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CHINA INSIDER

Inmates work on sewing machines at a prison in Chongqing Municipality, China, in this file photo.

NOT A PLACE FOR HUMANS

**INSIDE CHINA'S PRISON
LABOR SYSTEM**

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Chinese Leader Xi’s 2 Missteps in Handling US–China Relations

DAN KITWOOD AND NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

HE QINGLIAN

Commentary

In the past month, the United States has taken a series of harsh measures against China, which Beijing could hardly counter effectively. However, it wasn’t until the closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston that Beijing finally realized that the deterioration of U.S.–China relations is now irreversible.

The Chinese people whose biggest desire was to immigrate to the United States or send their children to the United States to study also realized that escalating tensions between the countries have put an end to their dreams. Apparently, in China these days, a lot of complaints and bitterness have been directed against the Chinese regime’s policymakers.

There’s a Chinese saying about how a person’s character determines his fate. Likewise, the character of state leaders determines the fate of the country.

It has been two years since the U.S.–China trade war started, but the real deterioration of bilateral relations occurred only recently. By tracing the root cause, we will see that Xi made two wrong moves on key issues, and these two mistakes have led to additional missteps—like a chain reaction.

Beijing Thought Trade War Was Only With Trump

Xi’s first mistake was to attempt to interfere with the U.S. elections. This wasn’t an impromptu idea of Beijing’s top leaders, but a decision based on careful planning.

Soon after President Donald Trump launched a trade war with China in late March 2018, the U.S. think tank Brookings Institution published a research paper, “How China’s proposed tariffs could affect US workers and industries.”

The authors studied the local effects of two lists of retaliatory tariffs proposed by China, with details as localized as the county level.

“The Chinese tariff lists seem optimally designed to especially agitate President Trump’s red-state base,” the report said. “After all, of the 2,742 counties with employment in the industries potentially impacted by the current Chinese tariffs, 2,247 (82 percent) of those counties voted for Trump in 2016, while just 439 (18 percent) supported Clinton.”

Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture showed that tariff increases on pork and soy products alone would have a major effect on the red states in the Midwest. During the 2016 U.S. presidential election, eight of the top 10 soy- and pork-exporting states went for Trump. They were Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio (a major swing state), and Oklahoma. (Hillary Clinton won Illinois and Minnesota.)

Although we don’t know the motives behind the Brookings Institution’s release of such a report, it provided a strong basis for Beijing to come up with its “waiting for favorable change” strategy. In addition, the pro-China elites in U.S. political, business, academic, and media circles would certainly tell Beijing that, as long as Trump loses reelection, U.S.–China relations will continue along the original track.

Chinese leaders felt very confident with their trade war strategy. In addition, the U.S. mainstream media and the Democratic Party gave China more confidence with their supportive actions. Even as U.S.–China relations deteriorated dramatically, The New York Times is still displaying hundreds of paid advertisements for Chinese media on its website, as part of the CCP’s external propaganda campaign.

Democratic politicians frequently gave speeches to curry favor with China. Democratic Party presidential candidate Joe Biden, before he secured the nomination, once said that China wasn’t a competitor, but a partner. On Aug. 5, Biden publicly stated in an interview with National Public Radio that, if elected, he would reverse the Trump administration’s tariffs on Chinese im-



This combination of pictures created on May 14, 2020, shows recent portraits of Chinese Communist Party leader Xi Jinping and President Donald Trump.

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ports, explaining that in his opinion, this is equivalent to imposing tariffs on U.S. companies and consumers.

In an Aug. 7 interview with CNN about election interference, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi clearly stated, “the Chinese ... prefer Biden.”

All these steered Beijing’s top leaders to the conclusion that the trade war is only the personal preference of Trump, who is hostile toward China. They believe that when the White House changes occupants, U.S.–China relations will return to what they were before Trump.

However, Xi’s judgment was based solely on the information and suggestions provided by pro-Beijing forces in the United States, as well as Chinese think tanks’ analysis of U.S. media reports. In other words, Xi isn’t clear about the undercurrent of American politics—the silent majority, which is deliberately ignored and suppressed by the Democratic Party and the mainstream media.

As a result, the Chinese regime made two wrong moves: one was to intervene in the U.S. presidential election, and the other was to deliberately conceal the severity of the coronavirus pandemic.

Various Methods to Interfere With U.S. Elections

In addition to hurting the economy of pro-Trump states, Beijing also intervened in the U.S. election in other ways.

The U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee has been investigating the threat of

China’s interference in the U.S. election for months, and has accelerated the pace of its investigation, with the 2020 election rapidly approaching.

On July 28, the committee held a hearing on this issue. Several U.S. intelligence officials issued warnings about China’s improvement in its ability to interfere in American politics. Some of the main concerns are that the regime in Beijing is advancing its ability to interfere in U.S. local electoral systems and to influence members of Congress engaging in China policies, is seeking to disrupt private communications among U.S. politicians and all relevant candidates, and has demonstrated the technical ability to establish political propaganda networks on U.S. social media platforms, some of which have gone to the point of disseminating false information.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced at a press conference on Aug. 5 that “the State Department’s Rewards for Justice program is offering a reward of up to \$10 million for information leading to the identification or location of any person who, acting at the direction or under the control of a foreign government, interferes with U.S. elections by engaging in certain criminal cyber activities.”

There are numerous analyses tracking the spread of the CCP virus pandemic around the world. From the perspective of the

Deliberately Concealing Pandemic

United States, the main concerns are: China concealed information about the outbreak and its severity, and even convinced Trump that it was controllable. Xi was able to convince Trump because the president had always believed that he had a good personal relationship with Xi.

After the United States imposed travel bans, China launched “wolf warrior” diplomacy, and promoted an unfounded claim that the origin of the pandemic was in the United States.

Chinese state-run media gloated about the severity of the pandemic in the United States, thinking it could destroy the U.S. economy and help the Democratic Party win the 2020 election. Statistics show that the U.S. economy fell 4.8 percent in the first quarter, which was the first negative growth since the first quarter of 2014. It was also the largest decline since the 8.4 percent decline during the global financial crisis in the fourth quarter of 2008. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, that report doesn’t fully reflect the effect of the pandemic on the U.S. economy, implying that the actual economic decline could be worse.

In an exclusive interview with the Fox News program “Sunday Morning Futures” on May 10, White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said that Trump “built the most powerful and beautiful economy in the world in three years,” but “the Chinese Communist Party

took it down in 60 days.”

Americans value human lives most, and a strong U.S. economy would have been the strongest guarantee for Trump’s success in the 2020 election. When China deliberately concealed the severity of the pandemic, it sparked intense indignation from the U.S. public and made Trump furious.

Why did China decide to interfere in U.S. internal political affairs, especially the presidential election?

In short, there are two reasons: One, interfering in other countries’ internal affairs is the CCP’s political tradition.

By exporting revolution to the world, the CCP supports political opposition forces and helps them overthrow their ruling parties. This was a political tradition formed as early as during the Mao era. It’s particularly evident in Southeast Asian countries, where Beijing exploited overseas Chinese organizations, schools, and consortia to achieve its agendas.

These actions triggered anti-Chinese campaigns in Southeast Asian countries several decades ago.

Second, as early as the 1950s, Mao was very wary of the “peaceful evolution” approach proposed by the United States and countered it with a series of strategic policies.

To make a long story short, in the 1950s, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles formally proposed a

Why is it that Beijing dares to treat the United States with contempt? It’s because Chinese leaders believe that with the Democratic Party controlling the House of Representatives, Trump won’t be able to get things done efficiently and carry out his China policies.

“peaceful evolution” strategy to target the Soviet Union. He pointed out that “liberation [of people in socialist countries] can be achieved through means other than war.” He expressed satisfaction with the “liberalization-demanding forces” that had emerged in some socialist countries, and placed his hope on the third and fourth generations within socialist countries.

Mao scoffed at Dulles’s theory. Since then, the CCP has paid full attention to every attempt and move toward “peaceful evolution” from Western countries. China’s economic reform movement in the 1980s doesn’t mean the CCP has ever slacked off in this respect. The only difference is that the CCP stopped using the term “Cold War.” Instead, it instead frequently accuses the United States and other countries of inciting “color revolutions” (in reference to uprisings in Ukraine and the Arab Spring).

At the same time, the United States’ internal politics has undergone profound changes since the Cold War. Leftists have been infiltrating the education sector for a long time and almost succeeded in a “color revolution” within the United States itself. In this process, what role did China’s all-encompassing penetration into the United States play? It has been going on for decades, but Americans have just begun to look into it.

To summarize, I would like to emphasize three main points.

One: The ancient Chinese general and military strategist Sun Tzu said in his famous book “The Art of War,” “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.”

In terms of knowing itself and its enemy, China knows the United States better than the United States knows China. Therefore, China maneuvers comfortably in its anti-U.S. war and has cultivated a huge pro-Beijing force inside the United States.

Two: In terms of systemic defense capabilities, China has built a strong defense system, and often acts overly defensive, while the United States is like a courtyard with no fences, making itself vulnerable from all sides.

Third: It has been a fairly easy job for China to penetrate to the United States and intervene in American politics, as there has been virtually no counterattack from the United States. Therefore, China didn’t even bother to draw a bottom line for itself.

For instance, China doesn’t care about any responses from the United States in relation to election interference, because Beijing believes that the United States isn’t in a position to counter its interference.

Why is it that Beijing dares to treat the United States with contempt? It’s because Chinese leaders believe that with the Democratic Party controlling the House of Representatives, Trump won’t be able to get things done efficiently and carry out his China policies.

Now that these two moves have proven to be wrong, what is the biggest challenge the CCP is facing? The CCP is placing all its hopes on the Democratic Party and Democratic presidential candidate.

I believe the Democrats could only win in pre-election polling. They have no chance to win in the actual election.

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

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



Inmates work in a sewing workshop at a prison in Chongqing, China, in this file photo.

HUMAN RIGHTS

‘You Work Like Animals’: Inside China’s Vast Prison Labor System

EVA FU & CATHY HE

For three years on and off, Li Dianqi worked for around 17 hours a day making cheap clothing—from bras to trousers—in a Chinese prison. She worked for no pay and faced punishment by prison guards if she failed to meet production quotas.

One time, a team of around 60 workers who couldn’t reach quota were forced to sit for three days straight, and not allowed to eat or go to the bathroom. The guards would shock the prisoners with electric batons whenever they dozed off.

Li described the prison, Liaoning Women’s Prison located in the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang, Liaoning Province, as “not a place for humans to stay.” “They arrest you and make you work. You work like animals,” Li said of the abysmal conditions.

Li, now 69 and living in New York, was imprisoned at the facility from 2007 to 2010 for refusing to give up her belief in spiritual practice Falun Gong. The Chinese regime has launched an expansive persecution campaign of Falun Gong since 1999, after the practice surged in popularity to roughly 100 million adherents, according to official estimates.

Other than clothes, the prison made a range of goods destined for export, from artificial flowers to cosmetics to Halloween toys. Li was but a tiny cog in China’s sprawling prison labor machine, spitting out cheap products for distribution in the global supply chain.

The Chinese regime’s forced labor practices have drawn fresh scrutiny as U.S. customs officials in recent months clamped down on imports made with Chinese prison labor. Since September 2019, U.S. cus-

If you’re a warden at a prison in China, you have access to labor and you might be able to offer very competitive prices to ... the China supplier.

Fred Rocafort, lawyer, Harris Bricken

REUTERS/LOREN ELLIOTT



A Customs and Border Protection patch on the arm of a U.S. Border Patrol agent in Mission, Texas, on July 1, 2019.

toms and Border Protection (CBP) has issued four detention orders against Chinese companies, barring their goods from entering the country.

CBP’s seizure in June of 13 tons of human hair products from the northwestern region of Xinjiang cast a spotlight on Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities who are subject to forced labor as part of the regime’s campaign of suppression. Pressure has also been mounting on international clothing brands to cut ties with factories in Xinjiang, particularly after researchers in March found that tens of thousands of Uyghurs were transferred to work at factories across China in conditions suggestive of forced labor. Those facilities manufactured goods for 83 global brands.

Prison and forced labor is “something that has infected the supply chain in China,” said Fred Rocafort, a former U.S. diplomat who now works for international law firm Harris Bricken.

Rocafort spent more than a decade working as a commercial lawyer in China, where he conducted more than 100 audits of factories to inspect whether they were protecting the intellectual property of foreign brands he represented, and in some cases, to check whether they were using forced labor.

“This is a problem that has been around for much longer than the current human rights crisis in Xinjiang,” Rocafort said.

He said foreign companies would often outsource their manufacturing to suppliers in China, who would then contract with companies that use prison labor or directly with prisons themselves.

“If you’re a warden at a prison in China, you have access to labor and you might be able to offer very competitive prices to ... the China supplier,” Rocafort said.

The attorney said that foreign brands have historically not dedi-

cated much energy to scrutinizing its Chinese supply chains for forced labor. According to Rocafort, a “lack of transparency runs across the supply chain.”

Criminal Enterprise

Li said Liaoning Women’s Prison was divided into many work units, each composed of hundreds of inmates. Li was in prison unit number 10, where inmates were forced to make clothes from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day. After that, each prisoner also had to make around 10 to 15 artificial flower stems. Li typically did not finish until past midnight. Those who were slower—especially the elderly—sometimes stayed up all night to finish the work, Li recalled.

“Chinese prisons are like hell,” Li said. “There’s not a bit of personal freedom.”

Li still remembers the acrid smell generated by another prison unit that made cosmetics meant for South Korea. The burnt smell and dust that permeated the production floor made the workers short of breath and were the source of constant complaints—though they couldn’t let the guards hear them, or else they would get beaten, Li noted.

Over the years, notes hidden in products allegedly written by Chinese prison laborers have been discovered by Western customers, sparking public attention on China’s labor abuses.

In 2012, an Oregon woman found a handwritten letter inside a Halloween decoration kit she bought at Kmart. The letter was from a man detained at the notorious Masanjia Labor Camp in the northern Chinese city of Shenyang, who provided an account of torture and persecution at the facility. The man, Sun Yi, a Falun Gong practitioner, had been sentenced to two-and-half years of forced labor at the camp in 2008, and hid several letters in Halloween decorations he was forced to produce and package.

Li, who is from Shenyang, was herself detained at Masanjia Labor Camp in 2000, where she worked from morning to night making plastic flowers.

While the flowers ended up looking “just gorgeous,” making them was torture, Li said. Inmates were not supplied with gloves or masks to protect against the toxic mist formed by plastic particles that filled the air. All the guards wore masks.

The laborers weren’t allowed any breaks except to go to the bathroom, which required a signature from the guard. Hygiene standards were nonexistent.

“Washing your hands is not a thing. You working more is all that matters,” Li said.

Vast Network

Wang Zhiyuan, director of U.S.-based nonprofit World Organization to Investigate the Persecution of Falun Gong, said the Chinese prison labor industry is a sprawling economic machine that falls under the supervision of the regime’s judiciary system.

He described the regime’s ability to tap into this unreported source of labor as a “powerful strategic weapon” to advance Beijing’s global economic ambitions.

“Regardless of how much tariffs the United States imposes on China, the Chinese Communist Party’s slave labor industry will not be significantly affected,” Wang said.

The organization in 2019 released a report which found 681 companies that use prison labor across 30 provinces and regions, which made an array of products from dolls to sweaters for sale overseas. Many of the companies were state-owned, while some were controlled by Chinese military, the report said. The legal representatives of 432 prison enterprises, or about two-thirds of the total, are also the heads of their local provincial prison administration, it found.

Even though the regime formally abolished its labor camp system in 2013, findings from the report suggest that the forced labor industry is alive and well.

The labor camps simply changed their names and merged into the prison system, Wang said, like “offering the same medicine with a different broth.”

EMEL AKAN

ASHINGTON—The severe supply-chain disruptions caused by the pandemic and the rapidly deteriorating image of the Chinese regime because of its mishandling of the CCP virus have forced the United States to rethink its policies of the past few decades toward Beijing.

As the presidential election nears, both candidates, President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden, have pledged to bring back supply chains and reduce reliance on China as the world’s biggest manufacturer.

In a recent interview, Trump raised the possibility of a complete decoupling from China during his second term, meaning cutting off economic ties for national and strategic reasons.

“Well, it’s something that if they don’t treat us right, I would certainly, I would certainly do that,” he told Fox News on Aug 23.

In an effort to reduce reliance on China for critical medicine, Trump signed an executive order on Aug. 6 to ensure that essential medicines, medical supplies, and equipment are made in the United States.

The Trump campaign also released on Aug. 23 a list of “core priorities” for the president’s second term. One of the key foreign policy topics is to “end our reliance on China,” according to the announcement, which includes the goal of bringing back 1 million manufacturing jobs. Trump proposes providing tax credits and allowing “100 percent expensing deductions for essential industries like pharmaceuticals and robotics” to incentivize companies to produce in the United States.

Biden, the Democratic nominee, also pledged to “bring back critical supply chains” under his “Supply America” proposal. His broader plan is “to bolster American industrial and technological strength and ensure the future is ‘made in all of America’ by all of America’s workers.”

Moving Away From China

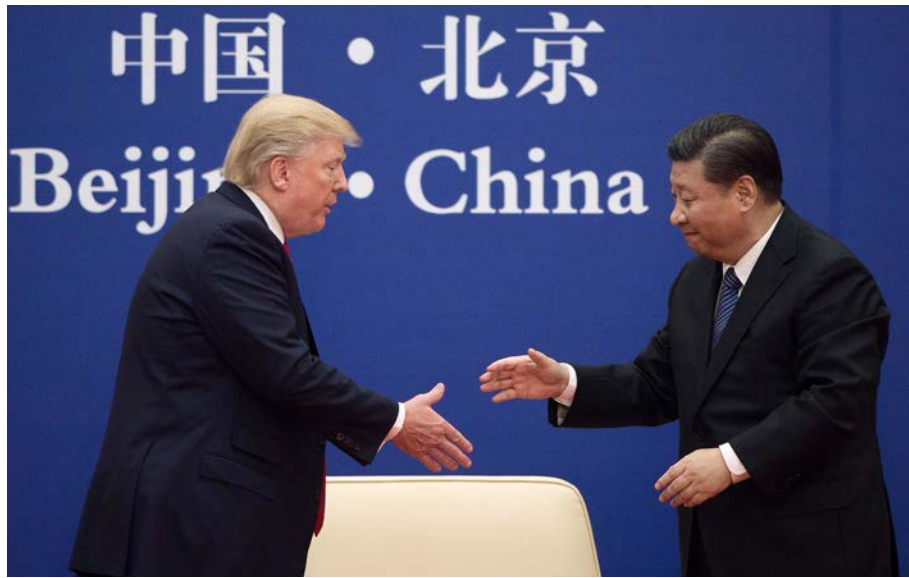
The pandemic crisis exposed how dependent the United States has become on China, and the lessons learned could end the country’s role as the world’s manufacturing hub.

In response to increasing global competition, U.S. companies have outsourced for decades their manufacturing operations, mainly to China, to reduce costs, but those days

ECONOMY

US Economic Decoupling From China May Gain Steam After Election

NICOLAS ASFOURI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



President Donald Trump shakes hands with Chinese leader Xi Jinping during a business leaders’ event at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Nov. 9, 2017.

are over, according to Willy Shih, Harvard Business School professor and co-author of the book, “Producing Prosperity: Why America Needs a Manufacturing Renaissance.”

“The problem is, when you lose the manufacturing, you lose the skill base and the industrial commons,” Shih told The Epoch Times, referring to shared know-how and capabilities within a sector.

“That’s a core thing, so if you want to bring it back, you have to relearn that,” he said, noting that it may take decades to bring back manufacturing because of lost skills.

It took 30 years for China and Taiwan, for example, to learn the skills and position themselves for leadership in certain industries, he said.

To revitalize or strengthen America’s manufacturing, Shih believes, the U.S. government needs to inspire young people and give them a reason to want to go into the critical fields of science and technology.

Before the pandemic, the studies showed that U.S. manufacturing was facing a growing skills gap that could leave millions of positions unfilled in the next decade.

Regional Approach

Besides bringing back manufacturing to the United States, the idea of more regional manufacturing is also emerging, which could benefit Mexico and Canada. The new trade agreement, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which took effect on July 1, could encourage businesses to bring their production to North America and advance economic decoupling from China.

Shih believes very labor-intensive

manufacturing could be nearshored to Mexico, since labor rates there “now are quite competitive with China.”

In addition, companies are also looking to move their supply chains from China to countries such as Taiwan, Thailand, and Malaysia.

A Gartner survey conducted in February and March among 260 companies that are global supply chain leaders found that 33 percent of respondents had already shifted sourcing and manufacturing activities out of China or plan to do so in the next two to three years.

Rupert Hammond-Chambers, president of the U.S.-Taiwan Business Council believes that Taiwan can help the United States commercially decouple from China. Taiwan is well-positioned for the role because it’s an original equipment manufacturer for many U.S. companies, including Apple and HP, he said.

The country is a top destination for semiconductor manufacturing, and hence its autonomy and stability are important for the U.S. government.

Despite the lack of a bilateral pact, Taiwan’s two-way trade with the United States surged 34 percent between 2016 and 2019, which is a result of the moving of manufacturing from China to Taiwan that’s taking place, Hammond-Chambers said.

“The Trump administration’s policy for decoupling and shifting the supply chains has come in lockstep with the Taiwanese government’s interest in reducing Taiwan’s exposure to China,” he said, adding that this has resulted in significant inflows of investment to Taiwan from Taiwanese companies.

STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Employees produce down coats at a factory in Nantong, China, on Sept. 24, 2019.

PETER PARKS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Workers pull coal wagons at the Beichang coal washery in Jixi City in China's Heilongjiang Province, on June 4, 2006.

CHINESE REGIME

Former Local Official Flees to the US in Fear of Repercussion From Chinese Regime

ALEX WU

The former deputy mayor of Jixi city in northeastern Heilongjiang Province reveals the tight control of speech and information in China, the regime's cover-up of COVID-19 cases, Communist Party officials secretly taking medicine to prevent virus infection, and the recent upsurge of petitioning across the country.

"I quit the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] using my real name," Li Chuanliang, the former deputy mayor of Jixi, stated in an interview with the Chinese-language Epoch Times on Aug. 19.

Li had left his post of deputy mayor and quit public office in 2014. He has refused to pay the Party dues for many years and considered himself no longer a Party member.

On Feb. 14, Kong Lingbao, a former subordinate of Li in the Jixi municipal government, was dismissed from his official post and arrested for his remarks about the CCP and for covering up the severity of the COVID-19 epidemic. Kong's home and offices were also searched by the police.

Upon hearing the news, Li feared that he would be implicated for making similar remarks and for his political views. With the help of overseas democracy activists, he fled from China during the pandemic and eventually arrived in the U.S. city of Los Angeles recently.

Many may wonder why Li had to resign from public office—as a former deputy mayor, he is still a communist cadre and entitled to many special benefits and treatments in China. In response to this, Li said, "No way, I re-

I quit the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] using my real name.

Li Chuanliang, the former deputy mayor of Jixi

ally can't bear it anymore." As a certified accountant, auditor, tax agent, with an EMBA (Executive Master of Business Administration) degree from Tsinghua University, and having worked in finance for many years, Li always considered himself to be a skilled professional rather than a bureaucrat or communist official. "I never fit into the political circle," he added.

At the end of 2011, Li was appointed as the deputy mayor of Jixi, while Chinese state-media reported his official appointment in May 2012. Li said that the time lag is due to the bureaucratic procedures, as CCP officials are appointed internally.

During the three years as deputy mayor, he had gradually entered the power center of the municipal government and witnessed corruption. "They [officials] embezzled the public funds of construction and land use for personal expenses. This is common in all major cities," Li said.

However, as a low-ranking regional official, Li could only try to stop or not execute certain cases. "I used to be very blunt and reported them. But in the end, their punishment was very light, and the officials were all protecting each other."

Li was both threatened and enticed by his superiors, implying that as long as he colluded with them, there would be a chance for promotion. He wanted to resign but got transferred to the position of deputy mayor of Hegang city in Heilongjiang Province in 2014.

In 2017, Li completely left the CCP governmental system, giving up all the benefits to become a "free man," which is commonly known in China as a "naked resignation." Since then, Li had worked as a corporate tax con-

sultant. As he was no longer a government official, he was able to apply for a passport. He said, "when I got my passport, I felt that I was truly free, and I happily called my friends to tell them about it." In recent years, Beijing has put out regulations to restrict officials' new application for personal passports and to confiscate all officials' current passports to prevent them from fleeing to other countries.

Since the CCP virus (novel coronavirus) outbreak, the regime has further tightened the control of information and speech. Li is very worried that China will return to the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976), during which the communist regime initiated violent persecution campaigns against those deemed "anti-revolutionary."

Before the pandemic, Li shared his views on current affairs, the CCP's system, and the ills of the Party with like-minded friends on social media group chats and at dinner parties. He said, "I was not without worries before, but I did not expect it to be this bad."

Under the current situation in China, he believes that few people dare to say anything anymore, as the CCP encourages people to watch and snitch on each other, and further clampdowns on the freedom of speech, especially with its national network of artificial-intelligence-enhanced surveillance cameras, known as the "Skynet Project."

One of the charges for Li's former subordinate Kong was "publishing improper speech." But Li wonders what "improper speech" actually means. Kong's remarks during a private conversation with another CCP cadre was recorded and reported to Party authorities. He had said, "I can no longer sell my life to the Communist Party. I cannot do its bidding anymore." Kong got into the authorities' crosshairs as a result, Li said.

Another reason for Kong's arrest is that he refused to cover up the number of CCP virus infection cases in his district, Li said. In early February of this year, the epidemic in China was severe, but authorities did not allow local officials to report it. As the leader of Hengshan district of Jixi city, Kong saw with his own eyes that unemployed workers from the local coal mines were infected with the virus one after another. The spread of the virus was rampant and Kong decided to report it to his superiors. However, authorities listed this as his crime of "failure to fulfill his duty in epidemic prevention and control." Li said, "This is a typical 'scapegoating.' Those who speak for the common people get convicted."

Li has heard of CCP officials taking hydroxychloroquine to prevent against COVID-19 infection, but the majority of Chinese people in the mainland don't know about it unless they are government officials or are able to read information on overseas websites through VPN to bypass the regime's firewall. When Li was still in China, he made inquiries about this medicine but could not get his hands on it.

Following the CCP virus outbreak, every Chinese citizen was given a health code installed in their cellphones. Li describes it as wearing a 24-hour, all-round monitor. However, he has noticed that many people don't mind the privacy invasion.

Li also refuses to believe the CCP's data on the pandemic, as it lacks transparency and the information is inaccurate.

"The current social environment in China is that they are only concerned with looking good on the surface, while they care little about the reality. There are more false things than real ones," Li said. Amid the pandemic, he has noticed that many laid-off workers have no income, but the topic is rarely talked about among officials or reported by Chinese media, he added.

Li said he witnessed firsthand how authorities' policies were harmful to citizens. "How come a house can be demolished just a few years after being built? Because the developers' interests are tied to it!" He points out that this is the reason behind officials' corruption—policies benefit interest groups.

Li said that most appeals and complaints filed by petitioners to higher authorities in China are not groundless. Li also believes that if there are only a small number of people filing complaints, then they are just individual cases; but with so many people petitioning in China, it means that there must be something seriously wrong with government officials. "The Chinese Communist system is actually the biggest problem in China," he said.

Li said that in China, whether someone is a high-ranking official, an entrepreneur or an intellectual, as long as they have a little conscience, they will have a lot of mental pressure. In addition to facing authorities' various suppression policies, people also have to worry about their own safety. He said, "Even being a CCP official is a high-risk and dangerous job nowadays."

After fleeing China, Li decided to speak up, because he believes that only by standing up can he encourage more people to distance themselves from the communist regime.

IP THEFT

Beijing Leverages Global Network to Lure Top Scientists, Gain Technology, Report Says

CATHY HE

The Chinese regime has built a worldwide network of 600 outposts to recruit foreign experts and scientists in a bid to acquire advanced technology, according to a new report.

U.S. officials have increasingly warned that Beijing uses state-backed recruitment plans to facilitate the transfer of American technology and know-how to China. Under these plans, foreign experts are paid to work in China, including opening labs and conducting research at Chinese institutions.

The report by the think tank Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) details for the first time the extensive global system used by Beijing to scout and lure scientists from Western research institutions and companies.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leverages at least 600 "talent recruitment workstations" around the world to support its talent programs, the report found. The United States has the most stations with 146, with other technologically-advanced countries including Germany, Australia, UK, Canada, Japan, and France, also hosting dozens of outposts each.

"The stations work on behalf of the Chinese Government to spot and pursue talent abroad," the report stated.

First established in 2006, the regime has drastically dialed up its rollout in the past few years, the report stated. More than 115 of the 600 sites identified were set up in 2018 alone, it added.

Between 2008 and 2016, the CCP's talent plans recruited almost 60,000 overseas professionals, the report stated, citing official statistics. The regime runs more than 200 talent recruitment programs, with the most well-known being the Thousand Talents Plan.

These stations are typically run by local groups—such as community, professional, student, or business associations—who are contracted by Chinese authorities to recruit individuals, according to the

report. They can be paid as much as \$29,000 for each person they recruit, and up to \$21,000 a year for operating expenses, it stated.

Overseas offices of Chinese companies also host recruitment stations, and one was also set up in the Confucius Institute at University College Dublin, the report added. Confucius Institutes are Beijing-funded language centers that have drawn backlash over its role in spreading propaganda and silencing dissent in American classrooms.

The findings come as the United States intensifies scrutiny over the regime's efforts to obtain technology by attracting American talent. U.S. officials cited the Houston Chinese consulate's ongoing work targeting local scientists for recruitment to China as a reason for ordering the consulate's closure in July. The U.S. Justice Department in the past year has brought a spate of prosecutions against Chinese and American researchers who allegedly hid their ties to and funding from China, sometimes while simultaneously receiving federal grant money.

Earlier this year, the former chair of Harvard University's chemistry department, Charles Lieber, was indicted on charges related to making false statements about his participation in the Thousand Talents Plan and receiving \$2.25 million in Chinese funding over three years—a case described by prosecutors as "one of the most egregious charges of misconduct related to a talent-recruitment program." Officials said that Lieber had received more than \$15 million of federal funding since 2008.

Lieber has pleaded not guilty. While participation in Chinese talent programs isn't in itself illegal, researchers are required to disclose foreign funding when applying for federal grants. U.S. officials have asked universities to tighten vetting for conflicts of interest and foreign sources of funding. The report stated that many of the units were established by agencies under the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD). The UFWD

coordinates thousands of groups to carry out foreign political influence operations, suppress dissident movements, gather intelligence, and facilitate the transfer of technology to China. A range of other Chinese bodies is also involved in setting up overseas recruitment facilities, including universities, state-backed scientific associations, and foreign expert affairs bureaus, it stated.

The Chinese military also uses the same network for talent recruitment, according to the report. Top Chinese research institutions affiliated with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Chinese state-owned defense companies both actively recruit overseas experts, it said. For instance, the Chinese Academy of Engineering Physics, which runs the PLA's nuclear weapons program, recruited 57 scientists through the 'Thousand Talents Plan' as of 2014, the report stated.

The report highlighted how the talent recruitment efforts are linked to economic espionage cases. In May 2019, Tesla sued former employee Cao Guangzhi for allegedly stealing the company's source code autopilot features before joining a rival startup, the Guangzhou-based Xiaopeng Motors. Cao later conceded to uploading the files to his iCloud but denies that his actions caused any harm to Tesla. The case has yet to go to trial.

A decade before the suit, Cao co-founded the Association of Wenzhou PhDs USA, which has worked closely with Wenzhou authorities since its inception, the report found. Wenzhou, a city south of Shanghai, is a center for Chinese commerce and manufacturing.

The association, which was contracted to run a talent-recruiting station in 2010, grew to more than 100 members in a few years, and included engineers from top tech firms such as Google, Apple, and Amazon, academics from Harvard and Yale, and U.S. government employees, the report stated.

The association also helped Wenzhou University recruit a materials scientist from the U.S. government's Argonne National Laboratory, according to the report.

JENEAH MOON/GETTY IMAGES



A woman wearing a protective mask walks on the Columbia University campus in New York on March 9, 2020.

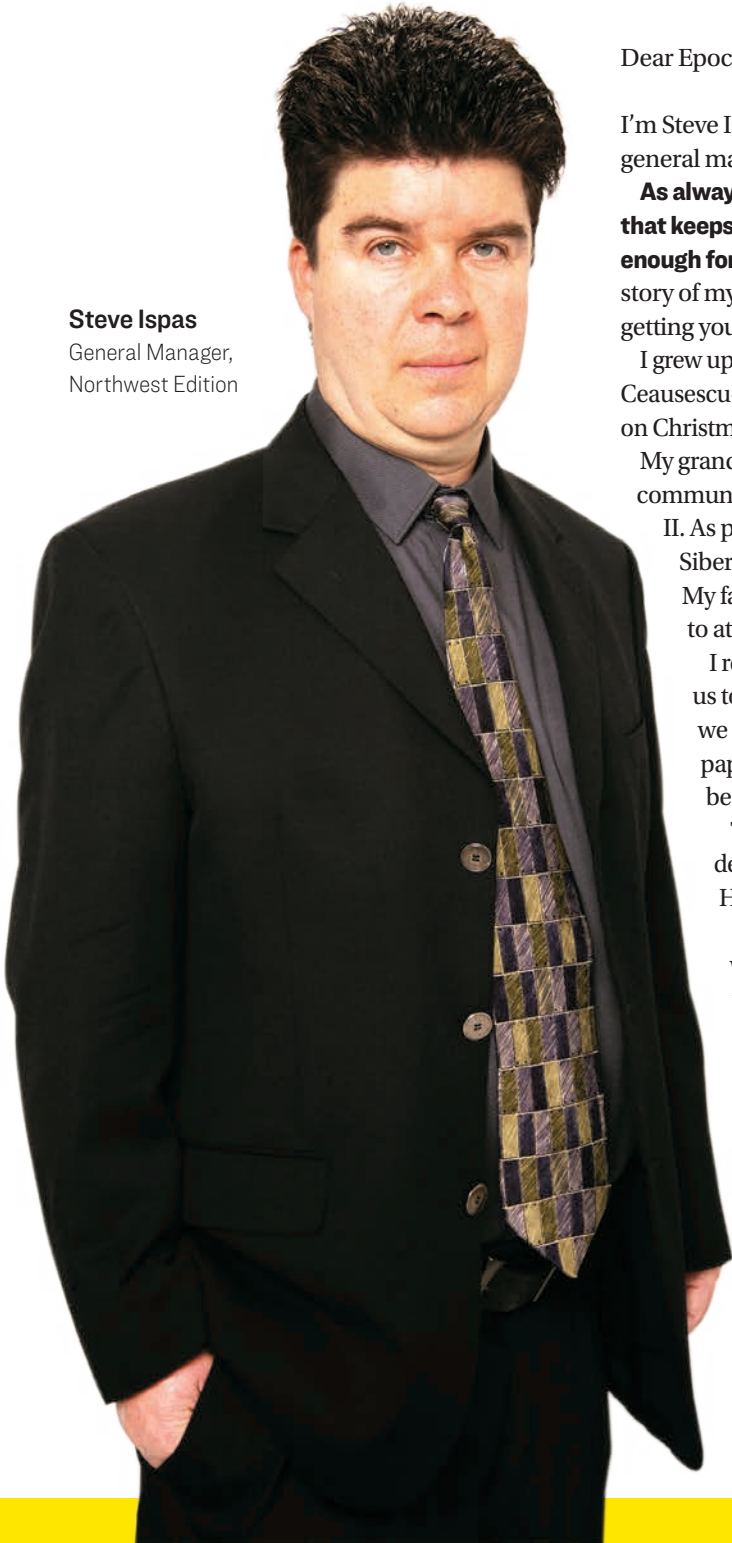


XU XIUJIE/THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH *and* TRADITION

In Our Own Words

From Ceausescu’s Romania to Today’s America



Steve Ispas
General Manager,
Northwest Edition

Dear Epoch VIP,

I’m Steve Ispas and I serve as the Northwest edition’s general manager here at The Epoch Times.
As always, it’s support and faith from readers like you that keeps me going every day, and I can’t thank you enough for that. In return, I want to share with you the story of my family, and the story of why I’m committed to getting you the truth every week.

I grew up in Romania under the former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu—the “king of communism,” who was executed on Christmas Day in 1989. But before that day, life was bitter. My grandfather belonged to a faction that opposed the communists who took over in Romania after World War II. As punishment, he was sent to a labor camp in Siberia and was a defeated man after he came back. My father, his son, was also blacklisted and forbidden to attend college.

I remember my father making the decision for all of us to leave Romania in order to look for a better life; we decided on the United States. He filled out all the paperwork and then waited, and waited. We would be denied nine times over the next five years.

The day before my 16th birthday, my father decided to protest in front of Ceausescu’s motorcade. He did not tell us, so we wouldn’t worry.

He took a day off from work, and that morning walked to a place where he knew the motorcade would pass in the morning. Once the motorcade approached, he stepped onto the street with a sign and a few words for the dictator.

“Let us go! Respect the Geneva Convention and approve our application to leave Romania!”

He was thrown in jail and told that he was lucky he was not shot on the spot. He was detained for a few days, where he had to sign a guarantee statement swearing not to protest like that again before they released him.

I did not see him that birthday, but his efforts seemed to have paid off in the end: After a month or so, we got a phone call from the emigration department saying that our paperwork had been approved. Nine months later, we were on our way to New York via Rome, Italy.

I still remember how amazed I was to walk the streets of Rome, as we were not allowed to travel anywhere when I was in Romania.

But what perhaps amazed me even more was when I began to see the media of the Free World romanticizing the concept of communism—the **very thing that my family had fought so hard to escape.**

Growing up in a communist country, I was fully aware of the fake news published daily by the communist propaganda organs. As time went on, I realized how the corruption of the media has extended beyond communist borders and how fake narratives have become front page news worldwide. Many true stories were being hidden away as the media cherry-picked facts to spin their own stories.

I was then very fortunate to come across The Epoch Times in 2004, when the Northern California edition was just about to be launched.

I gladly took the chance of working for a media that was focused on presenting the true stories at all costs—especially stories that exposed the crimes of communism, something that I was so aware of.

What motivates me every day is my desire to bring the truth to our readers regardless of the current hype or narrative, and to see the amazing appreciation from our readers. Though there are still challenges, I look forward to coming to the office every day and working with the absolutely amazing people who share in this mission to deliver the truth to you.

In Truth and Tradition,

Steve Ispas
The Epoch Times



What Our Readers Say (16)

“Everyone should subscribe because The Epoch Times covers subjects found almost nowhere else and details found completely nowhere else.”



I was starving for independent reporting. I was sick and tired of the “editorial” reporting - not the facts, but the media’s opinionated reporting and their interpretation or “take” on the facts, rather than the actual facts. **I found that in THE EPOCH TIMES!** I thought that “news” had been lost forever . . . but then I saw The Epoch Times. Love this read, even if I hate what is going on right now in our country!

DEBORAH MACKOY



Fear comes with lies.. **but truth, gets you prepared for what’s to come.** Know what really is happening.

ERIKA FLORES



Reporting that’s credible and can be relied upon has become hard to find.

I read The Epoch Times because they provide that credibility. In our current environment we hear and see what is referred to as “News” from many sources that are obviously false in so many ways. Historically, when a news outlet would lie to the public it was more of an embellishment buried within context that offered some form of truth. That has changed now and we see reports that are borderline reality television versus news fact. We believe news should be fact-based, free of bias or agenda. We look to The Epoch Times for clarity and factual reporting which we have now come to rely on them for. Thank you Epoch Times for print and video reporting that we feel provides perspective we can count on.

MELISSA MACH



This is the best source of information, the best newspaper, ever. The variety of authors gives me a better perspective of life as it is worth living, yet the quality of writing stays high. My local leftist paper, The Modesto Bee, is written with the vocabulary of a 13-year-old, The Epoch Times is not. I bought a subscription for my parents, they both love it. I considering gifting it to more. Everyone should subscribe because The Epoch Times covers subjects found almost nowhere else and details found completely nowhere else.

MATTHEW K DAVILA



Real Journalism! No Fake News! **Get details of the story and make up your own mind on facts,** not fiction.

LOUIS J WHITE



This journalistic publication is tremendous! I am a very satisfied member and also get the paper. It covers everything and honestly presents the facts. Other news is straight opinion and I’m completely unimpressed! **I can’t tell you how pleased I am to get the NEWS. Thank you Epoch Times!**

KATHERINE ANNE CARDWELL



The Epoch Times practices traditional journalism - **fact-based news about issues important for us as citizens to make informed decisions.**

MICHAEL GROVE