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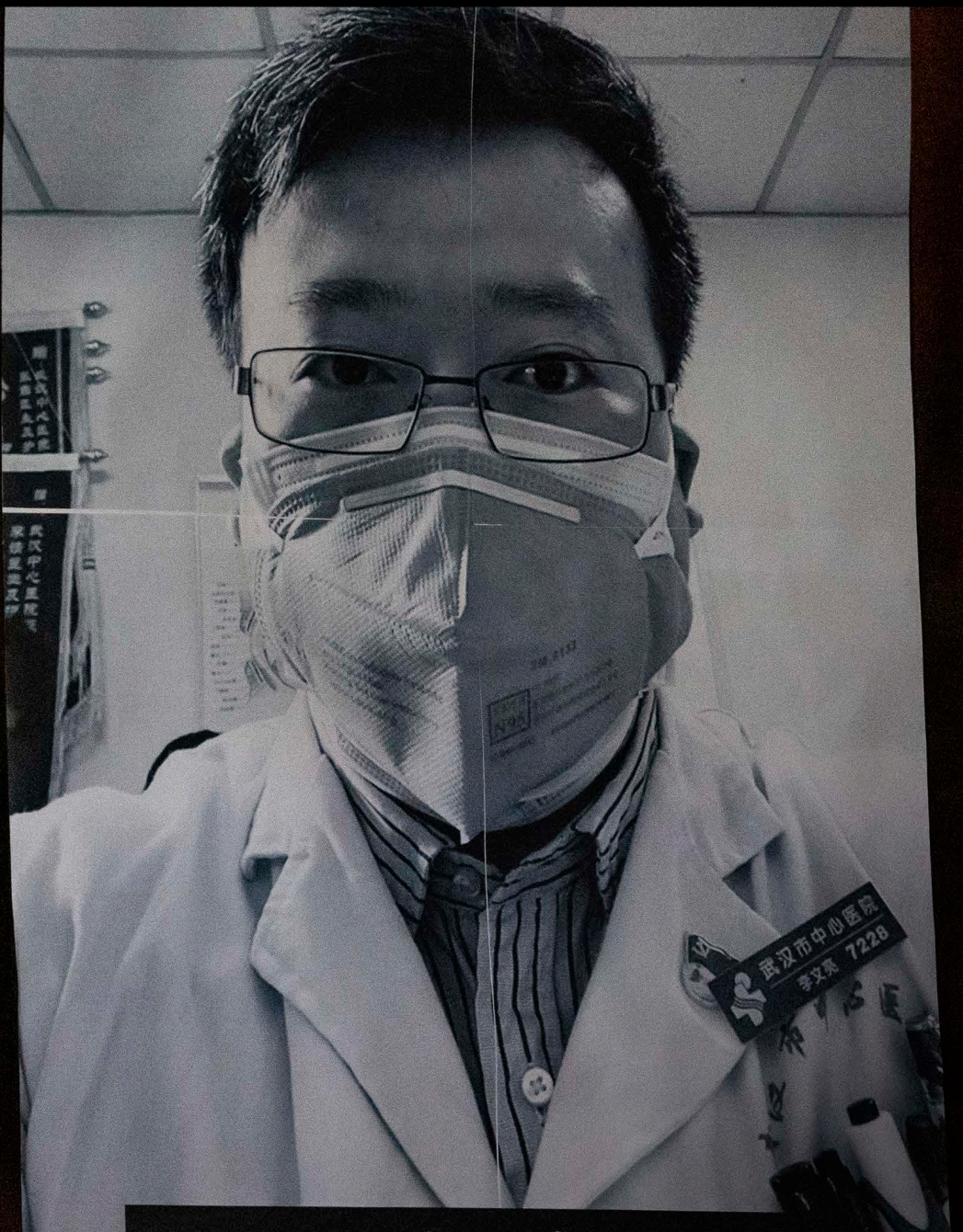
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ONE YEAR ON

AN
ONGOING
COVERUP
BY THE CCP

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The Space Force logo.

OPINION

Chinese Communist Aggression Is Why the US Space Force Is Imperative

ADRIAN NORMAN



In 2018, President Donald Trump directed the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to create a sixth branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, now known as the U.S. Space Force, which was formally established in December 2019. Though some have poked fun at the new military branch after it recently revealed that its troops would be called “Guardians,” the circumstances necessitating our Space Force are no laughing matter—the president’s directive was pursuant to a growing threat posed by two of America’s adversaries. China and Russia are already formidable enemies of the United States. But China, in particular, has methodically taken meaningful steps in its acceleration toward countering U.S. military and economic dominance on the global stage. Dethroning the United States as the world’s prevailing superpower has long been an ambition of communist China. And, over the last decade they’ve stepped up efforts to bring this dream to fruition prior to 2049, the year that marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China.

Though they could, how likely is it that a rogue nation would malignly use space-based assets?

Space Supremacy Means Terrestrial Hegemony “China wants to be the dominant economic and military power of the world, spreading its authoritarian vision for society and its corrupt practices worldwide,” U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said during a 2019 news conference in The Netherlands. However, projecting global power into the 21st century, and beyond, will require more than strong conventional armed forces. In this era, global preeminence will be inextricably tied to command, control, and denial of space. In other words, the first nation to conquer the space domain will be the beneficiary

of economic, technological, and military hegemony in perpetuity. As it stands, the Chinese are aggressively positioning to secure this role for themselves. “Chinese military writings state that the goal of space warfare and space operations is to achieve space superiority,” states a 2019 report called “Global Counterspace Capabilities” by the Secure World Foundation. “Space superiority is defined as ‘ensuring one’s ability to fully use space while at the same time limiting, weakening, and destroying an adversary’s space forces.’ It not only includes offensive and defensive operations in space against an adversary’s space forces, but also air, ground, and naval operations against space assets.” According to the report, Chinese planners recognize that whoever controls space will control Earth, and that “outer space is the new high ground of military operations. They assert that the center of gravity in military operations has transitioned from the sea to the air and is now transitioning to space.” The report cites a textbook published by the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences (AMS), which states: “Whoever is the strongman of military space will be the ruler of the battlefield; whoever has the advantage of space has the power of the initiative; having ‘space’ support enables victory, lacking ‘space’ ensures defeat.” Another publication by AMS, the Science of Military Strategy, concludes that “without space superiority one is at a disadvantage in all other domains,” according to the report. **National Security, Economic Implications** Understanding the need for the U.S. Space Force requires an understanding that burgeoning technologies and revolutionary innovations will permanently alter the way human beings live, how we travel, how we defend ourselves, how we produce, receive, and store energy, and that many of the tectonic shifts taking place within technology sectors will either be space-based or involve space. Currently, half the world is not connected to the internet. But, there are multiple companies close to reaching the milestone of being the first to offer the internet beamed from space, which will be a major global

We can say today, we are dominant in space. But the trend lines is what you have to look at. And they [China] will pass us in the next few years if we do not do something.

Steven Kwast, a retired Air Force lieutenant general

disruptor. “There is evidence that the arrival of high-speed internet access, if it spreads widely enough, can enhance productivity and transform local economies,” wrote science journalist Chris Baraniuk for the BBC. “In India, for instance, farmers and fishers using mobile phones to check prices and weather conditions increased profits by 8%.” Wider connectivity means expanded economic opportunity and the chance at a better life for millions of people. But, a hostile nation with control of the space domain could be able to interdict technologies like space-based internet access and prevent anyone they choose from accessing those services. Our own U.S. Department of Energy has signaled the possibility of a future where Earth’s energy needs are provided by space-based solar power. This concept involves groups of satellites harnessing energy from the sun and beaming energy back to Earth, technology that has already been under development by the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Navy. This could provide the entire globe with power that has zero emissions, allowing the planet to be far more sustainable with a minimal carbon footprint. Vehicles, airplanes, ships, homes, and businesses could all be powered by this clean energy. There would be no need to try to minimize our footprint on the planet with wealth-destroying programs like the Green New Deal, which impose extremely high taxes and crushing regulatory burdens. This is Overton-window-shifting, paradigm-shattering innovation that would radically alter our planet. However, a despotic country bent on global domination could exploit such technologies for their own gain, to the detriment of every other nation on Earth. But, though they could, how likely is it that a rogue nation would malignly use space-based assets? A 2018 report by the U.S. DoD confirmed that “China is developing multiple counterspace capabilities to degrade and deny adversary use of space-based assets.” The report also noted that Chinese scholars “stress the necessity of ‘destroying, damaging, and interfering with the enemy’s reconnaissance ... and communications satellites,’ suggesting that such

systems, as well as navigation and early warning satellites, could be among the targets of attacks designed to ‘blind and deafen the enemy.’” In the 2019 version of the report, defense officials said that China “continues to develop counterspace capabilities and related technologies, including kinetic-kill missiles, ground-based lasers, and orbiting space robots, as well as expanding space surveillance capabilities, which can monitor objects across the globe and in space and enable counterspace actions.” Left unchecked, China could shut down the United States. All of it. Including our military.

Dethroning the United States as the world’s prevailing superpower has long been an ambition of communist China. And, over the last decade they’ve stepped up efforts to bring this dream to fruition prior to 2049, the year that marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China.

What’s at Stake

Steven Kwast, a retired Air Force lieutenant general, spoke at Hillsdale College in November 2019 and delivered a powerful lecture on what’s at stake in the race for space dominance. “The power of space will change world power forever,” Kwast said. “It’s like America is a race car that has been winning races for 70 years since World War II. We’re going 90 miles an hour, and we’ve done it that way since World War II. It’s our entire mindset, our entire lives the same way. China is in a car right behind us. The car isn’t as good, but it’s going 120 miles an hour.” Kwast holds degrees in astronautical engineering and public policy, is a former fighter pilot, and was a commander of the Air Education and Training Command at Joint Base San-Antonio Randolph. He also presents the nightmarish reality that China is “building an entire method of being able to have a blanket of power over America in space that can bring directed energy to paralyze our power grids, paralyze our cars, paralyze our military, disrupt our markets.” “We can say today, we are dominant in space. But the trend lines is what you have to look at. And they [China] will pass us in the next few years if we do not do something. And they will win this race, and then they will put roadblocks up to space,” he said. “Because once you get the ultimate high ground, that strategic high ground, it’s curtains for anybody trying to get to that high ground behind them.” China under the Communist Party is a nation that has gross human rights violations, carries out forced organ harvesting, and went so far as welding people into their own homes as the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus (commonly known as the novel coronavirus) broke out in early 2020. These are not the actions of a friendly nation wielding its authority in a moral way. Kwast believes the ethics and integrity of the nation that first deploys and manages these emerging space technologies is critical. “So the next hundred years, the values that will rule the next hundred years will be defined by this next 10 years and who dominates space,” he said. “For 30 years, [China has] met every single milestone of their space program. And in the next 10 years, they will have solar and nuclear power generation space stations on orbit. They broadcast that they will be used for peaceful purposes, that those radio waves will bring energy to anybody on planet Earth without the need for power lines or power plants,” he explained. “But in a millisecond, that dominance of the electromagnetic spectrum can be directed energy that could paralyze any part of our power grid and freeze any military might that America builds on the spot. Every carrier battle fleet is a cork in the water. Every fleet of fighters is dead on the ramp, can’t even turn the wheel, because of our vulnerability. China has openly stated they are weaponizing everything.”

Adrian Norman is a writer, political commentator, and author of the book “The Art of the Steal: Exposing Fraud & Vulnerabilities in America’s Elections.”

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

OPINION

Behind the CCP’s Fervent Denial of Interfering in the US Election

ZHONG YUAN

An eye-catching report published on Dec. 17 on the homepage of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-run media Xinhua website stated, “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Refutes Influencing U.S. Presidential Elections: Completely Fabricated.” Chinese state media reports on the U.S. presidential election—and their expressed attitudes toward the two candidates—have fluctuated greatly. Of course, the Party has its eyes on Democratic Party candidate Joe Biden. But as allegations of election fraud and Chinese interference have surfaced, the Party is worried that the truth could be revealed soon. CCP media has been cautious in general in its coverage, for fear of being implicated in election fraud, which would attract a strong U.S. reaction. However, Xinhua’s denial of CCP interference in the U.S. election, at around the same time the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs held a hearing on election irregularities, is, in fact, indirectly hinting at its guilt. The core of Xinhua’s report can be summarized with these words from Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin: “China is committed to the principle of non-interference. Claims about China influencing U.S. presidential elections are completely fabricated.” Wang was responding to a Bloomberg reporter’s question during a regular press briefing. The reporter asked, “A statement from the Office of the U.S. Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe said on Wednesday night that a deadline to submit a classified report to Congress on foreign efforts to sway the November 3rd election will not be met. That’s because director Ratcliffe is said to be refusing to sign off on the report unless it more fully reflects the national security threat posed by China. Does the ministry have any comment on this situation?” The reporter carefully thought out how to phrase the question to elicit an impromptu answer from the spokesperson. And indeed, that appears to have happened. Wang said, “Not long ago, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence called China “national security threat No. 1,” referring to Ratcliffe’s op-ed for the Wall Street Journal. Then Wang said, “China is committed to the principle of non-interference. Claims about China influencing U.S. presidential elections are completely fabricated.” The reporter’s question actually

didn’t directly mention election interference, but Wang took the initiative to address the topic—a mistake on his part. This question wasn’t arranged in advance, as is often the case with Chinese journalists who attend the regime’s press briefings. Instead, Wang just blurted out those words without preparing a script. The reporter’s question successfully caught something big. Wang’s response was a slip of the tongue, although as long as no one mentions it deliberately, the moment will pass. However, what’s strange is that Xinhua made it the focus of an article, and deliberately emphasized the statement. On the surface, it seems illogical, but in essence, it reflects real concerns of the CCP leadership. Wang’s response was clearly the result of repeated warnings by the CCP’s high-level officials: You must categorically deny intervening in U.S. elections at all times. While Wang naturally kept this in mind, he accidentally “copy and pasted” the answer to the wrong question. A growing list of U.S. sanctions on Chinese companies and officials must have triggered fierce debates within the Party, as regime leader Xi Jinping’s authority is again being challenged. And the U.S. counterattack hasn’t ended. This is what the CCP leadership is most worried about. They cannot stop the United States from counterattacking, but the top officials don’t want to take responsibility for the consequences. Wang’s panic-stricken denial reflects the Party’s internal state. People within the CCP know that such moves are part of the Party’s playbook to deflect attention from their mistakes: blame the United States for the continued deterioration of U.S.-China relations; incite nationalism, and play tough to maintain the CCP’s authority in the country. Wang’s gaffe and the Party media’s overly zealous denial only expose how the CCP leadership is running out of ideas about how to deal with the United States. Zhong Yuan is a researcher focused on China’s political system, the country’s democratization process, human rights situation, and Chinese citizens’ livelihoods. He began writing commentaries for the Chinese-language edition of The Epoch Times in 2020. Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin takes a question during a briefing in Beijing on July 24, 2020.

CCP VIRUS

Deception and Suppression: A Year of Beijing’s Virus Coverup

NICOLE HAO

Around this time last year, Chinese authorities acknowledged that an “unknown” form of pneumonia was spreading in the city of Wuhan. But it was already too late. What we now know as COVID-19 had already broken out across the city and possibly beyond.

In the months that followed, authorities bungled prevention measures and covered up the number of infections. They enacted travel restrictions weeks too late—as Chinese travelers seeded outbreaks around the world—and prevented international researchers from visiting the country to investigate the origin of the virus that causes COVID-19.

A global pandemic ensued that has claimed millions of lives, brought economies to a halt, and disrupted people’s livelihoods.

As the virus spread around the world, the regime in Beijing began an aggressive campaign to spread disinformation claiming that the virus didn’t originate in China; that propaganda offensive continues today. Meanwhile, the regime punished citizens who dared to publicize information that didn’t fit its narrative: that authoritarian control had succeeded in containing the disease.

But in interviews with The Epoch Times, citizens tell of a different reality: draconian lockdown measures have deprived them of basic rights, while authorities continue to suppress information about new clusters around the country.

As a new wave now hits Beijing and parts of northeastern China, locals are once again kept in the dark as authorities seal off neighborhood after neighborhood.

Coverup Culture

China’s initial response was rife with missteps.

Wuhan health authorities only confirmed the outbreak on Dec. 31, 2019, after whistleblower doctors had shared information on social media.

Government documents leaked to The Epoch Times have since revealed that COVID-19 cases may have surfaced months earlier. Wuhan hospital data shows that patients were hospitalized with symptoms similar to COVID-19 as early as September 2019, while several people died in October 2019 from pneumonia, lung infections, and

other COVID-19-like conditions.

In the early weeks of the epidemic, the Chinese regime continually downplayed the crisis and denied that the disease could be transmitted among humans. The World Health Organization repeated Beijing’s claims, and would wait until Jan. 30 to declare the outbreak a global health emergency.

Chinese authorities didn’t implement containment measures until Jan. 23, with a lockdown on Wuhan. However, by then, 5 million people had already left Wuhan, amid a typical peak season for domestic and international travel for the Lunar New Year holiday.

Tight Control

Chinese authorities soon adopted a so-called “fire blanket style” procedure to contain the disease domestically.

Once a person is diagnosed with COVID-19, the local government detects the patient’s recent close contacts and the places he has recently visited, via China’s ubiquitous surveillance camera system. One internal Chinese government document obtained by The Epoch Times shows that more than a million people nationwide were being closely monitored for their risk of contracting COVID-19 during the month of May.

During lockdowns, people are prevented from leaving their homes. Usually, authorities mandate that only one person per household can go outside every two to three days, and can only spend an hour or two to shop for basic necessities.

Suspected patients are isolated at government-designated quarantine centers, including some that reportedly had unsanitary conditions and a lack of medical care.

In areas with serious outbreaks, such as Wuhan, Suifenhe, Beijing, and Shanghai, authorities created makeshift hospitals with only wall partitions separating one patient from another. Some complained that the hospitals were “like death camps.”

A Year of Outbreaks

Despite the containment measures, new clusters continue to emerge throughout China.

Authorities usually require mass nucleic acid testing soon after. During an outbreak in October in the eastern city of Qingdao, authorities claimed that after testing all 11 million residents, they found zero new infections.

International experts and local residents view such glowing accounts with skepticism. A day after authorities made that announcement, some residents told The Epoch Times that they hadn’t yet received their test results.

Local governments also continued to cover up the scale of new outbreaks. The Epoch Times has on several occasions obtained internal government data that revealed figures much higher than what had been publicly reported, such as in Beijing, and Shandong, Jilin, and Heilongjiang provinces.

Governments typically shared little information with citizens. In one classified document issued in February, Chinese authorities explicitly stated that epidemic-related documents were to be treated as top secret.

“During the time period of combating the virus, all types of urgent documents, urgent notices, urgent events ... internally shared sensitive information, and any information that the [government] leaders haven’t approved to disclose to the public” would be considered state secrets, the document said.

The populace is getting fed up with the way local authorities are handling the situation.

Disinformation

The Chinese regime switched tactics around March, as countries around the world were responding to their own outbreaks.

On March 12, a spokesperson for China’s foreign ministry, Zhao Lijian, claimed in a Twitter post that the CCP virus was brought to Wuhan by the U.S. Army. His baseless claim, and other similar accusations by Chinese diplomats, sparked widespread condemnation by Western officials.

On Nov. 29, the Chinese state-run Global Times published an article suggesting that the virus originated on the Indian subcontinent. Recently, Chinese state-run media misquoted scientists’ research to claim that the virus originated in Italy.

The Chinese regime and its media have also been promoting the theory that local COVID-19 outbreaks stemmed from frozen food supply chains. Authorities claim

they detected virus strains on imported frozen salmon, shrimp, pork, beef, and other foods from a range of countries, such as Norway, Russia, Indonesia, Brazil, and Germany.

The WHO states that the possibility of infection from contact with food and food packaging is slim. Disease experts also say it’s unlikely the virus can spread through frozen food.

Censorship

From the beginning, Wuhan authorities silenced whistleblower doctors such as Ai Fen and Li Wenliang, who were first to note on social media that their hospitals were admitting patients with a new, potentially contagious, pneumonia-like disease. They were summoned by police and reprimanded.

Li, who later died of the disease himself, has been described as a martyr.

Fang Bin, Chen Qiushi, and other citizen journalists who documented the Wuhan outbreak, including visits to local hospitals and funeral homes, have gone missing. Fang and Chen’s whereabouts remain unknown.

On Dec. 28, Zhang Zhan was sentenced to four years in prison, becoming the first known citizen journalist to be sentenced for providing first-hand information about the epidemic in China.

Netizens also reported being detained by local police after they posted outbreak-related information on social media.

Internal documents obtained by The Epoch Times showed that propaganda authorities heavily suppressed information about the pandemic that didn’t align with official narratives.

The populace is getting fed up with the way local authorities are handling the situation.

In March, residents under lockdown in Wuhan heckled a group of Chinese officials touring the area, shouting complaints from their apartments, such as, “It’s fake, everything’s fake!”

Recently in the northeastern city of Dalian, college students were barred from leaving campus as the city reported new COVID-19 cases. They complained about the suddenly imposed quarantine.

“I believe if the Dalian government continues to insist on not allowing students to leave, students could become restless. They could even join together to resist,” one student said.



People’s Liberation Army soldiers march in Beijing on May 22, 2020.

OPINION

Chinese Leader Xi Jinping Faces Pressure From Within the Military

YANG WEI

Chinese leader Xi Jinping attended a military ceremony on Dec. 18 at the People’s Liberation Army (PLA)’s headquarters in Beijing. Four generals were newly appointed and honored at the event. But it appeared as if Xi lacked enthusiasm, judging from the news video footage of Beijing’s mouthpiece Xinhua. What was behind the grim expression on Xi’s face and why wasn’t he in a celebratory mood? Perhaps he is under a lot of pressure and is faced with obstacles at home and abroad.

Xi Asserts His Authority Through the Military

Amid the infighting among political factions within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Xi took the opportunity to show the Party that he commanded the military by appointing new generals. As the chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the move would secure Xi’s authority and serve as a warning to those who oppose him.

Xinhua reported that on Dec. 18, Xi presented the officers with certificates of order at a ceremony held by the CMC at the Defense Ministry’s Bayi building, located near Bayi lake in Beijing. Four senior officers were promoted to the rank of general, the highest rank for officers in active service in China. Around 30 people attended the ceremony which was held in a small conference room.

The four officers who were promoted were: Guo Puxiao, the political commissar of the Logistics Support Department of the CMC; Gen. Zhang Xudong, the commander of the Western Theater Command; Li Wei, the political commissar of the PLA Strategic Support Force; and Wang Chunming, the commander of the People’s Armed Police.

Guo Puxiao, a native of Yaoxian county, Shaanxi Province, was transferred and assigned as political commissar of the Logistics Support Department of the CMC in December 2019. He has been a political cadre of the Air Force for many years. He was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general in July 2018.

Zhang Xudong has just been transferred and assigned to the commander of the Western Theater Command, one of China’s five military area commands. Xudong was also the deputy commander of the Joint Command Headquarters of the 70th anniversary National Day Parade in October 2019. He was promoted to lieutenant general in July 2018.

Under Xi’s leadership, China is becoming more isolated from the international community.

Xi took the opportunity to show the Party that he commanded the military by appointing new generals. As the chairman of the Central Military Commission, the move would secure Xi’s authority and serve as a warning to those who oppose him.

Li Wei has just been transferred to the political commissar of the Strategic Support Force, one of the six major branches of the military. He has been a political cadre for many years. He was promoted to lieutenant general in July 2016.

Wang Chunming has just been promoted to the commander of the armed police force. His father Wang Yongming was a lieutenant general. After Xi came to power, Wang transferred the armed police force to the Military Commission. The move suggests that Xi has always been worried about a coup and wanted to surround himself with loyal officers.

International Pressure

At the press conference of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Communist Party of China on Dec. 18, a reporter from Reuters asked: “The United States will add around 80 Chinese companies, including chipmaker SMIC to a trade blacklist ... Do you have any comment on this report?”

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said that if the report was true, then the U.S. move would be “detrimental to the interests of both Chinese and American companies, the normal technological exchanges and trade flows between the two countries and even on a global scale, and the stability of global industrial chains, supply chains, and value chains.”

Wang’s response reveals that the latest round of U.S. sanctions is unprecedented in scale. On Dec. 18, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced that it had included dozens of Chinese companies on a trade blacklist, including China’s largest chip manufacturer SMIC, and restricted its access to key U.S. technologies. U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross stated, “We will not allow advanced U.S. technology to help build the military of an increasingly belligerent adversary.”

“Entity List restrictions are a necessary measure to ensure that China, through its national champion SMIC, is not able to leverage U.S. technologies to enable indigenous advanced technology levels to support its destabilizing military activities,” Ross added.

The Trump administration’s consecutive sanctions against the CCP should be directly related to the regime’s interference in the U.S. presidential election. Xi has no countermeasures and can only try to conceal his missteps.

The CCP’s army refused to participate in a virtual meeting with the U.S. military that

was scheduled for Dec. 14 to 16. The meeting was held regularly since 1998 to discuss maritime and aviation safety and reduce confrontation between the two militaries. Beijing’s refusal to attend the meeting is another misstep for Xi, which is tantamount to intensifying the military confrontation between the United States and China.

“The PRC’s refusal to show up to MMCA [Military Maritime Consultative Agreement] is another example that China does not honor its agreements, and this should serve as a reminder to all nations as they pursue agreements with China going forward,” said Adm. Phil Davidson, the Commander for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

The U.S. Navy recently announced that U.S. warships trained with French and Japanese navies in the Philippine sea. On Dec. 9, Xi had a telephone conversation with President Emmanuel Macron of France, but the Party media’s report was very low-key. Perhaps Beijing is starting to feel isolated.

China could be facing an energy crisis as coal imports from Australia have been banned due to trade disputes between both countries. The Chinese regime recently took away iron ore projects from three Australian mining firms. With a shortage in China’s coal supply, heating has become a problem, especially in the winter, and authorities have to limit power usage.

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc, Beijing is making headlines with its vaccines as experts question their effectiveness. But China continues to export vaccines to third world countries while they order vaccines from the United States. Is China truly helping the international community to fight the pandemic as Xi has claimed?

Under Xi’s leadership, China is becoming more isolated from the international community. The state-run media recently touted that the CCP has achieved its goal of poverty alleviation in 2020, but netizens are in disbelief. Under these circumstances, how can the Chinese people continue to believe the CCP? The pressure continues to build up for Xi.

Yang Wei has been closely following China affairs for many years. He has been contributing political commentary on China for the Chinese language Epoch Times since 2019.

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



A medical staff member treats a patient infected by the CCP virus at a hospital in Wuhan in China’s Hubei Province on Feb. 22, 2020.

OPINION

How Chinese Leader Xi, Insecure About His Rule, Tried to Resolve Beijing’s Diplomatic Crises

ZHONG YUAN

With U.S. sanctions being announced against Chinese companies and officials one by one, Chinese regime leader Xi Jinping’s attempts to recover after such diplomatic disasters seemed to have failed. Xi did not appear in public for many days.

On Dec. 11, the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) Politburo, comprised of top officials, suddenly met up and discussed “security issues,” according to state media reports. This suggested that Xi had many things to worry about.

Just weeks ago, on Nov. 30, the Politburo had convened, while the Politburo Standing Committee—the Party’s top decision-making body—met on Dec. 3. Having two general meetings and one standing committee meeting within 12 days is rather unusual.

Was Xi trying to save himself from a bigger political crisis within the Party?

Xi’s demands are to protect both the Party and his personal power. It seems that although he thought he had a way to save himself, he is still extremely worried.

Self-Affirmation

According to state-run media Xinhua’s report, during the Dec. 11 Politburo meeting, officials discussed the Party’s anti-corruption investigations.

Xinhua’s report quoted Xi as saying: “Faced with a complex and volatile environment internationally and formidable tasks in promoting reform, development, and stability at home, especially the severe impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, China has achieved progress that is satisfactory to the people and has attracted global attention.”

Xi of course had to praise his own “high-quality work.” It’s meant to ease any internal complaints.

Interestingly, the biggest problems currently facing the CCP’s top leaders—undoubtedly U.S.-China relations and international relations—were not discussed at



Chinese Communist Party officials applaud as leader Xi Jinping delivers his speech commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Chinese army entering North Korea, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Oct. 23, 2020.

recent meetings, according to state media’s accounts. This abnormal phenomenon could be interpreted as either the Party could not come up with a solution, or the internal disputes were simply too big to be resolved.

Xi also hosted a forum on Dec. 8 for non-Party members. But his comments at the forum were not published by Xinhua until Dec. 11—when the Politburo meeting took place. His comments were along the same lines.

The timing suggests Xi had an ulterior motive for this aside from the self-praise.

Raise the Anti-Corruption Issue Again

Xi’s remarks at the Dec. 11 meeting must serve another important purpose: to shut everyone up. And it takes the “big stick” of the Party’s anti-corruption agency, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), to achieve this.

The interesting part about Xinhua’s report is that though a large portion of the remarks was about the economy, anti-corruption was outlined as the number one issue on the list.

The meeting emphasized “putting for-

ward new requirements for the comprehensive and strict governance of the Party, [how to] construct a ... clean government, and fight against corruption,” Xinhua reported.

Reading between the lines, officials at all levels will understand that this means anyone who dares to go against the Xi leadership will undoubtedly become a political target. The phrases to describe CCDI’s tasks have also changed from “anti-corruption” to “political inspection” and “investigating political issues.” With this great stick, no

one would dare to doubt Xi.

Foreign Ministry Comes to the Rescue

On the diplomatic front, China’s foreign minister came to Xi’s aide.

On Dec. 13, Wang Yi delivered a keynote speech at a forum on China’s foreign relations in Beijing hosted by research institutes.

Wang praised Xi for “rising up to the challenges ... become responsible to the country and do its part for the world,” according to Xinhua reports on the event.

Xi had to maintain the positive image both domestically and abroad. He, of course, could not admit to any missteps or misjudgments.

The series of Xinhua reports suggest that Xi has continued to gamble on maintaining power, but the piling sanctions imposed by the United States has left him at a loss.

The attempt at saving face did not actually help Xi to escape the crisis.

On Dec. 10, Wang Chen, vice chairman of the Standing Committee in charge of the CCP’s rubber-stamp legislature—who had just been sanctioned by the United States for his role in curtailing freedoms in Hong Kong—attended a dinner held by the American Chamber of Commerce in China.

Wang still had to put on a show despite the punishment by U.S. authorities.

The reality is, with limits on tech transfers, drastic changes to supply chains, and sanctions on Chinese companies, the country’s economic recovery is hopeless.

Lack of Security

State-run newspaper People’s Daily explained what top officials discussed during the Politburo’s study session on “security issues.”

It accurately reflects Xi’s concerns about his grasp of power at the time.

According to the report, Xi said that the Party was born at a time of “internal and external troubles,” and it has “an unforgettable understanding” of the importance of security during such times.

Xi said the Party must “persist in making political security a priority and maintain the regime’s security.”

Indeed, the CCP has always been concerned about internal and external crises throughout its history. To maintain its ruling is its priority. And today’s crisis is unprecedented.

Xi’s demands are to protect both the Party and his personal power. It seems that although he thought he had a way to save himself, he is still extremely worried. He refused to admit his mistakes, but he could not really resolve the internal and external conflicts. He could only use “security” as an excuse to suppress the internal conflicts further. Can he really survive this crisis?

Zhong Yuan is a researcher focused on China’s political system, the country’s democratization process, human rights situation, and Chinese citizens’ livelihood. He began writing commentaries for the Chinese-language edition of The Epoch Times in 2020.

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Customers line up to get their reserved iPhone 12 at an Apple store in Shanghai on Oct. 23, 2020.

CENSORSHIP

Apple Punished Employee for Approving App Critical of Beijing: Lawsuit

CATHY HE

A former Apple employee alleges in a lawsuit that the company punished him for approving an app critical of the Chinese regime, in order to appease Beijing authorities.

The allegations were made by Trieu Pham, a former app reviewer for the tech giant, in a discrimination and wrongful termination suit filed at the Santa Clara, California, Superior Court in December 2019.

In his complaint, Pham states that in 2018, he was criticized by his Apple managers for approving an app by Guo Media because it was “critical of the Chinese government.” Guo Media is a website created by Guo Wengui, a dissident Chinese businessman exiled in the United States and wanted by Beijing on alleged economic crimes, who’s known for making allegations about massive corruption at the highest levels of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership.

The claims illuminate how the tech giant navigates its relationship with the Chinese regime, which notoriously forces Western firms to comply with censorship and surveillance requirements as a condition of market access. Apple relies heavily on the Chinese market, its third-largest market by revenue.

Pham alleges that after the app was approved, Chinese authorities contacted Apple and demanded it be removed from the App Store. In response, the company conducted an internal investigation and found that Pham was the reviewer who approved the app, the court complaint stated.

He was called into a meeting with several managers to discuss the Guo Media app in September 2018, during which the managers said the app should be removed from the App Store because it was critical of the Chinese regime. Pham argued that the app didn’t violate any of Apple’s policies regarding app content, as it merely published claims of corruption in the CCP, and therefore should remain in the store as a matter of free speech.

Pham also told managers at the meeting that removing the app due to Chinese regime pressure would be caving into censorship, according to the complaint. He asked repeatedly if the managers could provide a justification to block the app based on the company’s own policies and procedures, but they couldn’t.

He later had a meeting with his supervisor about the same topic, during which Pham reiterated why the app should remain in the store. Pham also told co-workers about these meetings and that Apple was seeking to censor a Chinese dissident under pressure from Beijing, the complaint stated.

The former employee believed that the real reason Apple created the coaching plan was to “appease” the Chinese government. The plan was “Apple’s message to China that it in fact did not approve an App created by Guo,” the complaint said. The company then sought to punish Pham for speaking out against censorship, it added.

Pham was fired in March 2019. Apple didn’t immediately respond to a request by The Epoch Times for comment.

A judge in November ruled that the lawsuit could proceed after Apple sought to have some of Pham’s causes of action tossed out.

Apple has previously drawn criticism for bowing to the Chinese regime’s censorship demands.

Last year, the company pulled HKmap.live, an app used by Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters to track the city’s police activity, from its App Store. Protesters decried the move as an example of the company caving to pressure from Beijing, although Apple said the app was removed because it was a risk to public safety.

Around that time, Apple also removed the Quartz news app from its Chinese App Store after receiving complaints from Beijing over its coverage of the protests in Hong Kong.

Apple regularly takes down apps from its App Store in China at the request of Chinese authorities, and also proactively blocks hundreds of apps that are politically sensitive to Beijing, according to an analysis by the Tech Transparency Project, a U.S.-based nonprofit.

The former employee said that his managers stepped up scrutiny of his work after he lodged an internal discrimination complaint in September 2017, according to the court complaint. They later conducted an audit of a sample of Pham’s app reviews from July to September 2018, and gave him a “Documented Coaching Plan,” which included reviews that were allegedly done in error.

The plan identified Pham’s most serious error as approving the Guo Media app, which was forbidden from the Chinese version of Apple’s App Store, according to the lawsuit.

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ANALYSIS

Sina’s US Stock Market Departure Could Herald Wave of Chinese Delistings

FAN YU

Chinese internet firm Sina Corp. agreed to go private and delist from the Nasdaq stock market, 20 years after its landmark U.S. IPO that led to a wave of Chinese companies listing their shares in the United States.

Sina’s decision was crystallized after an entity led by its chairman, Charles Chao, sweetened the acquisition offer to \$43.30 a share. New Wave Holdings, the entity making the takeover bid, increased its offer from its initial one in July of \$41 a share.

Inglorious End of a Trailblazer

Sina, which was founded in 1998 by a group of software engineers, began as an internet portal.

Sina went public in New York in April 2000 during the dotcom heyday, becoming the first Chinese company to list its shares in the United States. Its initial public offering was quickly followed by Chinese internet giants Sohu.com and NetEase in the same year.

The company was a pioneer, using an unusual structure to get around China’s laws prohibiting foreign ownership of its internet companies. Since Sina’s 2000 IPO, almost all of China’s technology companies followed a similar listing structure, called



The signage of Sina Weibo displayed in Beijing on April 16, 2014. Its parent company Sina, which was listed on the Nasdaq stock exchange, will be going private.

the variable interest entity (VIE) structure. U.S. investors would buy shares in a Cayman Islands or British Virgin Islands-registered holding company, which then contracted with China-domiciled entities to earn revenue.

This practice was followed in subsequent, more high-profile IPOs such as those of Alibaba, JD.com, and Baidu.

The VIE structure allowed Chinese companies to bypass Beijing rules and enabled entities to raise hundreds of billions of dollars in U.S. capital and hundreds of millions of dollars in fees for U.S. banks and law firms assisting in the IPOs.

Sina’s big break came in 2009 with its launch of Weibo, a Chinese microblogging website similar to Twitter. In the same year, Twitter was banned in China by communist authorities.

After Weibo was taken public on Nasdaq in 2014, the child quickly overshadowed its parent. Weibo’s market capitalization was four times that of Sina, which owns about 45 percent of Weibo.

Over time, Sina’s other ventures, including social media and online finance, have largely languished in the shadows of much bigger rivals; the company itself became something of a Weibo valuation arbitrage play in the eyes of investors.

Weibo has been subject to intense regulatory and censorship pressure. Recently, influencers were forced to leave the platform if their commentary was deemed to be inappropriate by the Chinese communist regime.

More Delistings May Be Ahead

Because of growing scrutiny from U.S. regulators, several Chinese technology firms have delisted from U.S. stock exchanges or turned to other markets to raise capital in 2020. President Donald Trump signed into law a measure that would require foreign companies to adhere to the same accounting and disclosure standards as other public U.S. companies, or face delisting from U.S. exchanges. Companies have three years to comply.

At least a dozen New York-listed Chinese companies have approved take-private deals to delist from the stock market, including a few major names.

Sogou Inc. in July accepted a takeover bid from Tencent Holdings in a \$2 billion deal, while China’s biggest classified ads website 58.com Inc. was bought out by a group of private equity firms, including General Atlantic and Warburg Pincus, in a deal that valued the company at close to \$9 billion.

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TRUTH *and* TRADITION

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The Epoch Times not only reports reliably on U.S. politics and the Trump administration, but also publishes authoritative China news, covering topics including:

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