going forward.

Five major storylines have shaped the Chinese business and economic environment during 2019. All of them will be major factors going into next year.

Phase One Trade Deal Reached

The United States and China reached a deal to de-escalate the ongoing trade war in December.

After almost two years of on-again and off-again tariffs and trade war threats, the countries agreed to a new deal, which sent global stocks soaring. China has committed to U.S. agricultural purchases, ending forced technology transfers, increasing protections for U.S. intellectual property rights, and adding new commitments to a stable yuan currency. The United States agreed to not proceed with new tariffs and would partially cut existing tariffs introduced in September.

The trade deal further stoked finan-



Chinese Vice Premier Liu He and President Donald Trump meet at the White House on Oct. 11, 2019.

cial markets. The S&P 500 rose 1.7 percent in the five trading days following the deal's confirmation on Dec. 13. On the year, the S&P has gained more than 28 percent and has maintained record highs.

Waning GDP Growth

China's third-quarter GDP growth of 6 percent annualized was its worst in more than 30 years.

Economists know that the official National Bureau of Statistics gross domestic product growth (GDP) figure is inflated. But the nominal 6 percent has become a psychological threshold that, if breached, could trigger political embarrassment, mass investor sell-off, and widespread consumer panic.

China's annual growth figures have been falling for years. This year, Beijing has been implementing economic stimulus measures—mainly in the form of infrastructure spending—but not with the usual gusto. Several think tanks, investment banks, and even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are predicting sub-6 percent Chinese economic growth in 2020.

Salvaging all the growth it can is a key reason that China has rushed to a preliminary trade deal agreement with the United States. It desperately needs to keep factories open and goods moving.

Beijing Prioritizes Blockchain Strategy

China has high ambitions for its state-

controlled digital currency. Earlier this year, Chinese Communist Party leader Xi Jinping specifically conveyed his support for blockchain technology—but not bitcoin or any decentralized digital currency.

China's strong endorsement of a blockchain-based central bank currency and the West's relative aversion to the technology opens an interesting new front in the growing U.S.—China technology rivalry.

Developments in fintech, payments, and blockchain digital currencies are receiving support from the highest levels of the Chinese central government. Beijing has designated Hainan, an island province in the south of China, as a pilot zone for the technology. China is also believed to be readying a central bank digital currency.

Whether blockchain can be a successful technology underpinning global payments is still an open question. Current blockchain technologies still have speed and volume limitations. But if China becomes a technology leader in that space, it could be a detriment to other countries.

China could bypass the dollar-based global banking system and intermediary banks. Moreover, it could augment China's ability to track where money is going, increase state surveillance, and ultimately exert more control over people, businesses, and governments transacting with the technology.

Debt Defaults Becoming the Norm

Chinese commodities trader Tewoo

Group defaulted on its U.S. dollar-denominated bonds in December, becoming the biggest default by a Chinese state-owned enterprise (SOE) since 1998.

Beijing has become more comfortable with debt defaults in recent years. That's one way of describing the trend—and perhaps a more apt description is that Beijing is forced to accept more defaults simply because it has no other choice. Chinese companies have binged on debt for too long and regulators can no longer afford to bail out every defaulting company.

Onshore—or yuan-denominated—bonds have witnessed record defaults this year. Around 4.9 percent of all privately owned bond issuers defaulted on bonds through November 2019, according to credit rating agency Fitch Ratings. Bloomberg data shows 120 billion yuan (\$17 billion) of principal defaults through Dec. 3, on pace to break last year's record of 122 billion.

Beijing has been allowing a more diverse set of companies to default, including both privately owned and SOEs in several industries. Peking University Founder Group—an affiliate of a state university—failed to repay a 2 billion yuan bond due earlier this month.

Expect more defaults in 2020.

Bank Failures Rising

There's been a spate of bank failures in China, especially among small to midsize regional banks.

Shandong Province-based Hengfeng Bank, which had been bailed out earlier this year, went through a 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) restructuring on Dec. 18, selling shares to state governments and foreign investors in a rescue brokered by the local government.

Chinese regulators have seized or bailed out lenders at an unprecedented pace amid a surge in bad debt. Hengfeng and Baoshang Bank, another bank bailed out earlier in the year, are both linked to the troubled Tomorrow Group, whose billionaire founder Xiao Jinhua was detained in 2017 as part of Xi's crackdown on corruption.

Numerous institutions have struggled with bank runs and financial troubles, partly because of high interbank rates, which close off a major funding source for smaller banks. Central government policy also has forced banks to step up lending at increasingly lower interest spreads. And China's increasing amount of bad debt casts another dark cloud over smaller banks.

China has thousands of small lenders, mostly serving individuals in rural areas and small businesses. While they're less systemically important than national lenders—which cater to large businesses and state-owned enterprises—their customers are the common people.

If they begin to fail at a faster pace, it could undermine the Chinese Communist Party's social stability.



Mechanical Engineering students test software on the THOR robot while readying for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Robotics Challenge at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., on April 9, 2015.

US Joined by Nations Around the World in Cracking Down on Chinese Investment

EMEL AKAN

WASHINGTON—National security concerns are prompting tighter investment screening as numerous countries introduce new regulatory frameworks that focus on foreign buyers, particularly Chinese state-backed firms.

Almost 12 percent of global foreign direct investment was blocked in 2018 because of national security concerns, according to a study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

"In recent years, there have been numerous cases where foreign investment has been rejected by targeted host countries for national security reasons and related public concerns," a report by UNCTAD stated.

"There is a trend towards tightening investment screening by expanding the scope and depth of screening procedures and the corresponding disclosure obligations of foreign investors."

UNCTAD identified at least 20 cases in which planned foreign takeovers were blocked or canceled in the period from 2016 to September 2019; sixteen involved Chinese investors. The total value of the blocked transactions amounted to more than \$162.5 billion.

In addition, national security-related foreign investment screening is on the rise. "In Italy, for example, the number of such proceedings in 2018 was 255 percent higher in comparison to 2015; in the United States, the number of cases screened in 2018 was 160 percent higher than in 2015," the report stated.

While investment screening used to be more relevant to the military and defense industries, it has expanded to cover key technologies and know-how, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, semiconductors, 5G, biotechnologies, satellites, and aerospace. It's also applied to control the access of foreigners to sensitive data of domestic citizens.

Both developed and emerging countries have introduced measures to boost investment-screening mechanisms, in response to the rise in national security concerns. In nearly eight years, at least 13 countries introduced new regulatory frameworks. There have also been significant amendments to existing foreign investment laws.

There is a trend towards tightening investment screening by expanding the scope and depth of screening procedures and the corresponding disclosure obligations of foreign investors.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

There are several reasons for the increased crackdown on foreign buyers, according to UNCTAD. Countries want to ensure that cutting-edge technologies and know-how remain in domestic hands, as they are key for a country's competitiveness. In addition, they seek to block increasing investment activities by foreign state-owned enterprises or sovereign wealth funds.

Governments use state-owned companies to buy companies overseas as a means to acquire key technologies and know-how. Hence, tighter screening for national security reasons had a significant impact on such investors, particularly those from China.

For example, the Canadian government in May 2018 blocked a \$1.5 billion acquisition of the Canadian construction company Aecon by a Chinese state-owned company. The Canadian government stated that it "is open to international investment that creates jobs and increases prosperity, but not at the expense of national security."

The United Kingdom unveiled a 120-page policy last year to enhance the government's power to prevent foreign acquisitions of British assets that raise national security concerns. The UK has mainly targeted Chinese and Russian investors.

According to UNCTAD, other countries that have enhanced foreign investment screening in recent years include Australia, Canada, Italy, and New Zealand.

In its blueprint "Made in China 2025," the Chinese regime revealed its ambitions to achieve dominance in 10 high-tech industries, including advanced information technology, robotics, aviation, and new energy vehicles.

To realize its objectives, China has been resorting to various tactics including industrial espionage, cyber theft, forced joint ventures in exchange for market access, and acquisition of foreign companies to attain sensitive technologies.

According to a report by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), China's intention isn't so much to join the ranks of high-tech economies like the United States, Germany, South Korea, and Japan, but rather to replace them altogether.

Made in China 2025 outlines targets for achieving 70 percent "self-sufficiency" in core components and basic materials in high-tech industries by 2025.



A woman pulls a trolley along a business street in Beijing on Dec. 3, 2019.



Chinese Falun Gong practitioners and asylum seekers meditating in Bangkok on March 14, 2016.

US Congressman Urges UN to Aid Falun Gong Practitioners Detained by Thai Authorities

2 adherents of spiritual practice persecuted by communist China face deportation and further abuse

NICOLE HAO

Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) has petitioned the United Nations to urge the release of two Chinese refugees currently detained in Thailand. Leng Tao, 64, and Ma Chunling, 48, are practitioners of Falun Gong, a Chinese spiritual discipline banned in communist China.

Leng and Ma were granted asylum by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2016. While waiting for UNCHR to arrange their resettlement in a third country, however, they were detained by Thai immigration police. They face possible deportation to China, where they had "suffered brutal torture and psychiatric abuse," King warned in his letter.

Ma Chunling is from northeast China's Jilin Province. In the 1990s, she attended college in Dalian, a coastal city in the bordering province of Liaoning, and settled there.

At the time, millions of Chinese were taking up Falun Gong, which incorporates meditation exercises with a body of teachings based in traditional faith and moral principles. Introduced to the practice in 1996 via a friend, Ma credits Falun Gong with curing her illnesses within weeks. Seeing the transformation, Ma's entire family began to practice Falun Gong.

According to a Sept. 28 report by Minghui.org, a U.S.-based website that documents the persecution of Falun Gong, Leng Tao is from Sichuan Province. He was head of the tourism bureau in Aba, an autonomous prefecture home to people of the Tibetan and Qiang ethnic groups. Leng began practicing Falun Gong in 1995.

Persecution

The persecution of Falun Gong began in July 1999 on orders of then-Communist Party leader Jiang Zemin. Like hundreds of thousands of fellow adherents, Ma and Leng were arrested in the early stages of the campaign when they stood out to protest Jiang's policy.

Ma Chunling was arrested five times and held for over three years in total after she and her husband, who also suffered arrest, went to Beijing to petition the authorities. She was tortured during her detention. Ma's last time in jail was spent in the infamous Masanjia Labor Camp in Liaoning Province, from which she was released in 2013.

Leng was arrested in 2001, after he and other practitioners had distributed hundreds of Falun Gong flyers and hung up banners in public areas. In detention,

As a Falun Gong practitioner, Mr. Leng was arbitrarily detained many times, jailed for ten years, and suffered brutal torture and psychiatric abuse.

Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa)

Leng was tortured with electric batons, forced to sit facing a light bulb for extended periods, and suffered burns to his face. According to his report, Zhou Yongkang, the former CCP head of Sichuan and later director of the powerful Political and Legal Affairs Commission until his 2014 purge, paid special attention to his case. When Leng escaped detention in April 2001, thousands of police officers were dispatched across the county to search for him.

In 2005, Leng was detained in the Sichuan Provincial Police General Hospital in Chengdu, the provincial capital. There, he witnessed the deaths of other practitioners that he suspects may have been linked to the Chinese regime's practice of forced organ harvesting.

A group of Chinese Falun Gong practitioners who live in Thailand wrote in a letter: "When ... released from the prison, Leng couldn't walk because of the torture he suffered in the past ten years."

"As a Falun Gong practitioner, Mr. Leng was arbitrarily detained many times, jailed for ten years, and suffered brutal torture and psychiatric abuse," Rep. King wrote in his letter of petition to the U.N.

Limbo in Thailand

The UNHCR has accepted the asylum applications of both Ma Chunling and Leng Tao, who both escaped to Thailand. But their ordeals have continued even after leaving China, because the Thai authorities detained them for lacking proper visas.

The Falun Gong practitioners' situation is particularly dangerous because the CCP regime exerts diplomatic and economic pressure on foreign governments to extradite individuals fleeing persecution in China.

Ma and her husband arrived in Bangkok with their teenage son in 2014, where they applied for asylum with the Thai authorities. On Aug. 21, 2016, UNHCR granted the family asylum.

Because Thailand did not ratify the U.N.'s 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, approved asylees in Thailand are not afforded civil benefits and must be resettled in a third country by the U.N.

"[Ma Chunling's] family members don't have valid visas or proper resident permits," Ma Chunmei, Chunling's older sister, told The Epoch Times on Dec. 24. "They can't work, go to school, or live a normal life."

She said Ma and her husband were detained when they were talking to tourists about the persecution of Falun Gong in June 2017. Police said they didn't have valid visas and therefore couldn't

remain in Thailand. The couple was only released upon paying 4,000 baht (\$133).

Ma was again detained in February 2018, when Thai police stopped her and noted her lack of a visa. "She didn't have money to pay the fine, and she was worried about her son at home who needed her help," Chunmei explained, so Chunling fled after the officer made a record of her identity.

On Aug. 7, police checked Chunling's ID again and sent her to jail the next day because she didn't have money to pay the 5,000 baht (\$165.9) fine.

On Aug. 21, the prison guard didn't release Chunling, but sent her to Bangkok immigration detention center. On Sept. 11, two people from the Chinese embassy tried to arrange Chunling's extradition to China. She said she wouldn't go back, since she had refugee status as granted by the U.N.

On Nov. 18, Chunling was moved to a different immigration detention center, located close to the Myanmar border. Chunling's family is worried that she could soon be repatriated and incarcerated again.

"Two Chinese refugees Dong Guangping and Jiang Yefei were sent back to China from Thailand in 2015. They went straight to prison," Chunmei said. Leng Tao is in a similar bind. Despite his background as a former official whose decision to stand up for Falun Gong drew particular ire from the Communist Party, Leng faces possible deportation from Thailand.

The UNHCR approved Leng's political asylum on March 9, 2016. He was awaiting resettlement when he was detained by Thai immigration officers on Nov. 7.

Maj. Gen. Chuchart Tharichat, deputy chief of the Thai Immigration Bureau, said at a press conference Leng was arrested for having overstayed his entry visa, which was only valid until April 20, 2014. Leng had arrived on Feb. 20 that year.

Leng's landlord reported to police that Leng was renting his house and had, in line with the restrictions on his immigration status, not worked since he arrived in Thailand. The immigration bureau still decided to "detain him pending assistance from the UNHCR."

In his letter, Rep. King urged the U.N. body to intervene in Leng and Ma's detention, and expedite their resettlement to another state, lest they face further persecution upon their deportation to China.

Apart from Leng and Ma, another three Falun Gong practitioners—Li Hongjin, Jiang Hongbin, and Wang Jianhua—are detained in detention centers of the Thai immigration authorities. More than 100 other Falun Gong adherents from China are awaiting resettlement by the UNHCR.

CHINESE INFLUENCE

Communist China Praises Philadelphia for Controversial Flag-raising Events

Philadelphia favorably compared to communist revolutionary 'base area'; pro-regime groups harassed city's Falun Gong practitioners during 'National Day' ceremonies

NICOLE HAO

Beijing has lavished praise on the city of Philadelphia after it raised the flag of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in ceremonies held on and around the communist regime's Oct. 1 National Day.

China News Net, a state-controlled outlet, published an article calling Philadelphia a "red Yan'an," alluding to the city where the Chinese Communist Party was headquartered prior to seizing power over the whole country in 1949. The article was reposted by the PRC State Council's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office.

On Oct. 1, Philadelphia City Hall raised the PRC flag to "celebrate pride in the local Chinese-American community," according to a statement from the mayor's office.

The ceremony was preceded by two similar events at Independence Mall on Sept. 28, and on Sept. 22 in Philadelphia's Chinatown. All three events featured the "red songs" of the CCP, including well-known titles like "Singing a Folk Song for the Communist Party" and "My Homeland China and I."

Philadelphia is the city where the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution were drafted.

Municipal officials and two city council members gave remarks at the flag-raising before the city hall. Li Shipeng, deputy consul-general of the Chinese consulate in New York, also attended and delivered a speech.

Raise the Red Flag

Despite being billed as a celebration of the local Chinese community, the flag-raising ceremonies sparked controversy for their implicit support of the CCP regime.

The three events were organized by Bihong Guan, a naturalized U.S. citizen of Chinese descent who has lived in Philadelphia since 1988. Since 1998, he has organized ceremonies to raise the PRC flag on Oct. 1 each year, os-

Raising the flag of a brutal totalitarian regime does not honor the immigrants whose parents and grandparents were brutalized by the government it represents.

Philadelphia columnist and radio host

tensibly in support of diversity.

And while the mayor's statement said that "the flag raisings are not a sign of support for any specific government, political party, or movement," the ceremonies hold profound significance for the Chinese regime.

The PRC state flag embodies the communist takeover and dictatorship. "The red color represents the revolution," according to a government site. "The five stars and the interaction between them stands for the revolutionary people unified under the leadership of the Communist Party."

According to Chinese law promulgated in 1990, raising the PRC flag is an important tool for instilling patriotism and collective values. In China, it is illegal to raise any foreign flags without explicit permission, and the flags must be flown with the PRC flag.

In August 2018, the world-famous Shaolin Temple raised the PRC flag, a move many observe saw as an effort to stave off persecution by demonstrating loyalty to the CCP.

Historians estimate that in the 70 years since it came to power, the Communist Party has caused the unnatural deaths of at least 60 million Chinese through famine, terror campaigns, and other forms of political persecution.

"Raising the flag of a brutal totalitarian regime does not honor the immigrants whose parents and grandparents were brutalized by the government it represents," Christine Flowers, a Philadelphia columnist and radio host, wrote in an Oct. 4 commentary.

"Raising that flag does not honor the humanity of those Chinese refugees, prisoners of conscience, and victims of persecution who I have met in my capacity as an asylum advocate. Raising that flag is an abomination."

Doing the Party's Work in America Bihong Guan, the Chinese-American who organized the Philadelphia flag-raising ceremonies, has received of-

ficial recognition from CCP leaders. For at least two of the National Day celebrations in recent years, Guan was honored with invitations to attend the military parades in Beijing from a viewing spot atop the gates of Tiananmen.

In addition, Guan has met with former Party heads Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, as well as former Chinese premier Wen Jiabao, in congratulations for his work in Philadelphia.

Members of a pro-Chinese regime group from New York came to Philadelphia to take part in the ceremonies, where they engaged in political harassment.

After the flag-raising at Independence Mall on Sept. 28, more than 20 Chinese left the venue and headed to Liberty Bell Park. Several practitioners of Falun Gong, a Chinese spiritual discipline that is persecuted by the CCP, were gathered in the park for weekly meditation practice.

Led by a woman named Li Huahong, the pro-regime Chinese began to yell insults at the meditators, most of whom were also ethnically Chinese.

Li is known for her role in organizing anti-Falun Gong events in the New York area. She had previously been sentenced in 2013 for assaulting a Falun Gong practitioner in Flushing, Queens.

According to Yang Jingfang, a Philadelphia local who was meditating with the other practitioners on Sept. 28, they called 911 out of fear for their safety.

"The police arrived quickly and moved Li's group to the other side of the road," Yang told The Epoch Times. "But they kept on shouting profanities at us for a while."

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a discipline based in traditional Chinese faith and the values of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance. Before the CCP launched its persecution in 1999, the Chinese authorities estimated that 70 million people had taken up the practice.



The Philadelphia City Hall on May 30, 2018.



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