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CHINA INSIDER

Chinese and Ivorian technicians work on the construction site of a new container terminal at the Port of Abidjan on March 29, 2019.

AFRICA PUSHES BACK AGAINST

CHINESE 'PREDATORY' LENDING

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CHINESE INVESTMENT

Africa Beginning to Push Back Against China's 'Predatory' Strategy

FAN YU

News Analysis

Yang Jiechi, China's top diplomat, recently made several stops in Africa to monitor Chinese interests and bolster bilateral relations on the continent.

Yang, the director of the Office of Foreign Affairs and a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Politburo, also made sure to criticize those who accuse the Chinese regime of taking advantage of Africa and engaging in "neocolonialism."

"Some people who are unhappy about the growing China-Africa relations have made groundless accusations to defame and attack our cooperation," Yang said in a speech on Dec. 22, as reported by Xinhua News, the state-controlled media outlet. "Those who attempt to undermine the traditional friendship between China and Africa will only fail."

The Chinese regime has faced increasing criticism in recent years for its engagement with African countries. Over the past decade, Beijing has become the most important economic partner to Africa across trade, investment, financial aid, and infrastructure financing.

But the regime's goals aren't entirely altruistic. The belief is that Beijing ensnares developing countries into accepting expensive loans, and when incompetent leaders can't balance the budget to repay such loans, the regime imposes heavy punishment such as asset takeovers and other concessions.

More than 10,000 Chinese-owned firms are operating in Africa, with Nigeria, Zambia, and Tanzania attracting the most attention from Chinese companies, according to a 2017 report by consultancy McKinsey & Co.

"In manufacturing, we estimate that 12 percent of Africa's industrial production—valued at some \$500 billion a year in total—is already handled by Chinese firms," according to McKinsey. "In infrastructure, Chinese firms' domi-

nance is even more pronounced, and they claim nearly 50 percent of Africa's internationally contracted construction market."

The Chinese regime's most visible involvement in Africa is infrastructure development. Most of the new infrastructure projects—bridges, major highways, skyscrapers, and tunnels—are financed and built by Chinese firms, which use Chinese labor and Chinese materials.

'Debt Trap' France, the United States, and the UK have faced criticism for exploiting Africa historically. Today, that role is being played by the Chinese regime. On the surface, the regime's infrastructure investment in Africa is to assist in development and to increase commerce. But in providing so much financing, Beijing has the future fate of the continent under its thumb. Africa is central to the regime's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR, also known as Belt and Road) initiative in expanding geopolitical influence, which includes access to Africa's oil, natural resources, and strategic location.

Between 2000 and 2017, Beijing loaned more than \$140 billion to African countries, according to a report by Washington-based think tank Brookings Institute. Most of that lending has been concentrated in a few resource-rich countries. By sector, lending has been focused on the important and strategic industries of transportation, power grid, and mining.

The "debt trap" narrative isn't going away. And what's happened recently in Zambia bolsters such criticism against the CCP.

Zambia, which has had trouble paying the debt it owes the regime, reportedly has offered major state assets as collateral. The exact amount Zambia owes Beijing is debatable—the U.S. government claims the figure could be as high as \$10 billion, but Zambia, according to a December 2018 Reuters report, claims that only \$3.1 billion is owed.



ISSOUF SANOGO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Chinese and Ivorian technicians work on the construction site of a new container terminal at the Port of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on March 29, 2019. The modernization of this port is led by Chinese engineers and workers and is being financed by China for 1.1 trillion Central African francs (\$1.86 billion).

The real debt figure is unknown, as "much of its debt to China has not been fully accounted for, an exercise the Lusaka exchequer is not anxious to complete, for fear of the alarm the figures would cause," Africa Confidential reported.

Zambia held talks with the CCP regarding handing over ZESCO, the state utility company, to China as payment in kind, sources told the newsletter.

"China is already in control of the country's broadcasting company, ZNBC. There are also fears the main airport in Lusaka could be the next target."

Attitudes regarding China's presence amid Zambian media is highly polarized, with an increasing number of headlines critical of Beijing's motives, as well as the quality and longevity of Chinese-led projects.

Some African countries are beginning to push back against China's predatory strategy.

In mid-2019, Tanzania suspended plans to team up with China to construct East Africa's biggest port in Bagamoyo, Tanzania. China Mer-

chant Holding International was slated to be the sole port operator.

Citing disagreements with Chinese investors over "exploitative and awkward" demands, Tanzanian President John Pombe Magufuli called off the project.

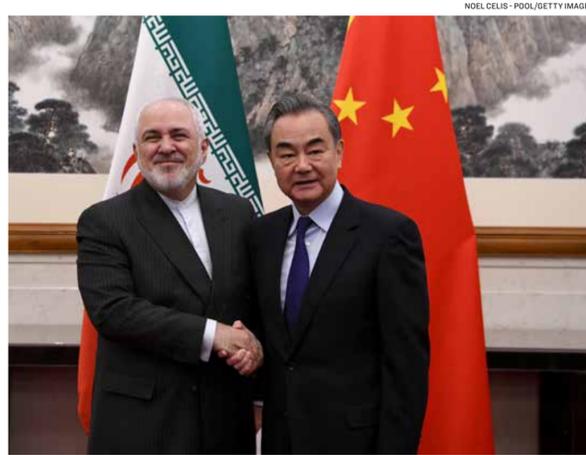
"They want us to give them a guarantee of 33 years and a lease of 99 years, and we should not question whoever comes to invest there once the port is operational. They want to take the land as their own but we have to compensate them for drilling construction of that port," Magufuli told The Economic Times of India last year.

Beijing also demanded from Tanzanian government loss compensation during the project, as well as tax and customs duty waivers.

Tanzania's rejection of the Chinese regime follows the cancellation of a Chinese-funded project in Sierra Leone in 2018.

A proposed \$320 million airport—to be financed by Beijing—outside Sierra Leone's capital of Freetown was scrapped in late 2018, after the country deemed the project to be uneconomical and unnecessary.

The Chinese regime's most visible involvement in Africa is infrastructure development.



China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi shakes hands with Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif during a meeting in Beijing on Dec. 31, 2019.



IRAQI PRIME MINISTER PRESS OFFICE VIA AP

A burning vehicle at the Baghdad International Airport following an airstrike early on Jan. 3, 2020.

CHINESE INFLUENCE

US Killing of Iran's Soleimani Sends Signal to Beijing

CATHY HE

The recent U.S. airstrike that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani will send a strong message to the Chinese regime, which is a key Iranian ally, according to a China expert.

It signals that Washington will take resolute action to deal with "bad actors," including the Chinese communist regime—one of Iran's top economic and military partners. "Bad actors take their cues from our reactions to other bad actors," Gordon Chang, the author of "The Coming Collapse of China," told The Epoch Times in an email. "A resolute response to one of them results in the others shrinking back into the shadows—and vice versa."

The attack came as the United States and the Chinese regime are on the cusp of signing a "phase one" trade deal that has eased tensions in a trade war initiated by Washington 17 months ago, to combat a range of China's long-standing trade abuses.

Soleimani, a 62-year-old general who led the overseas arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, was killed in Baghdad on Jan. 3 in an airstrike authorized by President Donald Trump. The general was regarded as the second most powerful figure in Iran after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In response, Iran has vowed to exact revenge. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the strike aimed to disrupt an "imminent

attack" that would have endangered Americans in the Middle East.

Trump told reporters in Florida that the attack was to stop a war, not to start one. He added that while the United States doesn't pursue "regime change" in Iran, the "regime's aggression in the region, including the use of proxy fighters to destabilize its neighbors, must end."

The killing of Soleimani marks an escalation in the decades-long standoff between Tehran and Washington. Tensions rose after the Trump administration pulled out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

China-Iran Ties

As an ally of Iran, the Chinese regime will have to support Tehran against the United States, June Teufel Dreyer, professor of political science at the University of Miami told The Epoch Times in an email.

On Jan. 3, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang urged the United States "to remain calm and exercise restraint to avoid further escalation of tensions," adding that "the stability and peace in Middle East gulf region should be maintained."

China is Iran's top trading partner and was also its largest buyer of crude oil prior to U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil taking effect in May 2019. Analysts say the Chinese regime continued with some oil imports even after the expiration of its exemption to the embargo on Iranian crude oil.

The U.S. administration in September imposed new sanctions on several Chinese entities and individuals it said knowingly transferred oil from Iran in violation of Washington's embargo.

"China needs oil and partnerships with countries that oppose the U.S.: Iran fits both," Dreyer said.

Beijing uses its relationships with Iran and other countries, such as North Korea, to force the United States to shift its focus away from dealing with the Chinese regime's threats, said retired U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Robert Spalding, senior fellow at the Washington-based think tank Hudson Institute.

"So it's all part of this general approach to disrupting the international order and ... presenting challenges that the U.S. is required to step up and meet, because it ultimately weakens the U.S.," Spalding told The Epoch Times. He noted that Beijing will be able to use that approach as long as it doesn't affect the price of oil.

"To the extent Iran and the terrorist groups it sponsors can cause problems for the U.S. there, the better for China," Dreyer said.

The Chinese regime also has a long history of supplying Iran with weapons, including fighter jets, surface-to-air missile systems, anti-sub missiles, and attack submarines. According to a 2019 report by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, with the United Nations' arms embargo on Iran set to end in October 2020, Tehran is already

"evaluating and discussing military hardware for purchase primarily from Russia and, to a lesser extent, China."

Chang said, "China has always supported Iran as it tried to bedevil the United States and the West, including supplying, directly and through proxies, technology, equipment, and materials for Tehran's nuclear weapons program."

On Dec. 31, 2019, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif visited Beijing to meet with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi for the fourth time within a year, underscoring their close relationship. Beijing hoped to "deepen practical cooperation" and "push forward the comprehensive strategic partnership" with Tehran, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said.

The two countries, along with Russia, earlier in December conducted joint naval drills in the Gulf of Oman.

Apart from rhetorical gestures, the Chinese regime is unlikely to respond to the U.S. airstrike with concrete action, the experts said.

"Trump just hit one of its [China's] partners and [China] cannot do much about it," Chang said. "Therefore, [Chinese leader] Xi Jinping must think he appears—as is the case—helpless now that the American president has taken down a Chinese asset."

Reuters and Epoch Times reporter Jack Phillips contributed to this report.

SURVEILLANCE

Huawei 'Safe City' Systems Are Ineffective, Crime Figures Show

Faulty cameras and heavy debt characterize much-hyped 'smart' surveillance infrastructure

NICOLE HAO

China has been heavily promoting its surveillance technology among client governments around the world, but apart from miring the locals in debt and raising national security risks, the projects have produced lackluster results.

Multiple cities in Pakistan have reported increased crime rates, even after installing "Safe City" infrastructure built by China's state-linked tech company Huawei.

Completed in 2016 at a cost of about \$100 million, the Safe City project in Islamabad boasts 1,950 surveillance cameras. Seventy-two screens in the Pakistani capital's police headquarters help officers monitor the streets.

Huawei claimed that the endeavor would dramatically improve order, with a projected 15 percent reduction in violent crime. But while crime in Islamabad did fall in 2016, by the end of 2018, it had increased by 33 percent.

Pakistan is a key country in the "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative, the Chinese regime's global infrastructure investment project. It has also been one of Beijing's long-term allies.

Since 2015, Pakistan has engaged

Huawei to build Safe City systems in nine cities.

Huawei claims that the Safe City project can substantially improve emergency response time, crime rates, and case-solving. But data from the country's National Police Bureau shows that the overall crime rate rose by 11 percent.

A Nov. 12, 2019, report by Bloomberg cited a Pakistani legislative committee as saying that half of the Huawei-produced cameras in Islamabad were out of order.

From 2017 to 2018, instances of dacoity, a term used on the Indian subcontinent to refer to banditry, rose by 244 percent, while robbery and burglary saw a roughly 62 percent increase. Murders and kidnappings also became more frequent.

Police statistics showed that crime rose by about 2.9 percent throughout Pakistan from 2017 to 2018, with the capital seeing the worst increases.

More Hype Than Results

Kenya, another country with heavy OBOR investments, has also installed Huawei's Safe City system in its cities, including Mombasa and the capital, Nairobi. According to Huawei, the projects helped slash crime rates in the cities by 46

percent year-over-year from 2014 to 2015.

But Kenya's National Police Service reported different results. Its statistics indicated the crime rate in Nairobi experienced a slight decrease in 2015, but increased in subsequent years, reaching a higher level by 2017 than before the Safe City program was introduced.

The same police report said that crime rates in Mombasa didn't decrease following the installation, which also took place in 2014. Kenyan authorities haven't commented on why the Huawei technology failed to work as advertised.

On Nov. 4, 2019, the Washington-based Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) published a report that said Huawei used exaggerated data to promote Safe City projects. The report looked at data from 73 cities across 52 countries; Huawei itself claims that the infrastructure has been set up in 230 cities in 90 countries.

CSIS's report questioned Huawei's claims about the program's success, noting that "all statistics are reported for an unspecified location and time period and no specific data or sources are provided for the numbers."



A worker cleans a surveillance camera on a street in Nairobi, Kenya, on Jan. 18, 2019.

Moreover, "after adopting Huawei's equipment, countries may be 'locked-in' by high replacement costs," the report stated. That includes tech upgrades, as well as replacement and repair of poorly built components.

Kenya's police report said that crime rates in Mombasa never decreased following the installation, which also took place in 2014.

Debt and National Security

The CSIS report warns that the Chinese regime may be "exporting authoritarianism" by repurposing "facial and license-plate recognition, social media monitoring, and other surveillance capabilities" associated with the programs.

And because most of the projects are part of the OBOR plan, the clients are likely to be saddled with debts they can't pay. There's currently no publicly available data that show how much debt is caused by Huawei. But most of the OBOR countries with high debt risks use Huawei's systems.

In 2018, the Washington-based

Center for Global Development (CGD) published a report analyzing OBOR-related debts.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) envisions OBOR as a project to span at least 68 countries and involve as much as \$8 trillion in investments worldwide to build a vast network of transportation, energy, and telecommunications infrastructure, primarily linking Europe, Africa, and Asia.

To build this network, the Chinese regime steered funding to partner countries via the China Development Bank the Export-Import Bank of China, and the Agricultural Development Bank of China.

In order to qualify for the loans, the client states are required to use Chinese products.

The report, which integrated the countries' overall public debt-to-GDP ratio and the concentration of that debt with China as the creditor, identified eight countries where OBOR appears to create the potential for debt sustainability problems.

For example, Djibouti's GDP was \$1.73 billion in 2016, but it owes China \$1.2 billion. The other seven at-risk countries are Pakistan, Laos, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Maldives, and Montenegro.

Kenya owes China \$4 billion, and is among 15 countries that are significantly or highly vulnerable to debt distress because of their acceptance of OBOR loans.

YASUYOSHI OHBA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

HUMAN RIGHTS

Beijing Is 'Following the Anti-Falun Gong Playbook' in Uyghur Crackdown, Says Expert

EVA FU

Yan Yuhua is one among the millions who have languished in Chinese prisons because of their faith. The first time she was arrested, in 2006, guards put her in solitary confinement in an effort to force her to sign a renunciation of her belief in Falun Gong, a banned spiritual practice. Sleeping, showering, eating, and even lying down were luxuries. They poured cold water over her body and forced her to stand for prolonged periods. They also barred her family—parents in their 70s and a teenage son—from visiting her.

Later, she was detained at a brainwashing center for 2 1/2 years. Guards made her wear earbuds blasting propaganda that attacked Falun Gong. "Watchers" would take turns beating and insulting her.

Stories mirroring the experiences of Yan and other Falun Gong adherents—who have suffered such persecution since the beginning of the Chinese Communist Party's campaign against them in 1999—are now also occurring in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang.

Origins of the Xinjiang Model

Xinjiang is home to roughly 11 million Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minorities.

Under the guise of "eradicating extremism," Chinese authorities began a campaign in 2014 to monitor, suppress, and persecute Muslim minorities, including by establishing an overarching surveillance network. The regime collected biometric data from residents and installed cameras and phone apps to monitor their activities.

Estimates by the United Nations found that more than a million Muslim residents are currently detained in internment camps, where they are tortured, "re-educated," and forced to swear allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), in an effort to coerce them into giving up their faith.

According to experts, the tactics used in the current repression were not devised recently, but are the culmination of the regime's two decades of experience in targeting Falun Gong.

The spiritual discipline, which incorporates meditative exercises and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, drew roughly 70 million to 100 million adherents before the CCP launched a nationwide campaign to eradicate the practice in 1999.

The tactics used in the current Uyghur repression are but a culmination of the regime's two decades of experience targeting the spiritual discipline Falun Gong.



Buildings of a reeducation camp where mostly Muslim ethnic minorities are detained, in Artux City, north of Kashgar in China's northwestern Xinjiang region, on June 2, 2019.

'Transformation Through Education'

The concept of "transformation through education," for example, emerged with the persecution of Falun Gong, according to Sarah Cook, a senior China analyst at the watchdog organization Freedom House, in a February 2019 report.

The Chinese regime detains Falun Gong practitioners in prisons and "legal education centers" (often dubbed brainwashing centers), and previously sent them en masse to labor camps, which were abolished in 2013. In the prisons and centers, detainees are forced to watch propaganda videos, sing pro-CCP songs, and "repent" for their supposed crimes of faith. Those who resist the pressure are subject to torture.

The euphemism "transformation" is a way for the Chinese regime to "invoke a positive image" and frame the process as "compassionate treatment," Cook said.

"It's such a Falun Gong-oriented term that really emerged and took off. ... Then you see this exact same term coming up in Xinjiang," Cook said in an interview with The Epoch Times.

She recalled a 2018 panel about Xinjiang, held at the Hudson Institute in Washington, where she was surprised to hear a China analyst associating the term "transformation" with Xinjiang. "These scholars ... are not that familiar with the specific Party language related to Falun Gong, and that was really striking when I heard them say that."

According to an incomplete survey from Minghui.org, a clearinghouse

documenting the persecution of Falun Gong, there are 449 brainwashing centers in 173 cities and 329 districts or counties across China.

Such facilities proliferated after the Chinese regime abolished the labor camp system in 2013, Cook noted. The persecution of Falun Gong continues unabated.

Officials

A most telling link between the two persecution campaigns, according to Cook, is the fact that key officials who are now influencing Xinjiang policy originally built their careers through campaigns against Falun Gong.

Fu Zhenghua is currently China's minister of justice in charge of funding Xinjiang's political indoctrination programs. From 2015 to 2016, he led the 610 Office, an extralegal agency created expressly to oversee the Falun Gong persecution.

He also held a top post at the Beijing municipal police bureau between 2010 and 2015, during which time Falun Gong practitioners who refused to renounce their faith were "reported to have been directly sent to various 'brainwashing centers'" following the official dissolution of the labor camp system, according to a 2013 Amnesty International report.

Sun Jinlong, Party secretary of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, a state-owned quasi-military and business conglomerate, also has extended experience with the persecution. In a 2001 national conference, Sun made a public speech denouncing Falun Gong and encouraged officials to "tirelessly struggle against" the spiritual practice, according to the Party's mouthpiece newspaper

People's Daily.

In 2010, while Sun was Party secretary of Hefei city, Anhui Province, he outlined an "overall battle work plan" to monitor and harass local Falun Gong practitioners, including setting up databases of practitioners and brainwashing centers for "stubborn" adherents, and conducting door-to-door visits. The plan announced a goal to "transform" all "newly identified" adherents within a year. Street-level officials would receive honorary titles recognizing their effectiveness in those efforts, local government records showed.

Their "proven track record of harshly suppressing innocent religious believers" seemed to be "precisely" what got them to higher ranks, Cook said.

The World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong, a U.S.-based nonprofit dedicated to documenting the persecution of the spiritual discipline, has named both officials as human rights violators.

The Learning Curve

The Xinjiang policy bears other hallmarks of the campaign against Falun Gong.

In terms of terminology, officials executing the suppression in Xinjiang and of Falun Gong have framed reeducation efforts as "psychological counseling" and have assigned target quotas for security officers, Cook said.

Authorities also use similar terms to refer to the two groups: "die-hard" Falun Gong practitioners and "strike hard" detainees in Xinjiang, for example.

Minghui.org has reported extensively on how police have eavesdropped on Falun Gong practitioners' phones since the early 2000s to collect intelligence on them. A quick search on the website reveals a dozen cases of prolonged phone tapping, most of which were followed by subsequent arrests. The 20 years of experience in suppressing Falun Gong allowed the Chinese regime to quickly pull together an apparatus to persecute Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

"It's like any kind of project management. Once you've done it before, it goes that much faster the second time," Cook said. "They know exactly what they're doing."

She said the recurring patterns showing Chinese officials "following the anti-Falun Gong playbook in Xinjiang" is cause for alarm.

"It indicates that they are playing the long game, have little intention of reversing the policy, and have few qualms about using harsh tactics like severe torture or long prison terms to achieve their aims," Cook wrote in her February report.

ANTHONY WALLACE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Hong Kong pro-democracy legislator Claudia Mo (R) is surrounded by security as she shouts "Free press! No persecution!", as Chief Executive Carrie Lam (not pictured) arrives to deliver her policy address at the Legislative Council in Hong Kong on Oct. 10, 2018.

FREE PRESS

Press Freedom in Hong Kong, Taiwan Under Attack by Beijing: Report

NICOLE HAO

Hong Kong and Taiwan are on the frontlines of this battle [for press freedom].

Committee to Protect Journalists

The Chinese regime has undermined press freedom in Hong Kong and Taiwan as it seeks to export censorship worldwide, according to a recent report by U.S.-based nonprofit.

While the special administrative region of Hong Kong and the self-ruled island of Taiwan have been "bastions of civil liberties in East Asia," their media markets have come under pressure from the communist regime as it seeks to influence editorial content and manipulate public opinion, according to a Dec. 16 report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

"Hong Kong and Taiwan are on the frontlines of this battle [of press freedom]," the organization stated.

The report came as Hong Kong has been embroiled in more than a half-year of protests against the regime's growing interference in the city. Meanwhile, the regime's infiltration in various sectors of Taiwanese society, including media, has drawn heightened scrutiny as the island heads toward a presidential election next week.

According to the CPJ, the regime has deployed a range of measures to influence media including openly or covertly taking ownership of media outlets, pressuring media owners through financial incentives, and intimidating journalists.

Hong Kong

Since Hong Kong reverted to Chinese rule in 1997, the city's freedoms, including a free press, have come under heavy pressure, the report said.

Nine out of 26 mainstream media outlets in the city are controlled by Chinese regime officials or companies led by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members, the report stated, citing a tally by the Hong Kong Journalists Association. These include leading TV broadcaster TVB, and English-language newspaper South China Morning Post.

In addition, Chinese businessmen who aren't residents of mainland China but have political appointments within the regime control other outlets, meaning more than half of the city's news organizations have close ties to the mainland, the report added.

Meanwhile, outlets that haven't caved to regime pressure have found

themselves the focus of attacks by the regime. For example, Jimmy Lai, chair of Next Digital, the company that owns independent Chinese-language media Apple Daily, was targeted by Chinese state-run propaganda outlets after he met with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence in July 2019.

An August 2019 commentary by Chinese state-run Xinhua had accused Lai of spreading disinformation and working with foreign forces to interfere in Hong Kong.

In March 2019, former Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, now vice-chair of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, an advisory body to the Party, began a social media campaign aimed to get people to boycott Apple Daily's advertisers.

"The squeeze on Apple Daily advertising is consistent with China's increasing efforts to wield commercial muscle against companies that cross an ill-defined political red line," the report stated.

Pro-democracy media outlets and journalists have been victims of a variety of attacks, the report noted. Lai's home was firebombed in 2015, and again in September 2019. His company headquarters was also firebombed during the attack in 2015.

In February 2014, two assailants attacked Hong Kong journalist Kevin Lau, slashing his back six times with a cleaver. Lau was editor-in-chief of pro-democracy leaning Ming Pao, before being replaced in January 2014. The assailants were arrested and are currently serving 19-year jail sentences over the incident.

In November 2019, the printing warehouse of the Hong Kong edition of The Epoch Times came under an arson attack, when four masked intruders set fire to some of the equipment while employees were on shift.

"CPJ research overwhelmingly shows that when journalists or a publisher such as Lai are targeted for attack, they've been known for critical reporting on Hong Kong or China," the report said.

While journalists in Hong Kong are also concerned that critical reporting of the regime would lead to Beijing denying them visas to work in the mainland, international correspondents fear that their permission to stay

in Hong Kong could be revoked.

Taiwan

Unlike Hong Kong, Taiwan prohibits direct ownership of local media companies by mainland Chinese entities or individuals.

"That prohibition has nonetheless failed to halt China's efforts to influence media or prevent individuals with strong business interests in China, who are potentially vulnerable to Chinese pressure, from owning Taiwanese media," the report stated.

Taiwan also bans advertising by the regime, but not by Chinese commercial entities.

"A cursory look at Taiwan's newspapers indicates that papers that are critical of China do not carry advertisements from China. It pays to be pro-Beijing," it stated.

The report noted that Chinese influence in Taiwanese media escalated in 2008, when China-friendly Taiwanese entrepreneur Tsia Eng-meng acquired one of the island's largest media companies, Want Want Group. The company owns The China Times newspaper, five other print outlets, three TV broadcasters, and eight news websites or apps.

In March 2012, The China Times ran daily reports about a visit to Taiwan by Chinese official Su Shulin, then-governor of the Southern Chinese province of Fujian. The independent news site New Talk later revealed that Fujian authorities had paid The China Times for the coverage to promote tourism.

The paper was fined NT\$1.8 million (\$57,368) for illegally running advertising for Chinese authorities.

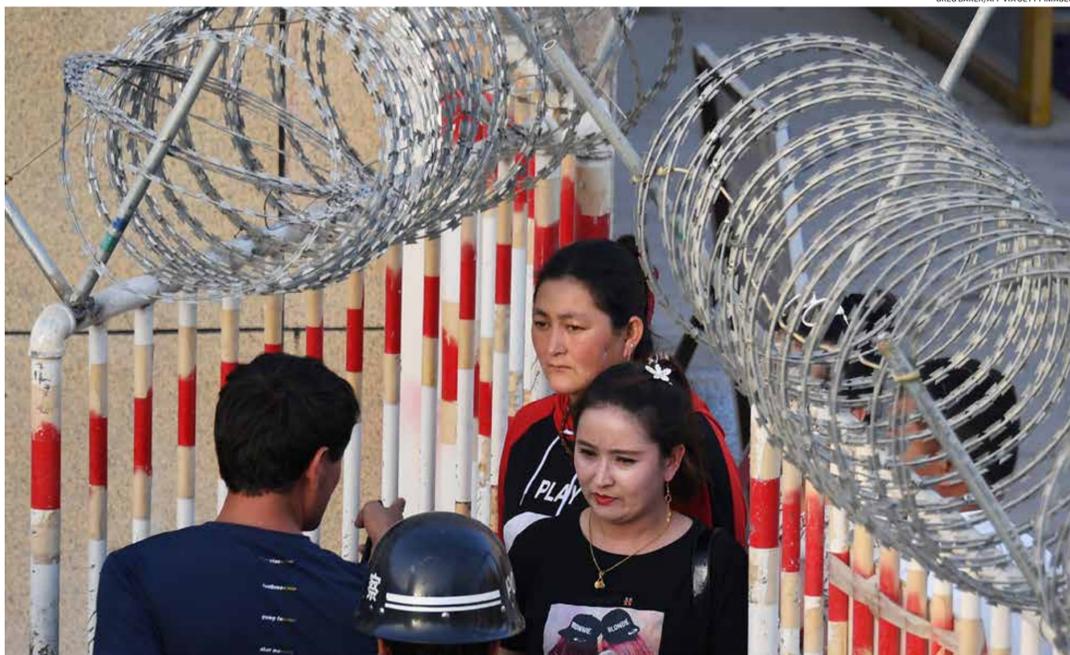
In April 2019, Nikkei Asian Review reported that Want Want had received \$586.7 million in Chinese state subsidies since 2004. The company responded that the subsidies had no connection to its media business.

In May 2019, Vincent Chen Wen-fan, the deputy director-general of the National Security Bureau, Taiwan's intelligence agency, told a legislative hearing that some Taiwan media outlets cooperated with the Chinese regime to spread fake news and disinformation.

In August 2019, Reuters reported, citing unnamed sources as well as contracts reviewed by the outlet, that mainland authorities have paid at least five Taiwan media groups for favorable coverage.



Sarah Cook, China analyst at Freedom House, at a panel discussion at the Jamestown Foundation in Washington on Oct. 15, 2019.



A Uyghur woman (C) goes through an entrance to a bazaar in Hotan, Xinjiang, in northwestern China, on May 31, 2019.

ORGAN HARVESTING

Chinese Doctor Discusses a Possible Case of Forced Organ Harvesting

NICOLE HAO

In comments made during an interview with The Epoch Times, a Chinese surgeon gave details about a liver transplant operation that he believes may be linked to the communist regime's practice of mass organ harvesting from prisoners.

On Dec. 19, the Chinese-language edition of The Epoch Times interviewed Dr. Zhong, who provided documents confirming his identity and occupation. In order to protect his identity, The Epoch Times omitted Zhong's full name.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) regime has been accused of running a large-scale organ harvesting scheme since at least the mid-1990s, turning huge profits through the murder of those jailed for their religious beliefs. According to a growing number of witnesses and experts, the primary victims are practitioners of Falun Gong, a banned Chinese spiritual practice.

During his postgraduate studies, Zhong had the opportunity to participate in a variety of surgical operations at different hospitals in China. In 2011, he took part in a "special liver transplant" at the First Affiliated Hospital of Zhejiang University's School of Medicine, where he was working as an intern surgeon.

One night, staff at the hospital called Zhong after 11:00 p.m. for a transplant. "They said there wasn't a surgeon available and they wanted me to perform the operation. I wanted to learn and practice more. It was really a good opportunity for me," he said.

Upon arriving at the hospital, Zhong found police uniforms in the locker room. Then he saw several people dressed in visitors' surgical gowns. They were taller and stronger than the average doctors and nurses.

"It was very strange," he recalled. "The locker room is for doctors' and nurses' exclusive use. Why were there police uniforms there?"

Zhong then saw several of the visitors inside a room adjacent to the operating room. When they were to start the transplant, a nurse brought the liver in from the first room. "I believe that the donor was in the operating room next door," Zhong said.

The patient had cirrhosis. Zhong spent about eight hours performing the transplant operation, and went home directly afterward.

When he returned to the hospital, Zhong heard that a cornea transplant operation had been performed in the same building during the liver transplant.

"Normally, the hospital won't perform a cornea transplant operation at the same time as a liver transplant," Zhong said. "But that night, the transplant operations were done in parallel with each other. It's very strange."

"I did surgeries at many hospitals in Hangzhou [the capital of Zhejiang Province]. I know the hospitals well," Zhong said. "The First Affiliated Hospital of Zhejiang University School of Medicine is one of the best hospitals for hepatobiliary transplantation. It has performed many more operations than other hospitals in eastern China."

Zhong thinks the person who supplied the cornea was the same person as the liver donor, and that it's likely the hospital used all the organs it could get from the donor.

"The donor must be a political prisoner. That's the reason why policemen were there," Zhong said. He said he didn't ask for the donor's background, but soon after he learned that the donor might be a Falun Gong practitioner.

Mass Killing

According to Ethan Gutmann, an American investigative journalist,

China has been harvesting the organs of prisoners since at least the mid-1990s, when it was carrying out such operations in Xinjiang, a province on the far western Chinese border.

In the 2000s, the business assumed a horrific scale. In 1999, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) banned Falun Gong, a spiritual practice that had tens of millions of adherents, and hundreds of thousands of people found themselves behind bars, where they were beaten or tortured if they refused to give up their faith.

In June 2019, the London-based China Tribunal concluded that organ harvesting was indeed taking place in China with the CCP's approval, and that it showed no signs of stopping. Experts such as Canadian rights lawyer David Matas suspect that Uyghur Muslims, over 1 million of whom are believed to be incarcerated in labor camps, could be replacing Falun Gong practitioners as the biggest source of involuntary organ donors.

The first allegations that Falun Gong practitioners were being murdered for their organs were raised in 2006. However, the difficulty of conducting on-the-ground research in China has forced investigators to rely on circumstantial methods such as discrepancies in official statistics and witness testimony.

'There Were Plenty of Donors Before'

At the medical school, faculty told Zhong and others that the donors were executed prisoners, but didn't allow any questions about who they were or why they had been killed.

"They knew they [the donors] were Falun Gong practitioners," Zhong later realized.

Later, Zhong began working with a different team, where he met Zheng Shusen, director of organ transplantation at the First Affiliated Hospital

of Zhejiang University.

Zheng also formerly directed the Chinese Transplant Congress and chaired the China Organ Procurement Organization Alliance. Between 2007 and 2017, he was also head of the Zhejiang provincial branch of the China Anti-Cult Association. The latter is an important Communist Party-controlled organization for defaming Falun Gong.

According to Chinese media, Zheng Shusen's team had performed over 2,300 liver transplant operations by December 2017.

"Zheng told us that the donors were fewer than before ... He didn't draw a comparison with any specific year ... He said there were plenty of donors before, and they could do a lot of medical research," Zhong said. Zhong didn't elaborate on why there were fewer donors.

In 2017, Liver International, the official journal of the International Association for the Study of the Liver, retracted an article by Zheng Shusen because he couldn't produce "credible evidence" that the organs used in his research had been obtained ethically.

Dr. Zhong said that his experiences made him suspect that there was a darker background to the Chinese organ transplant industry, so he decided to become a general surgeon instead.

Following graduation, Zhong started to look deeper into the background of the liver transplant he had helped perform. He spoke to others at the medical school and used VPN software to skirt Chinese internet censorship and find out more information about organ harvesting.

"When I first heard about live organ harvesting, I was very shocked. But the facts I learned were so solid that it's impossible to deny," Zhong said. "This is the reason why international magazines removed Chinese doctors' work on transplant research."



The curtain call for a Shen Yun performance at the Performing Arts Center at Purchase College in Purchase, N.Y., on Dec. 22, 2019.

CHINESE INTERFERENCE

Shen Yun Audiences Criticize Chinese Regime's Latest Attempt at Interference

NICOLE HAO

While audiences in upstate New York were preparing to watch a classical Chinese dance performance by New York-based nonprofit Shen Yun, hecklers appeared in front of the venue.

From Dec. 20 to 22, Shen Yun performed four sold-out shows at the Performing Arts Center at Purchase College in Purchase, New York.

Shen Yun, which means "the beauty of divine beings dancing" in Chinese, according to its website, seeks to revive 5,000 years of Chinese civilization through music and dance. Founded in 2006 by artists in exile, the company was established to present traditional Chinese arts, free of censorship from the Chinese regime.

So what was the motive behind the heckling? To comply with the Chinese regime's censorship agenda.

Beijing has continually sought to sabotage Shen Yun's performances in the United States and elsewhere in the world; its latest attempt involved a New York-based front group for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Heckling

At about 6:30 p.m. local time on Dec. 20, Li Huahong, the head of a CCP front group known as the Chinese Anti-Cult World Alliance (CACWA), led a group of 25 people into the Purchase College theater lobby, claiming that they wanted to buy tickets.

The group frequently appears at venues where Shen Yun is scheduled to perform and displays posters and banners that malign the company. They are also known to harass and intimidate local adherents of Falun Dafa, a spiritual group that is currently banned and heavily persecuted in mainland China.

Some of Shen Yun's performances depict the ongoing persecution of Falun Dafa in China.

Li and her entourage didn't buy tickets but instead yelled Chinese-language insults at Shen Yun staff in the lobby.

Soon after, the theater's security staff forced the hecklers to leave. One of the security guards told Shen Yun staff: "Please don't worry! We will make sure the show can perform without interruption. Here is neither China nor Hong Kong."

One audience member shouted, "You guys go back to Communist China!" Once outside, Li and her group held poster boards with false messages about Shen Yun and Falun Dafa.

The following day, Li and her group arrived at the Purchase theater in a bus, prior to Shen Yun's 2 p.m. show.

When I first saw this protest, I felt ... they were paid to stand there, hold the signs that they were told to say.

Rudy, Shen Yun audience member

They again stood outside the theater with their posters. Afterward, the group left on the bus.

When the bus returned to the theater in the evening, only some in the group stood outside the theater again with their posters.

On the third day, local police sent more officers to patrol near the theater. Li's group again had noticeably fewer members.

Audience's Opinion

Audience members were critical of the Chinese regime's interference toward Shen Yun.

"[Shen Yun is] so fabulous. It's just wonderful. I really love it. Everybody should see it. It's really great," painter Betsy M. Fowler said in an interview with The Epoch Times after she watched the Dec. 22 performance in Purchase.

"When I first saw this protest, I felt ... they were paid to stand there, hold the signs that they were told to say," a salesman who identified himself as Rudy told the Chinese-language Epoch Times on Dec. 21. "They were not authentic. They were not genuine. They were not emotional. They were not with passion."

A business owner named John told the Chinese-language Epoch Times at the theater on Dec. 21. "In a situation like this, where there is art and music, the protest doesn't belong here."

After seeing Shen Yun on Dec. 22, a clinical research scientist named Dr.

Thakker told the Chinese-language Epoch Times: "They [Li's group] are supported by the Chinese government. And I think that is a mistake by the Chinese government. If they [the regime in Beijing] want to become one of the most powerful countries in the world, they have to give their people complete freedom."

Li Huahong

Chinese immigrants previously hired by Li told The Epoch Times that CACWA receives funding from China's Tianjin City Political and Legal Affairs Committee. Those hired by the group are paid to participate in the group's activities.

The Political and Legal Affairs Committee is a CCP agency that oversees all law enforcement authorities, including the police force, in China. Each regional government in China has a branch office of this agency.

On Feb. 9, while local residents were celebrating the Lunar New Year in Flushing, a neighborhood in the New York City borough of Queens, Li was observed instructing people to stand behind police barricades among the spectators and carry the Chinese regime's national flag. About 100 flag-bearers were stationed along the parade route.

An African American man told a reporter that he was paid \$200 to carry a flag, adding that last year, he was paid \$20. Another male, an apparent coordinator who was giving out flags,

was observed telling recipients to keep their red envelopes safe, adding that the payment was \$30. Red envelopes containing cash gifts are traditionally given out during Chinese New Year.

Peter Tu, chairman of the Flushing Lunar New Year Parade and executive director of the Flushing Chinese Business Association, said that the display of the flags was upsetting to him, adding that his association had declined to allow Li's group to join the parade, but he couldn't stop people from waving Chinese flags on the sidewalks.

In 2013, Li was found guilty and sentenced for assault with intent to cause injury, for an incident in which she beat a man named Cheng Changhe, after the latter tried to stop her from assaulting a Falun Dafa practitioner.

The judge ordered that Li undergo anger management therapy.

According to court documents, Li has been sued multiple times since 2011 for physically assaulting Falun Dafa practitioners in Flushing, where local adherents often distribute fliers about the persecution of the group in China.

The CCP has used a variety of methods to interfere with Shen Yun since the arts company's founding, such as threatening venues and local governments to stop them from hosting Shen Yun; sabotaging Shen Yun's tour buses; arranging for China-based performers to assault art groups to perform at the same venues as Shen Yun; and hiring internet trolls to sway online opinion against the company.



Li Huahong (Top L wearing black cap), a CCP agent in New York, and her team members attempt to interfere with Shen Yun's performance at the Performing Arts Center at Purchase College in Purchase, N.Y., from Dec. 20-22, 2019.

HUANGYI18/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS [CC BY-SA 3.0 (EPTMS/2BW5EVO)]



The First Affiliated Hospital College of Medicine Zhejiang University on Dec. 4, 2012.



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