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CHINA INSIDER

FIGHT OF THEIR LIVES

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FOR FREEDOM

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Hong Kong protesters rally against China's national security law in Hong Kong, China, on May 27, 2020.



Pro-democracy supporters scuffle with riot police at a rally in Causeway Bay district in Hong Kong on May 27, 2020.

HONG KONG

Global Freedoms at Risk Over Beijing’s National Security Law

BOWEN XIAO

It is becoming increasingly clear under Beijing’s new national security law that anyone, anywhere across the globe, can be targeted—a threat experts call unprecedented and an exportation of the country’s oppressive model.

The expansive legislation, which went into effect on July 1, gives the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sweeping powers to target individuals for any acts of secession, subversion, terrorism, or collusion with foreign forces. The offenses can carry a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

The law has triggered fears that Hong Kong will become just like any other mainland Chinese city under the authoritarian grip of the CCP. But the threat has spread beyond Hong Kong.

Samuel Chu, a U.S. citizen and pro-democracy activist, and five others were issued arrest warrants by Hong Kong authorities following the legislation’s implementation.

“Every provision of this law—which was concocted in Beijing and enacted without the Hong Kong legislature—applies to everyone outside of Hong Kong,” Chu wrote in an op-ed. “Nobody is beyond the law’s reach, not me in the United States, and certainly not the estimated 85,000 Americans living and working in Hong Kong itself.”

In response to Beijing’s legislation, the Trump administration on Aug. 7 sanctioned Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam and 10 other Hong Kong and Chinese officials. The sanctions freeze any U.S. assets the officials have, and generally bar Americans from doing business with them. China soon responded with unspecified sanctions against 11 U.S. politicians and heads of organizations promoting democratic causes—matching the same number the United States had originally targeted.

One of those 11 sanctioned was Michael Abramowitz, the president of Freedom House, a U.S.-based, government-funded nonprofit.

Annie Boyajian, director of advocacy at the organization, called the law the latest example of the CCP “seeking to export their model of oppression.”

“It’s also very ironic how broadly the CCP says this law applies, given how frequently Chinese officials tout the principles of noninterference and national sovereignty,” Boyajian told The Epoch Times, describing it as “outrageous.”

Chu, among the five others issued arrest warrants, is wanted on suspicion of seces-

sion or colluding with foreign forces, which is punishable with life in prison.

“To be clear, [Chu] was doing that lobbying work here in the U.S.—to his own government!” Boyajian added.

The sanctions against Freedom House’s president follow sanctions placed on the group back in December last year. Boyajian said the latest move was a sign of the effectiveness of U.S. sanctions against Hong Kong and CCP officials.

Chilling Effect

The national security law is “entirely unprecedented” said Scott Watnik, litigation partner at U.S. law firm Wilk Auslander and co-chair of the firm’s cybersecurity practice, noting that it applies to everyone in the world “with zero jurisdictional safeguards or defenses to non-resident foreign nationals.”

“China is aiming to instill fear in its critics across the world and control the narrative, so that journalists and government officials will think twice before they criticize China,” Watnik told The Epoch Times. “At least to some degree, China is likely to have some success in bringing about this chilling effect.”

Anyone who comments on affairs in Hong Kong could be at risk of violating the legislation, he said.

The national security law comes in response to months of pro-democracy protests that started in 2019.

“The fact that these stories are getting so little international attention should be frightening to us all,” Donald Kendal, research fellow and co-leader of the Stopping Socialism Project at The Heartland Institute, told The Epoch Times.

The text of the law is so broadly written that all interpretative and enforcement power “lies in Beijing’s hands, with no check on the Chinese government by any judicial or other authority,” Watnik said.

“The law has no limits; it means whatever Beijing says it means,” he added.

There are a multitude of actions the United States can take to combat Beijing’s national security law, such as expanding sanctions to entities involved in human rights violations in Hong Kong, urging other democracies to impose matching sanctions, and welcoming Hongkongers forced to flee their homeland, according to Boyajian.

The transformation of Hong Kong into an authoritarian state is occurring at “nearly breakneck speed,” she said. Instead of Beijing officials viewing Hong Kong as one of their greatest assets, they have unleashed a campaign of oppression that is to “their

own detriment.”

“The contrast between the U.S. and Chinese sanctions is telling: The former aim to punish human-rights violations, and the latter aim to punish speech about those violations,” wrote Abramowitz in an op-ed.

Inconveniences posed to Freedom House staff due to Beijing’s latest actions “pales in comparison to the sacrifices made by those in Hong Kong and mainland China seeking to protect and promote rights and freedoms,” Boyajian said. “It is our honor to stand with them.”

In the month since the law went into effect, the Hong Kong government has escalated attempts to curtail the city’s freedoms. Authorities postponed a scheduled September legislative election for a year, citing fears over the CCP virus—which broke out in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019—and disqualified 12 pro-democracy candidates who won votes in an unofficial primary.

Popular protest slogans were also outlawed.

Watnik, like other experts, believes the security law may end up backfiring as the communist regime is now front and center. He called China’s retaliatory sanctions against U.S. lawmakers “weak and empty, as they are of no practical effect.” Imposing economic sanctions on China, as the United States has, may hurt U.S. companies in the short term, he said, but hitting the CCP financially “may be the only way to end totalitarian rule in China.”

Chinese officials claimed the national security law would target a small segment of society, but recent events have shown otherwise.

The CCP has created “a blueprint of persecution that identifies, tracks, and suppresses dissenting voices,” David Curry, CEO of Open Doors USA, a nonprofit that aids persecuted Christians globally, told The Epoch Times, noting China’s long track record of oppressing religious minorities.

Beijing’s new law also highlights how the party is willing “to disregard deals they have previously agreed to in order to further their own imperialist interests,” said Edward Bourke, executive director of Australian-based conservative political action group Victoria Forward.

Bourke told The Epoch Times that the CCP only responds to strength, emphasizing that the global community must take a decisive and united stand against the CCP by employing appropriate punitive measures.

Epoch Times staff Eva Fu, Cathy He, and The Associated Press contributed to this report.

HONG KONG

Hong Kong Youth Chase Hope, Freedom Under Beijing’s Authoritarian Grip

EVA FU

When news reached Simon Cheng, a former British consular employee and Hongkonger-in-exile, that he had become a fugitive overnight, he took it with a mix of shock and pride.

“You are in the headlines now,” a friend texted him.

There was no notice in the mail, nor any official statement from the Hong Kong government. But CCTV, the Chinese Communist Party’s state broadcaster, confirmed the Hong Kong police ordered Cheng’s arrest, one of six overseas pro-democracy advocates they said violated the new national security law on charges of secession or collusion with foreign forces. The offenses are punishable with up to lifelong imprisonment.

Cheng, who fled to the U.K. under political asylum, dismissed what he called a “groundless accusation.”

“I did nothing that violates my conscience,” the 29-year-old activist told The Epoch Times from his London home, adding that, “at this moment, I have no way back but to persist.”

Being on the Chinese regime’s target list, he said, was something of an accomplishment.

“It’s my honor to sacrifice for democracy,” he said.

Since pro-democracy protests ignited last summer in the former British colony over Beijing’s growing encroachment, police have made close to 9,700 arrests and prosecuted over 2,000. “Secondary and post-secondary” students made up roughly 40 percent of the arrestees. In Hong Kong, secondary school begins at age 13.

At least 24 have been arrested under the security law since it took effect on July 1.

A State Enemy

The arrest warrant came roughly a year after Chinese agents abducted Cheng while he was on a business trip to mainland China and placed him in detention for 15 days.

Cheng later described being shackled, hooded, and repeatedly tortured as police tried to extract intelligence about the Hong Kong protest movement. A day after he broke his silence and shared his experience with the media, China’s English-language state broadcaster CGTN aired a confession video showing him admitting to Chinese authorities’ prostitution charges, for which he has brought a lawsuit to U.K.’s broadcast regulator, citing breach of privacy and fairness.

In London, Cheng said he has noticed suspicious people following him on at least three occasions. On Aug. 10, he posted a screenshot of a threatening email he received, with the subject line: “Chinese agents will find you and bring you back.”

It’s my honor to sacrifice for democracy.

Simon Cheng, Hong Kong activist based in London

Still, Cheng keeps going. He has created a platform called Haven Assistance, to help Hongkonger dissidents escape to other countries.

Hong Kong has entered a new phase since Beijing enforced the new security law.

Local authorities have doubled down on their aggression, criminalizing the use of a popular protest slogan and an unofficial protest anthem, and barring 12 pro-democracy legislative candidates from running in elections before postponing the voting completely—which Beijing critics said was a tactic to avoid an embarrassing defeat at the polls for the pro-Beijing camp. Police have made arrests over social media posts and raided the newsroom of an outspoken newspaper.

“No one would naturally hate the Chinese Communist Party from their birth,” Cheng said, adding that many moderate Hong Kong youths have become more vocal in dissenting against the Chinese regime due to its aggressive policies.

Beijing has “pushed the young people to where they are. They made so many enemies because of their own doing,” he said.

Defending Hong Kong’s Identity

At Causeway Bay, a popular shopping district, Zack Ho, 19, hands out flyers containing creative catchphrases to remind people of Hong Kong’s political predicament while promoting local cultural customs—from Hong Kong’s use of traditional Chinese script (as opposed to the simplified version used in mainland China) to its famed creamy egg tarts.

The idea is to reach the “mild” people who don’t have much of an opinion about the city’s current political situation and who are too caught up in the humdrum of their daily lives, said Ho, who is the convener of the student activist group Inspidemia.

His flyers intentionally use phrases that would circumvent the authorities’ new ban. “Post-Hong Kong times,” for example, hints at the end of the “one country, two systems” formula, under which Beijing promised to preserve the city’s autonomy upon its transfer of sovereignty in 1997. Parts of the slogan “there are no rioters, only a tyrannical government,” are replaced with blank spaces to work around the new law.

“We try to just play word games,” Ho said in a phone interview. Since “we cannot say ‘one country, two systems’ is dead, [and] we cannot say the autonomy of Hong Kong is dead... we try to imply that softly to them.”

The streets are much quieter compared to last year, when fears of deepening Beijing control following a government proposal to enact an extradition bill brought millions to the streets. Citing concerns

about the spread of COVID-19 and the new law, this year, police quickly made arrests to suppress any budding signs of protests. Often, people who walked past Ho’s booth simply “stayed chill” and ignored them, as patrolling police officers, whose numbers have steadily grown, stood nearby and watched quietly, Ho said.

Even printing the materials was no small feat: among 50 printing shops he talked with, only a handful was willing to print his leaflets—because many complete their printing work in the mainland and don’t want to risk provoking authorities, he said.

Ho, who hopes to pursue a political career in the future and serve local communities as a district councillor, was not deterred by the security law. “We just want to bring out our mindset,” he said. “People should not shut up from this.”

But in August, as several young pro-democracy activists were arrested for violating the new law, the escalating suppression forced Ho to reconsider his stakes.

“What should I say from now on ... [to] be more safe for me to continue my work?” he asked himself. The first rule, he decided, was “try not to get arrested” and play a long-term game.

Chasing Hope

There has been a sense of loss and frustration among Hong Kong activists as they grapple with the aftereffects of the new law, such as symbols of the movement being wiped away: slogans, protest songs, rallies, and Lennon Walls—either voluntarily to avoid authorities’ scrutiny, or because police forbade them.

“It feels a bit lonely where we are. We’re all alone,” said Ventus Lau, who organized several major protests in 2019, in a recent phone interview. The 26-year-old, one of the pro-democracy candidates who was disqualified from the September elections, is also facing rioting charges in relation to last year’s protests.

The new reality is the most dreadful for the young generation—the driving force of the pro-democracy protests—who face a future under Beijing’s authoritarian reign, he said.

He doesn’t see a way out yet, but believes that as long as Hongkongers preserve that flicker of hope, a solution will surface—“maybe just not now.”

“We can never give up because it is what we can only do for our next generation,” he said. “We have to fight until the final moments.”

It’s the only way they can envision a different future: by carrying on, they would show the world that Hong Kong still deserves freedom.

“We don’t fight because we have seen hope. We fight because we want to chase hope, and hope is made by human efforts,” Ho said.



BILLY H.C. KWOK/GETTY IMAGES



A Chinese oil worker inspects one of the wells at a gas field in Baicheng County in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Sept. 4, 2007.

CHINESE INFLUENCE

Chinese Regime Rushes to Destroy Files Overseas as US Cracks Down on Beijing’s Espionage: Leaked Document

CATHY HE, FRANK FANG & EVA FU

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has directed certain overseas Party cells to destroy sensitive documents and safeguard its secrets, in response to heightened scrutiny in the West of the regime’s covert activities abroad, an internal document obtained by The Epoch Times reveals.

China’s state-owned oil giant China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC) instructed the company’s overseas offices in more than 10 countries, including Australia and Canada, in a notice issued in August to “urgently destroy or transfer sensitive documents” relating to “overseas Party-building activities.”

Party-building activities overseas refers to the CCP’s efforts to expand its global influence, according to New York-based China commentator Qin Peng. Under this program, Chinese consulates can instruct Chinese multinational companies to carry out tasks beyond their business operations, such as collecting intelligence, stealing sensitive information, and influencing local officials, he said.

CNPC, the world’s third-largest oil company, has operations in 75 countries, according to its website. Like most Chinese businesses, the company has a CCP unit embedded in its organization—to ensure the firm is toeing the Party line in its business activities. The company has more than 1.3 million employees worldwide, with almost 700,000 Party members as of 2018, according to the company’s website.

The notice says that important documents that can’t be easily destroyed may be given to the Chinese embassy in Cambodia for safekeeping, and also warns company Party members not to divulge sensitive information to local law enforcement.

“When subject to foreign investigations, Party members and cadres must abide by [the principle of] ‘strictly guarding Party secrets,’” the document says. “This is an iron rule and discipline.”

The directive is a response to recent actions by the United States and other Western governments, the document says, citing an incident in Australia in which authorities searched and seized mobile phones and computers of Chinese diplomatic personnel because they contained material relating to the CCP. It didn’t provide additional details.

The United States has in recent months escalated efforts to combat Chinese es-

When subject to foreign investigations, Party members and cadres must abide by [the principle of] ‘strictly guarding Party secrets.’

From a notice issued this month by China’s state-owned oil giant China National Petroleum Corporation

pionage and malign influence activities. The Trump administration in July ordered the closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston, saying the diplomatic outpost was a “hub of spying and intellectual property theft.”

The regime’s covert foreign influence operations have also drawn the attention of many democracies, particularly in Australia, where the government has stepped up actions to stem Chinese influence in politics and university campuses.

Nicholas Eftimiades, a former senior U.S. intelligence official and author of the book “Chinese Intelligence Operations,” told The Epoch Times that the incident in Australia may have referred to an unreported seizure by border officials at the country’s ports of entry, or the recent raid of a Chinese Australian’s home as part of an investigation into foreign interference by Beijing.

Australian police in June raided the home of John Zhang, a naturalized Australian citizen and an aide to a state politician, seizing materials such as computer evidence. According to court documents, Zhang was under investigation for allegedly concealing that he was acting “on behalf of, or in collaboration with” key organs of the CCP, including the Ministry of State Security, the regime’s top intelligence agency, and the United Front Work Department, the Party branch that oversees the regime’s foreign influence operations.

Going Underground

The notice refers to the United States, the UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand as “highly sensitive countries,” and directed staff in those countries to delete all Party-building materials from electronic devices and to destroy physical files. When documents can’t be destroyed, they should be “sealed and stored” in a secure location or handed to the Chinese embassy in Cambodia, the document says.

In Australia and Canada, CNPC staff are to report to their local Chinese consulate the status of how they have dealt with “sensitive urgent information,” the notice said.

The document also demands that all the company’s overseas Party organizations, particularly those located in Malaysia, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia, should “proactively accept the leadership role of the Party committee at Cambodia’s Chinese embassy.”

The CNPC and Chinese embassy in Cambodia didn’t immediately respond to re-

quests by The Epoch Times for comment.

The instructions also emphasize limiting public exposure of overseas Party activities, prohibiting events from being promoted on Chinese social media such as Weibo and WeChat, and issuing public reports of such activities. Communications about Party members or organizations, and reports on Party-building activities should be sent via encrypted channels.

Party members were also banned from raising the Chinese national flag, wearing the Party badge, and displaying the content of Party activities on notice boards.

In addition, when holding Party-building activities, staff aren’t to disclose the identities of Party members and their Party positions, the notice says.

‘Damage Control’

Eftimiades said that it’s very likely this directive was issued to other state-owned enterprises. The notice, he said, reveals an “extraordinary global operation to protect information, to restrict activities so that they don’t come up on the radar of foreign governments.”

The regime is now in “damage control,” after triggering strong reactions from Western governments over a range of behaviors, from its military aggression in the South China Sea to its border dispute with India, Eftimiades said.

Damage control entails destroying and securing evidence while toning down activities so outside observers don’t perceive the regime as a threat, according to Eftimiades.

James Carafano, vice president of the Heritage Foundation’s Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, said this move wouldn’t be surprising, given that the regime is likely anticipating much more scrutiny from Western countries.

“If there’s one thing they’re really good at, it’s covering up their tracks,” Carafano told The Epoch Times.

The notice also reveals the close cooperation between the regime and state-owned companies, Eftimiades said.

“A huge dimension of this is the role of the consulates in directing and coordinating the activities of state-owned enterprises abroad,” he said.

While the document suggests the CCP has become more cautious, countries shouldn’t let down their guard, Qin warns, adding that as these activities go underground, the Chinese regime is likely to engage in more covert actions, and it’s a long-term threat that countries shouldn’t dismiss.

CHINESE REGIME

Top Chinese Officials’ Moves Suggest Factional Infighting as Beidaihe Conclave Ends

NICOLE HAO

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and the Communist Party’s first-ranked secretary, Wang Huning, attended different meetings on Aug. 17, suggesting that the annual Beidaihe conclave when Party elite discuss political dealings has ended.

Every summer, Party factions conduct informal negotiations, discuss major national policies, and finalize decisions while meeting in the northern resort town, although details are kept secret.

In a letter addressed to an Aug. 17 conference for the Communist Youth League, Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who attended the conference, asked young people to follow the Party and strive to contribute, according to a copy published on state-run media Xinhua.

Meanwhile, Li spoke about unemployment at a Chinese cabinet meeting.

But none of the top officials mentioned China’s current woes such as severe flooding, the pandemic, and food shortages.

“Xi Jinping delivered a message to youth after the Beidaihe conclave ended, showing that Xi kept his position as CCP [Chinese Communist Party] leader during the meeting. At the same time, China became softer in the U.S.-China dispute, showing that Xi made compromises to the rival faction that is loyal to former Party leader Jiang Zemin,” said U.S.-based China affairs commentator, Tang Jingyuan.

The Jiang faction is the Xi camp’s chief political rivals. Since Xi took power in 2012, he has sought to purge officials loyal to Jiang in an anti-corruption campaign.

Before the Beidaihe meeting, Chinese officials and state media used a strong tone to criticize U.S. senior officials.

On Aug. 11, as the meeting was occurring, the Hong Kong-based newspaper South China Morning Post, citing anonymous sources, said that Xi ordered Chinese troops not to fire

the first shot in the event of a standoff with the United States in the South China Sea. The U.S. State Department in July formally rejected Beijing’s territorial claims in the waterway, citing its “bullying” tactics.

Two Meetings

According to state media, Li hosted a State Council executive meeting on Aug. 17, at which he talked about how to support the economy and allow university graduates who studied education to apply for teaching jobs without first obtaining a license—so they can start working as soon as possible.

Li said the Chinese economy needs to continue its “restorative growth” after being severely hit by the CCP virus pandemic, as well as events outside of China that caused export orders to dry up.

He emphasized that all pandemic relief funding allocated to Chinese companies by the central government must be tracked and recorded. Furthermore, “punish the officials immediately after finding any of them who falsely reports [data] or embezzles the funding,” he added.

Tang says Li’s remarks suggest that corruption at different levels is still a serious problem for the Party.

“When the CCP says to avoid some issue, that means the issue is a big problem,” he said.

At the meeting, Li also requested that teacher training universities allow graduates to take a teacher’s position immediately after graduation, and take certification tests later. Another option would be for training universities to organize their own testing to see whether students are qualified, he said.

China has about 143 teacher training universities, according to Chinese university ranking company CUA.

The new directive suggests the severity of China’s unemployment problem, Tang said.

“Young people may protest or challenge the government if they

don’t have a job,” he said. Similar to how Xi spoke to youth about following the Party, “the regime is trying to give young people a job and persuade them to listen to the Party.”

Beidaihe Conclave

In early August, none of the CCP’s senior leaders made public appearances, suggesting the conclave had begun in Beidaihe, a resort town located in northern Hebei Province.

On Aug. 14, the CCP’s mouthpiece newspaper People’s Daily posted an article to emphasize the Party as “the unique leader” of the Chinese military, noting that the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) mission is to “maintain the Party’s ruling internally and protecting the regime’s security externally.”

The following day, Qiushi, a bi-monthly political theory periodical published by the Party’s Central Committee and Party School, published a speech given by Xi in November 2015.

In the previously unpublished speech, Xi claimed that the Marxist political economy is suitable for China, and that capitalism would cause wealth disparities.

U.S.-based China affairs commentator Yang Wei said in an analysis published in the Chinese-language edition of The Epoch Times that Xi published his speech to send a message to the other Party factions—he doesn’t want to change.

Through the speech, “Xi wanted to use the banner of ‘maintaining the CCP’s ruling’ to receive support from CCP officials,” Yang wrote.

“It indicates that the factions’ infighting at the Beidaihe meeting was very intense, and the factions couldn’t reach an agreement.”

Yang also believes the People’s Daily article was likely a request from Xi, ordering the PLA rank-and-file to protect his position as Party leader and commander-in-chief. As chairman of the Central Military Commission, Xi is the leader of the PLA.

Xi wanted to use the banner of ‘maintaining the CCP’s ruling’ to receive support from CCP officials.

U.S.-based China affairs commentator Yang Wei



Chinese leader Xi Jinping is applauded by, from left, State Councilor Xiao Jie, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, State Councilor Wang Yong, and Defence Minister Wei Fenghe, as he arrives for the closing session of the regime’s rubber stamp legislative conference at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on May 28, 2020.

China Grows Hungry

Food shortages, economic shortfalls drive Beijing to further extremes

JAMES GORRIE

Commentary



The leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) knows what's coming to the people of China: food shortages.

That's the reason behind Beijing's latest draconian edict to the people, the so-called Clean Plates Campaign. Once enacted, the new law will limit the amount of food that people can order at restaurants and may even extend into what amounts Chinese citizens can consume in their own households.

This latest totalitarian move by the CCP follows Beijing's very public arrest of Hong Kong media mogul Jimmy Lai, whom the regime designated a threat to national security. The two may not seem related, but evidently, freedom of speech and freedom of dining are both considered by the Party to pose national security risks.

Unfortunately, China has seen a significant rise in China's food prices, particularly pork, which is the national staple. As of July, there was an almost 90 percent year-over-year rise in pork prices, and food prices overall rose 10 percent over the same time period.

The Party rightly fears that food shortages and the accompanying inflation can lead to widespread civil unrest in China. What's more, the shortages aren't expected to end anytime soon, either. In fact, they will likely grow worse.

Chinese government authorities and their official media outlets are citing food wastage by ordinary citizens as the reason for the new policy. Essentially, they're blaming the people for the food shortages, while deliberately ignoring the true causes. The fault lies partially with Mother Nature, but in large measure, the CCP is to blame.

CCP Makes Natural Disasters Worse

Consider, for example, that in 2019, China lost at least half of its swine herds due to Beijing's poorly managed response to African swine flu. With China possessing more than half the world's pig population, there aren't enough swine in the rest of the world to fill that gap. In some areas, pork in the marketplace is as rare as a panda sighting.

In addition to African swine flu, China's crops are threatened by infestation from ravenous insects. Swarms of desert locusts in biblical proportions have ravaged East Africa and Pakistan. They may also soon impact China's grain production in Yunnan Province, located in China's southwest. But they aren't the only locusts.

Food scarcity is a matter of national security for China; but it's a much bigger threat to the survival of the Party.

Swarms of a different breed from Laos are already eating into China's crops.

An even more dangerous threat looms this fall with the expected resurgence of the armyworm. The pest, which breeds even faster than locusts, first appeared in China last year, but now has a foothold in the south and southwest. Chinese agricultural officials fear that the losses to corn and wheat crops may be much worse than in 2019.

Then, there are the floods. More than 13 million acres of farmland are under water, destroying at least 5 percent of China's rice production, and perhaps twice that if flooding continues. The financial costs exceed \$21 billion and have affected more than 55 million citizens.

Depleting Grain Reserves and Importing More

As a result, China's food imports have risen dramatically. By July, China's grain imports were already 21 percent higher than the entire prior year. But that may not be enough. With the pandemic still affecting the world, importing food may be less reliable than before. Some nations are even halting food exports during the pandemic.

Geopolitical strains with the United States and Australia are also a factor. China has imported more than 9 million tons of soybeans, about 100,000 tons of wheat, and almost 65,000 tons of corn from the United States. But if relations continue to deteriorate, the United States, China's top agricultural trading partner, could cut off Beijing from food exports, making it more vulnerable to scarcity than it already is.

Another red flag is the Party's recent prohibition against photographing the nation's strategic grain reserves. This new restriction comes after images of moldy corn taken at a storage depot in Heilongjiang Province showed up on Chinese social media.

Typically, strategic reserves of food or fuel are used as propaganda tools to assuage public concerns. But as of August, two main Chinese agricultural authorities, the China Grain Reserves Corp and the National Grain Trade Center, have already released more grain reserves than used the entire year of 2019.

The disturbing images of rotten food supplies and subsequent photo ban will only stoke fears and raise doubts in the minds of the people about the Party's ability to feed them.

Falling Incomes, Rising Unemployment

As if food shortages, price inflation, and natural disasters weren't troubling enough for the Party, double-digit unemployment and falling consumer incomes are put-

ting even more pressure on citizens. But the Party's decision to pour more salt into those wounds with its Clean Plates Campaign may not yield the desired results.

It's one thing for a generation to be born into scarcity, but quite another to have insufficiency forced upon it. In the former case, one knows no other reality; hopeless acceptance is perhaps all one knows from the first day to last. But in the latter, anger, dissent, and rebellion against the Party could be much more probable outcomes.

CCP Virus, History Boomerang on China

The CCP virus is likely a synthesized pathogen, according to Luc Montagnier, the Nobel Prize-winning virologist who discovered HIV, and Dr. Fang Chi-Tai of National Taiwan University. Its China origins, specifically in Wuhan, and the Party's deliberate or accidental mismanagement of the outbreak has been a major factor in the emerging national food shortage.

The cause is simple and predictable. Lockdown measures in agricultural exporting nations have led to less food being harvested and exported. In short, the pandemic has been a major cause of China's imminent food crisis. The political effect of the Party's pandemic culpability and ineffective responses, including its latest insulting Clean Plates Campaign, remain to be seen. But it could be more difficult to manage than Party leaders anticipate.

Perhaps it's just coincidence, but the last time food scarcity was a major problem in China was in the 1970s, when one man with absolute power ruled over the nation with an iron fist, re-education camps, and a little red book of wisdom. China was alienated from the rest of the world, and the Party was on the brink of collapse, saved by Western economic intervention.

Today, another solitary man wields absolute power in China, which he rules with a digital fist, re-education camps, and his own little black book of personal wisdom. Like his predecessor, he too is rapidly alienating China from the rest of the world, driven by the Party's abuse of the international system and the resultant Western economic decoupling.

Yes, food scarcity is a matter of national security for China; but it's a much bigger threat to the survival of the Party.

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



Why Beijing's Wolf Warrior Diplomacy Suddenly Quieted Down

HUIDONG ZHANG

Commentary

Top-level Chinese officials have recently shifted away from the regime's wolf warrior diplomacy tactic to a more toned-down approach. This turnaround can be interpreted as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) not wanting to decouple from the United States nor shut out of the global economic order led by Washington.

Yang Jiechi, a top member of the Politburo, wrote, "China is always open to dialogue and communication with the U.S.," in an article dated Aug. 7. Cui Tiankai, Chinese ambassador to the United States, said the U.S.-China relationship should be "cooperation rather than confrontation" at the Aspen Security Forum on Aug. 4. Foreign Minister Wang Yi addressed the China-U.S. Think Tanks Media Forum on July 9, saying, "China can restore and restart the dialogue mechanisms at all levels and in all areas."

Although the above statements from the CCP officials reveal that Beijing is begging for a dialogue with Washington, the words carry no weight and may not lead to concrete actions.

Wolf Warrior Diplomacy Creates a Global Enemy

For a long time, the CCP has regarded diplomacy to be a way of extending its tyranny. Its aggressive and offensive diplomacy is characterized by the goal of inciting national sentiment and brainwashing the Chinese people.

For example, as former leader of the Communist Party, Mao Zedong's revolutionary diplomacy was in line with his personal ambition—to become a leader of the world revolution. He classified nearly all nations as enemies. The United States and Western Europe became "imperialists," the communist countries that abided by the Soviet Union were the "social imperialists," and the remaining third world countries basically close to Europe and the United States were the "anti-China" faction. The few countries left were the "widespread poor friends" in Africa, which the regime could exploit using its foreign aid policy.

In the 1969 Sino-Soviet border conflict, a very annoyed Soviet Union was preparing to carry out a "surgical nuclear strike" against China. A firm opposition from the United States spared the Chinese people from nuclear attack. Under the provocative "anti-imperialist" and "anti-revisionist" foreign policy of the regime, the Chinese people have suffered endlessly from an arrogant and isolated dictatorship.

The subsequent leaders of the CCP realized that the time wasn't right for the CCP to become a world leader; so they adopted former leader Deng Xiaoping's "economic foreign policy with a strong nationalist diplomacy" to confuse the international

community. During this period, the CCP organized various demonstrations in mainland China to threaten the international community, such as the 1999 students' anti-American demonstration, the Chinese internet users' boycott of French retail giant Carrefour in 2008, the 2012 anti-Japanese protest, and the anti-Korea demonstration in 2017. The wolf warrior diplomats, however, remained quiet.

China's economy developed rapidly after the United States helped it join the World Trade Organization (WTO). Its national strength also increased significantly, especially after it surpassed Japan to become the world's second largest economy in 2010. Its capital strength seemed to prepare the CCP to achieve its ambition of changing the world order so it dominated the world. CCP hack writer Jin Canrong, a professor on Sino-U.S. relations at Renmin University of China, even declared the so-called "win-win" as China wins twice. The new superpower is now ready to launch its revolutionary diplomatic wars around the world.

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The global pandemic enabled the wolf warrior diplomats to launch a series of attacks in order to shirk accountability for the wide spread of the CCP virus, commonly known as the novel coronavirus. First, they inferred that the United States was the source of COVID-19, which provoked the China-U.S. conflict. Second, shamelessly demanding gratitude from the world for providing defective face masks. Third, the Chinese ambassador to Australia warned Australia to stop the international inquiry into the origin of the CCP virus. Fourth, the Chinese ambassador to Paris slandered staff in France's nursing homes on his embassy's website and sharply criticized the Western response to the outbreak for being laggardly. Fifth, the Chinese Embassy in Brazil tweeted that Eduardo Bolsonaro, the son of the President of Brazil, had been infected with a "mental virus" during a recent trip to the United States after he tweeted that the regime is a "dictatorship." Sixth, the Chinese Embassy in Germany called local tabloid BILD "bad" when it claimed that China owes a debt to Germany because of the CCP virus pandemic. Seventh, the Chinese Embassy in Sweden posted on its website that think tank Frivarld's claim that "China should apolo-

gize" is totally groundless, unjustified, and is a more terrifying virus.

These diplomatic spats caused by the wolf warriors on the surface demonstrate the tough line of the regime, but also constantly brainwash the Chinese people. As the state-run media Global Times wrote, "The days of China getting bullied are gone." The ultimate goal of such tactics is to trap the international community into the blame game and obfuscate the fundamental issue of the source of pandemic.

However, this wolf warrior diplomacy has brought an obvious side effect, namely, "the big power diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" proposed by CCP leader Xi Jinping has deteriorated to distrust by all countries in the world, and to once again becoming the "human enemy." A recent Pew Research Center survey showed "roughly two-thirds of Americans now have a negative opinion of China, the highest percentage recorded" since Pew began asking the question 15 years ago.

Shifting to Dialogue Mode Buys Time

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The relationship between the CCP and other countries in the world continues to deteriorate—especially U.S.-China relations. After U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that the freedom-loving nations of the world "must start by changing how our people and our partners perceive the Chinese Communist Party," and (we) "can't treat this incarnation of China as a normal country, just like any other," the regime finally realized the change in U.S. foreign policy toward the CCP. In order to maintain the legitimacy of the regime, the CCP top officials had to beg for a dialogue with the United States.

Yang Jiechi, a Politburo member and director of the Office of Foreign Affairs of the Communist Party of China wrote: "The two countries need to engage in dialogue and communication in all areas. China is always open to dialogue and communication with the U.S."

Obviously, Yang deliberately forgot what Pompeo said in his speech, "Yang's promises, like so many the CCP made before him, were empty." The dialogue will not occur because the United States has recognized, as Pompeo stated, "that the only way—the only way to truly change communist China is to act not on the basis of what Chinese leaders say, but how they behave."

The United States has said it clearly: "When it comes to the CCP ... we must distrust and verify."

The CCP's begging for a dialogue with the United States can be interpreted as a delaying tactic and pinning its hopes on the upcoming presidential election. "China prefers that President Trump—whom

Beijing sees as unpredictable—does not win reelection," according to a statement made by NCSC (U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center) Director William Evanina on Aug. 7.

The CCP has never given up its ambitions of global hegemony. Therefore, the United States must be alert to the current behavior of the CCP, because what the CCP does has always threatened the security of the United States and the world.

CCP Breaking Away From World Economic Order

As we all know, from the cover-up of the coronavirus outbreak to the suppression of whistleblowers, the CCP's actions, aided by the WHO director general's misleading information, have led to a world pandemic that continues to erode the international community. It is inevitable for people around the world to demand compensation from the CCP for damages caused by the virus. Already, some countries in Africa have publicly asked the CCP to reduce or forgive their debts—this is compensation in disguise. Conflicts around the issue of claims will erupt after the pandemic is over. The CCP may have to leave the international economic order.

Countries will not move their industrial supply chains to China, especially after seeing the threat of the CCP's tyranny to the global economy and politics. Considering national security and the safety of people's lives and health, countries will accelerate their decoupling with the regime. A tidal wave of decoupling from the CCP has already begun.

Countries involved in cooperation projects and organizations led by the CCP's investment-oriented "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR, also known as Belt and Road Initiative), Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the BRICS, have had serious conflicts and disagreements with the CCP over the pandemic and diplomacy. India and Brazil, members of the BRICS, for instance, have shown deteriorating relations with the CCP.

Through the pandemic, deterioration of relations between the CCP and other countries has accelerated. Once the industrial chain moves out of China, it will be difficult to get it back. The status of "world factory" will never return. The CCP's perverse actions will only lead to its exclusion from the international community and the world economic order.

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