

#### **OPINION**

## Beijing's 'Anti-Foreign Sanctions' Law Puts Global Businesses in Further Bind

**FAN YU** 

oreign companies doing business in China will soon find their operating environment littered with economic roadblocks because of a series of new "antiforeign sanctions" rules that China's legislature rushed to pass on June 10.

The new rules were introduced as countermeasures against foreign nations enacting sanctions on Beijing. This development may put foreign organizations and individuals enforcing their home countries' sanctions against China in a tough position going forward.

The new law expands the Chinese regime's toolkit to fight back against sanctions and can be used in conjunction with the existing Unreliable Entities List of companies it created last year.

The measures are extensive and give the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) broad powers to sanction organizations and individuals complying with sanctions against China. So, what exactly can it do? The CCP could deny visas for, deport, and restrict travel for affected entities, seize properties they have within China, block business or personal transactions, put pressure on the target's family members and associates, and any "other necessary measures" deemed appropriate by the regime.

Basically, the law allows the CCP to do anything it wants under the pretense of combating "discriminatory" foreign sanctions.

#### **Immense Pressure**

The CCP rushed the legislation—it gave hints that this was coming merely days prior—during the 29th session of the 13th National People's Congress, without the usual period of public consultation.

Beijing has been increasingly dismayed by recent escalating pressure from the United States and its allies. The international community has stepped up criticism of the CCP's human rights abuses against Uyghur minorities and Falun Gong practitioners and its suppression of political freedoms in Hong Kong.

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Several actions were taken during the past few years, including Canada's house arrest of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou, international retailers' boycott of Xinjiang-harvested cotton, U.S. sanctions and trade restrictions affecting Chinese state-linked companies, and the EU putting on ice its trade and investment pact with Beijing, all of which were viewed by the CCP as measures to "contain and suppress" a rising China.

Foreign Companies to Be Marginalized The CCP's new retaliatory sanctions law's

broad language makes it unprecedented in scope compared to historical sanctions enacted by other countries. As a result, foreign companies could easily find themselves with a target on their backs. Beijing could retaliate against companies or individuals complying with legal sanctions from their home countries. AmCham China Chairman Greg Gilligan

summarizes it well.

"This new law presents potentially irreconcilable compliance problems for foreign companies," he told Bloomberg News in

For example, imagine an international



bank complying with President Joe Biden's updated executive order to affirm the Trump administration policy of restricting the purchase of stock in certain Chinese companies with military links by refusing to buy those companies' stock in its Asia emerging markets fund.

In this scenario, the CCP could punish the bank by forcing Chinese companies to cancel all their business with the bank. Beijing could go as far as seizing property or assets owned by the bank in China. If the bank is one of the major U.S. investment banks such as JPMorgan, which recently took full ownership of its China subsidiary, the CCP could seize its Chinese business entirely.

Take fast-fashion retailer H&M as another example. H&M earlier this year was caught in a firestorm in China for its earlier statements condemning forced labor in China's Xinjiang region. With the new law, the CCP can go much further than inciting social media users to boycott H&M in China. The CCP can outright shut down H&M's stores in China or permanently ban it from operating in the country.

While these are hyperbolic examples and I don't expect the CCP to resort to such

measures casually, these measures are now available to the CCP under the new law.

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store in

2021.

March 30,

For foreign investors and investors in multinational corporations with a presence in China, this law is a compliance nightmare and severely increases operational risk in China. Corporate CEOs could be facing a dilemma with few viable solutions. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on June 11 told reporters in Beijing, in one of the most obtuse statements of the week, that the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law is a net positive for foreign investment in China.

"China will only open its door wider to the world and remain committed to fostering a better business environment for foreign companies," Wang said.

will automatically be forcing foreign companies to decouple from China.

Ironically, if the law is carried out, China

Fan Yu is an expert in finance and economics and has contributed analyses on China's economy since 2015.

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 at the Foreign Ministry briefing in Beijing on Nov.

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The Chinese consulate in Perth, Australia, on March 24, 2014.

# Ban CCP Land Ownership in the USA: A New Bill From Texas

In their quest for global

domination, China has

the United States.

Rep. Chip Roy (R-Texas)

**ANDERS CORR** 



Don't mess with Texas. U.S. Rep. Chip Roy, a Republican who represents the 21st Congressional District, which includes parts of Austin and San

Antonio, is taking on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in a big, Texan way. Roy proposes to ban CCP members from purchasing land in the United

It's a short, sweet, and brilliantly cutting edge bill that should be voted into law ASAP.

This two-page bill has a potent engine of a purchase of public or private real estate located in the United States by members of the Chinese Communist Party."

Roy's press release to accompany the bill pulls no punches.

"In their quest for global domination, China has been buying up land and strategic infrastructure all over the world and in the United States," it reads. "Direct Chinese investment in the U.S. economy is a major threat to the American way of life and requires that we take serious action to thwart the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from ever seizing control of strategically valuable domestic assets in the U.S."

The bill is called the Securing America's Land from Foreign Interference Act. According to a statement from the congressman: "Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that foreign investors control nearly 30 million acres of U.S. farmland, roughly the size of Ohio. Texas has the second-highest amount of foreign ownership with 3 million acres under foreign control."

The release notes that a China-based energy company bought more than 130,000 acres in Texas, near an Air Force base, and "is now attempting to build a wind farm to access the U.S. power grid."

Roy's office notes that China is the second-largest foreign owner of land in Australia, including an Australian island that is now off-limits to Australian residents. China leased an airport in Australia for 100 years, and now, "China owns the airspace and Australian citizens can't land in their own country without approval from the Chinese government."

Kyle Bass, the billionaire Texan who has long criticized the CCP and shorted currencies from China and Hong Kong, supports

He wrote in an email: "The Communist Party of China exploits every nook and cranny of our open society to achieve their goal of primacy over the U.S. Allowing strategic purchases of land and improvements by CPC members here in the United States presents clear and present dangers to U.S. national security."

Bass has asked a series of tough ques-

tions related to the ownership of land by CCP members. "How many purchases have proximity to U.S. military bases? How many direct connections to the U.S. power grid do they already have control over? How many of these purchases are on farms where they are stealing valuable genetic seeds to ship back to the mainland? Why have we allowed a Chinese company to acquire one of the largest poultry producers in America?"

He appealed to the principle of reciprocity, supported by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC) last November, with respect to land sales to CCP members.

"China doesn't allow former U.S. miliwhy should the U.S. allow such strategic security implications. CCP investment in purchases by Chinese nationals?" he said.

In April, Bass gave testimony to the Texas Senate on the issue of CCP ownership of land in Texas, specifically, "the ownership by Guanghui Group America (GH America Investments Group Inc.) and its leader, former Chinese People's Liberation Army officer Sun Guangxin, of multiple Texas land (at least 10 Texas

ranches) and business holdings (spanning at least 130,000 acres and including Blue Hills Wind Farm in Val Verde County)." Bass noted in his testimony:

"GH America, Sun Guangxin, and Guanghui Group are closely connected to the Chinese military and the Communist Party of China. Sun is a former member of the 8th, 9th, and 11th sessions of the Xinjiang Chinese People's Consultative Conference (CPPCC). SUN maintains close and positive relations with current and former Communist Party leadership. These relationships are likely the key to his business success in China. Guanghui Group's website emphasizes the conglomerate's determination in supporting Communist Party of China's leadership, as well as prioritizing 'Party-building' amongst its employees. one law of 1923 targeted the land owner-As of 2018, Guanghui Group operated 40 internal Communist Party committees, 227 local grassroots CPC branches, and employed more than 6,000 Communist Party of China members. ... it appears that Guanghui Group is much more embedded in the Communist Party-State apparatus than most other 'private' sector businesses."

Sun and his GH America are the types of entities that would be targeted by Roy's CCP land bill.

But there are a couple of arguments that detractors will throw against the bill. First, tary, economic, and diplomatic power of the Committee on Foreign Investment in 21st-century China, or its totalitarian charthe United States (CFIUS) already reviews acteristics under the rule of the CCP. The single sentence: "Notwithstanding any other tary officers to acquire 200 square miles of some land purchases by Chinese nation- China of today is not the China of the 19th land between an active Chinese military als (including CCP members). So CFIUS actions as may be necessary to prohibit the base and their border with Taiwan ... so can cancel any sales that have national

> non-strategic land, say in the middle of Nowheresville, United States, provides an economic hostage of sorts.

For example, if the U.S. government needs to conbeen buying up land and fiscate CCP property in the United States as compensastrategic infrastructure tion for economic damages all over the world and in from COVID-19, it would be useful to have CCP property in the United States available for the taking. The more property the CCP keeps in

the United States, the less willing it should be to risk expropriation of that property by

harming America. However, given the magnitude of damages owed by China, which are at least \$19 trillion globally, the quantity of land that the CCP is purchasing is too negligible to make a difference. But it could make a difference if strategically located, or it

provides a foothold for political influence,

espionage, or elite capture. The second major argument against the bill is that it will remind detractors of alien land laws of the late 19th century, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the Immigration Act of 1790, amended in 1875, along with other such laws. Many argue that these laws were racist. For example,



China is one of a number of countries that are systematically buying up or leasing large tracts of

ship of U.S. citizens of Japanese descent. A 1921 law in Washington that targeted the Japanese went to the Supreme Court, was upheld, and caused diplomatic tension with Japan. Some laws focused on new Asian immigrants, but not new Scandinavian immigrants.

These types of argument, however, can conflate patriotic support for American democracy and anti-communism with racism, or reject the sovereign right of a nation to control immigration. They typically fail to account for the growing milicentury, nor is it the Japan of the 1920s.

Today, China is communist, territorially aggressive, promoting its political influence globally, and threatening elite capture in nations small and large. The CCP today enables the destruction of political, cultural, and linguistic diversity on a domestic and global level, including through its genocide against the Uyghurs. The CCP leads that genocide.

The bill proposed by Roy, therefore, is the right bill for 2021. But it will need a lot more support to become law. Bass noted, "For the bill to be powerful, I believe it needs Democratic sponsors and Republican sponsors alike."

That's exactly right. Three representatives who have done the right thing to introduce the bill with Roy are Reps. Lance Gooden (R-Texas), Ken Buck (R-Colo.), and Randy Weber (R-Texas).

Where are the Democrats? Where is the Republican leadership? At the very least, where is the rhetorical support for reciprocity with China on the issue of land ownership? America's failure to act decisively against the threat of the CCP, if such indecision continues, will be its own undoing.

Roy's bill is decisive. It's a corrective. With the introduction of this bill, he's putting the heat on not only the CCP, but other members of Congress. Who is going to step up to the plate, buck the naysayers, and do the right thing to cosponsor this bill? How much longer will American politicians of both parties allow China to

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walk all over us?

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

ALBERTO PIZZOLI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# Italy Is Turning Away From the Chinese Communist Regime

#### **PINGPING YU**

piece of breaking news appeared on various popular Chineselanguage websites on June 7 claiming that the Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi had admitted that the COVID-19 pandemic had originated in Italy in a virtual interview by Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI). The Chinese reports claimed that Italy had mistaken COVID outbreaks in Milan, Genoa, and Venice in the summer of 2019 for influenza.

This soon was exposed as fake news. The Italian embassy in Beijing issued a statement that afternoon, saying that "The Italian Embassy strongly emphasizes that the content of the article concerning the Prime Minister's remarks is a complete lie and that the information has no basis whatsoever."

This happened shortly after Italy's recent veto of Beijing's attempted takeover of LPE, a Milan-based semiconductor manufacturer, on March 31.

There is no way of knowing if the fake COVID-19 origins report was Beijing's retaliation for the aborted deal but it certainly didn't ease tensions between the two countries.

#### **Expert: 5 Reasons Italy Is Cooling Its Relationship With China**

Italy's blocking of the Chinese acquisition was an abrupt change in course for the European nation that had been growing a close relationship with the

Chinese regime in Beijing.

In 2019, Italy under the leadership of former Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, became the first G7 country to embrace China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), against the advice of the United States and other G7 members.

In 2020 when the pandemic hit, Italy was the most impacted country in Europe. China donated 31 tons of personal protective equipment and virus testing kits to Italy in March 2020, as well as a dozen medical experts to support the health response.

Italy had also been one of the most pro-China EU members in recent decades. Between 2000 and 2019, Italy received 15.9 billion euros (\$19.25 billion) in Chinese investments, making it Europe's third biggest beneficiary. Recent financial troubles saw numerous China-based companies acquire a number of Italian businesses. As of 2020, more than 400 Chinese groups held stakes in 760 Italian companies across "highly profitable or strategic sectors."

One of the best-known acquisitions was that of the AC Milan football club for 740 million euros (\$788 million), previously owned by former Prime Minister Silvio

But the change in approach to China didn't surprise experts like Cheng Chinmo, director at the department of diplomacy and international relations of the Tamkang University in Taiwan. "This demonstrates the unravelling of China's diplomacy in Europe," Cheng told The

Chinese money was enthusiastically welcomed in Italy when the BRI MoU was signed in 2019. But the

country has since

found no material

benefit from the

collaborations.

Cheng Chin-mo, director, department of diplomacy and international relations of the Tamkang University in Taiwan

An aerial view of the port city of Trieste in Italy which China is considering for its Belt and Road

Epoch Times. "There are five reasons why this is bound to happen."

Although China's "mask diplomacy" strategy helped ease some immediate supply shortages for Italy, the country can't forget that China's cover up of its coronavirus breakout caused the catastrophe in the first place, Cheng said. Italians have seen four million COVID-19 infections, and almost 127,000 deaths from the disease caused by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) virus. The pandemic was devastating for Italy's already struggling economy, causing a 13 percent drop in per capita income in 2020 while the economy contracted by almost 11 percent. Free facial masks are just not enough to clear the clouds, Cheng said.

Secondly, China has made itself with a bad reputation in business ethics and conduct over the past decade, Cheng said, adding that Chinese businesses and investors are known for violating local regulations and agreements, which deeply upsets Europeans who value integrity.

"Chinese money was enthusiastically welcomed in Italy when the BRI MoU was signed in 2019. But the country has since found no material benefit from the collaborations," he added. "On the contrary, some century old Italian businesses have turned for the worse or even went bankrupt after they started partnering with China."

Thirdly, China's "wolf warrior diplomacy" has turned many former fans off, Cheng said. In response to the EU's sanctions in March over the regime's genocide of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the sanctions were based on "nothing but lies and disinformation." It asked Brussels to "reflect on itself [and] face squarely the severity of its mistake" and stop "interfering in [China's] internal affairs."

Draghi's political position is the fourth factor, Cheng said. Draghi, who holds a very friendly attitude toward the United States and the EU, described his foreign policy as "strongly pro-European and Atlanticist, in line with Italy's historical anchors." Contrary to his predecessor, Draghi, who was elected in February, has shown clear determination to seek alliance with the Unite States. Shortly after his appointment, Draghi reaffirmed Rome's membership in NATO and the historic friendship between Italy and the United States. The vetoing of the LPE deal is seen as a signal of the new administration's focus on stemming Beijing's political and economic influence in Italy, Cheng said.

Lastly, Cheng pointed to the global environment, which is turning against China. The U.S.-led international effort to curb communist China's global expan-

sion and human rights abuses, as well as the investigation in China's role in the outbreak of the pandemic, have encouraged G7 countries to openly speak and act against the CCP's atrocities, which they had avoided for many years fearing hurt to their business relationship with China. Meanwhile, Europe is growing much more wary of the threat the CCP's poses to nation's security after the CCP's

infiltration tools such as Huawei and the

#### Italy Still Influenced by the CCP's Overseas Propaganda

Confucius Institute were exposed.

However, public sentiment toward the Chinese regime may take some time to change, as many Italian national media outlets have been frequently publishing pro-regime content and the mindsets of their journalists have been infiltrated quite deeply by CCP propaganda. Francesco Galietti of the Rome-based thinktank Policy Sonar told Breitbart that "the Chinese have 100 percent infiltrated

Italian media." Breitbart also revealed in a June 7 report that an Italian-language video series on "Xi Jinping's Classical Quotes" developed by Chinese state-owned China Media Group had been broadcast on Italy's Mediaset and the Chineselanguage outlet Cinitalia.

"The National Associated Press Agency (ANSA), Italy's equivalent to The Associated Press or Agence France Presse, has also been publishing up to 50 Italian language

wire articles per day from Xinhua News Agency, the state-run wire service for the Chinese Communist Party. Again, ANSA does not disclose to its readers that the Chinese government runs and approves all Xinhua content," the report read.

Italian national newspaper Il Giornale has been publishing CCP propaganda regularly since 2019. A May article in Il Giornale suggested that reports about the CCP's genocide of the Muslim Uyghur people were a mere "media manipulation of events" crafted to use "human rights concerns" to further America's foreign policy agenda, echoing the regime's party line.

The Breitbart report also noted that a magazine published by Cinitalia "openly admits that it produces its Italian content in association with the Chinese Embassy in Italy."

Il Giornale is owned by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who was critical of the CCP until he sold the AC Milan soccer club to Chinese investors for \$788 million in 2017 due to financial troubles. Since then, Il Giornale's China-related content have looked very similar to the CCP's propaganda.

#### New Era in EU-China Relations EU members, including Italy and Hun-

gary, are starting to push back on the CCP's coercion both economically and politically. The EU condemned the Chinese re-

gime's human rights record in a conference earlier this year, and France sent a warship and submarine to the South

2020, Taiwan was

and businesses

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Italian PM Giuseppe Conte and Chinese leader Xi Jinping during a welcoming ceremony at Villa Madama in Rome on March 23, 2019.

Italian national newspaper II Giornale has been publishing CCP propaganda regularly since 2019. China Sea for a "freedom of navigation" patrol in February.

On May 22, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said in a statement that the Baltic nation does not see itself as part of Beijing's "17+1" platform for EU member states and five Balkan countries anymore, according to the Baltic News Service. He said the Chinese platform was "divisive" from the EU's point of view and called on EU members to pursue "a much more effective 27+1 approach" for its communication with China.

Hungarian premier Viktor Orban, who has reportedly built cordial ties with the Chinese regime, including massive joint business projects, and has several times this year blocked EU statements denouncing the Chinese regime's record on human rights, had to pause a planned project with China's Fudan University amidst massive protests this month. His government has since announced a referendum on the project

Pingping Yu has been a writer, translator, and researcher for The Epoch Times since 2007. She covers a variety of topics related to China, with a strong focus on human rights, economy, and business.

Sophia Lam contributed to the report.

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

#### **CCP VIRUS**

### Spread of COVID-19 Variants Around the World Could Be Seen as 'Next Pandemic': Taiwan Health Official

#### **ADAM MOLON**

The continuous mutation of the CCP virus, with multiple variants circulating around the world, could be described as the "next pandemic," a top Taiwanese health official

Wu Chung-hsiun, president of Taiwan's Development Center for Biotechnology (DCB) and director of the Biotechnology and Pharmaceutical Industries Promotion Office of Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA), told The Epoch Times that he thought it was too early to predict the end of the COVID-19 pandemic "because this [virus] ... keeps mutating and is still infecting people around the world."

"So, actually, maybe we can consider that as the next pandemic," he said.

Wu's comments were made in advance of the DCB's annual Taiwan Biotech Forum on June 10. The forum, which included presentations by vaccine makers Pfizer and AstraZeneca, featured the theme "Preparing for the Next Pandemic."

U.S. Sens. Chris Coons (D-Del.), Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), and Dan Sullivan (R-Ark.) visited Taiwan—flying in on a U.S. Air Force C-17 cargo plane—to announce a donation of 750,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses. Duckworth said during the stopover that "the United States will not let [Taiwan] stand alone" and that the vaccine donation "also reflects gratitude for Taiwan's efforts to send PPE [personal protective equipment and other supplies to America in the early days of the pandemic."

Taiwan has received vaccine shipments from U.S.-based Moderna and UK-based AstraZeneca, but authoritarian China reportedly blocked democratic Taiwan's plans to purchase vaccines from the German firm BioNTech.

Wu said a Taiwan-produced vaccine may be available by July at the earliest, and expressed serious concern about the quality of vaccines that Chinese firms have proposed to provide to Taiwan, stating Taiwan is more confident in and comfortable with

The forum was held only days after U.S.-produced vaccines. He noted, unlike COVID-19 vaccines produced by American firms, vaccines from Chinese firms are produced using attenuated, or weakened, coronaviruses, which can be dangerous if the coronaviruses aren't killed or sufficiently weakened.

> Taiwan became very good [economically] in the last year, because we kept everything normal, everything steady.

Chang Chi-feng, vice president, Taiwan's Development Center for Biotechnology

"[Chinese vaccine makers] are using the attenuated virus. That kind of approach could cause very serious side effects if the attenuation part is incomplete. So, that could cause infection rather than immu-

nization," Wu said.

"The Pfizer, the Moderna, the [Astra-Zeneca] [vaccines] ... we could have very clear public information about those, and they are coming from reliable sources that we use to corroborate. So, I think, in that aspect, that's one of the major justifications that we tend to use the Pfizer and Moderna [vaccines], etcetera. And also, we have the capability to manufacture those if needed."

Wu noted that many members of the DCB's management team hold degrees from both U.S. and Taiwanese universities, and robust scientific and academic interaction means Taiwanese and U.S. scientists share a common language and philosophy.

"We share the same philosophy as people in the States because we have our higher education," he said. "Our thinking process, pretty much, is in line with the scientists or the academic in the States. So, when we exchange information, we know exactly, when we say 'A,' we mean 'A,' and you hear 'A' literally ... when we try to do something and try to find collaborators in the States, it's very easy because we communicate, we speak the same language."

Following the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Taiwan was able to keep schools and businesses open while also implementing effective pandemic defense measures, which resulted in strong economic performance. Taiwan achieved annual GDP growth of nearly 3 percent in 2020, higher than China's for the first time in three decades.

"Taiwan's goal for the pandemic is to keep economic growth steady," DCB Vice President Chang Chi-feng told The Epoch Times. "Taiwan became very good [economically] in the last year, because we kept everything normal, everything steady."

More than a year later and with the arrival of the UK variant, the Taiwanese government has for the first time decided to closed all its schools and has introduced other restrictions while saying that it isn't planning to introduce a full lockdown, but will instead adjust the strictness of restrictions as needed.

Wu stated sharing its expertise in pandemic management is one way in which Taiwan can continue to contribute to the global community.

"Our national capability, actually we can contribute a lot," he said. "Taiwan is experienced in fighting the pandemic. ... Taiwan



Wu Chung-hsiun, President of Taiwan's Development Center for Biotechnology and Director of the Biotechnology and Pharmaceutical Industries Promotion Office of Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs.



Chang Chi-feng, vice president of Taiwan's

COURTESY OF ZHOU YO

Bilirakis (R-Fla.) during a hearing

on Capitol Hill in

Washington on

May 14, 2020.

# US Lawmaker Calls on Chinese Regime to Free Detained Relative of Falun Gong Adherents

**EVA FU** 

Zhou Deyong last saw his wife and son in Florida half a year ago, before flying back to China to care for his ailing parents, aged 87 and 90.

He's now being held in a Chinese detention center with little access to the outside world.

His wife and son both practice Falun Gong, a spiritual practice that has been targeted for brutal suppression by the communist party in China for more than two decades.

Zhou, a senior geological engineer at the Geological Scientific Research Institute of the Shengli Oil Field, the secondlargest crude producer in China, was arrested on April 23 at his home in Dongying, a coastal city in eastern Shandong Province. They accused Zhou of "utilizing heretical religion to sabotage the enforcement of law"—a common charge that many religious believers have faced under a regime that has shown little tolerance of faith.

The police produced no official document when they raided Zhou's house and seized more than 100 Falun Gong-related books and booklets—items his family had left behind when they fled to the United States. According to FalunDafa. org, the self-improvement discipline

promotes the values of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance.

Something felt off to Zhou's family when calls to his phone went unanswered for days. They finally learned of his arrest after reading an article on Minghui—a U.S.-based website dedicated to documenting the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China—that also noted the arrests of 18 practitioners from the region.

Under Chinese criminal law, one could face three to seven years of jail time for making and spreading 250 books and publications that the regime deems to be "heretical propaganda." For one-fifth of that quantity, the sentencing could be up

'A Stone Dropped Into the Vast Sea' Authorities were tight-lipped on any information pertaining to the detainees. Many calls from Zhou's wife, You Ling, to local police stations and detention centers in China never got through. And the few times that she was able to speak with someone, the officials tended to dodge her questions or even played communist

"red songs," she said. "It was like a stone dropped into the vast sea. They completely ignore you," Zhou You, the couple's son, told The Epoch Times.

You Ling, Falun Gong

It's really unforgivable some of the things the **Chinese Communist** Party has done to these wonderful

Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.)

Every time we went out to talk to people about the persecution of Falun Gong, we didn't know if we could come back.

practitioner

Falun Gong practitioner You Ling meditates near her home in Tampa, Fla., on June 10, 2021.

"We can only guess why my father was arrested in the first place. I don't think my father had any clue himself." The authorities initially denied a re-

quest for Zhou to meet with his lawyer. On May 25, the day before a scheduled video meeting, police called the lawyer to call off the meeting, citing "weather conditions."

"Over those few days, there was no extreme weather, and the meeting equipment ... it's just a software they install at the police bureau and a camera, rain and wind should have no impact on them," Zhou You said. "They are simply finding an excuse to stop us from seeing him." On the U.S. side, the family's plight caught the attention of Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.), who wrote a letter to Chinese leader Xi Jinping calling for Zhou's

Bilirakis, who co-chairs the Congressional International Religious Freedom Caucus and is a member of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, spoke highly of the family and says he wants to "do everything in my power to make sure the gentlemen is released."

"It's really unforgivable some of the things the Chinese Communist Party has done to these wonderful people," he told The Epoch Times, referring to the Falun Gong community.

"This just should not happen anymore, and it has."

A grandson of Greek immigrants, Bilirakis recalled having a family member who had to leave Turkey in the early 1900s during the persecution of Greek Orthodox Christians, a heritage that helped him to identify with the Falun Gong practitioners, he said.

"These are peaceful people," Bilirakis said, noting that they "should have a right to practice any ... spiritual meditation."

"It's only a positive thing." The U.S. pressure appeared to have an impact on the situation. Half an hour after Zhou You mentioned Bilirakis's letter in a call to the judicial officials, the detention center called the lawyer and said that the meeting would proceed.

Zhou's family said they're concerned about his health after receiving updates from the lawyer. Zhou, who will turn 60 in a few weeks, already looks thinner He also asked his lawyer to pass along a message to his son: "Stay there [in the United States and be well."

The family has carefully kept the news from Zhou's parents, who both have

heart problems and high blood pressure, among other health issues. They told them that Zhou had returned back to the

United States for a second visit. In the two-month period between March 1 and April 30, nearly 2,860 Falun Gong practitioners are known to have experienced police harassment or arrests, according to Minghui.

The local police in Zhou's hometown of Dongying City conducted a campaign this year to collect the personal details of each Falun Gong practitioner, including their addresses, details about the vehicles they own, and their phone numbers.

#### Shengli Oil Field

The state-controlled Shengli Oil Field which translates to "victory" from Chinese—is a major economic powerhouse in the region that employs tens of thousands of workers, including Zhou and his wife, You. For years, thousands of Shengli employees have experienced house raids, detention, forced labor, or imprisonment for persisting in their practice of Falun Gong. Dozens of them lost their jobs, and at least 11 people died under the ongoing persecution.

You, who has sought refuge in Florida, recalled spending more than 40 days in a "black jail" operated by the oil field in 2012, where she was fed propaganda materials that maligned her faith on a daily basis.

"Every time we went out to talk to people about the persecution of Falun Gong, we didn't know if we could come back," You said.

She said that she has minimized her use of phones for nearly 20 years due to surveillance concerns.

Shi Ning, a former data center engineer at the oil field who has also suffered persecution for her Falun Gong faith and escaped to the United States, told The Epoch Times that she endured a total of nearly eight years of official and unofficial detention throughout a two-decade span.

At one labor camp, at least 100 people took turns day and night persuading her to give up practicing Falun Gong, she said of her ordeal in China. She would hear "horrible cries" as Falun Gong practitioners detained in the same cell got pulled out one by one. When it was her turn, her hands were cuffed behind her back as 11 people rained down blows on her head and waist. Three days later, when she saw herself in front of a mirror, she could hardly recognize the body she saw reflected back.

"My head ... was completely swollen," Shi told The Epoch Times. "My two eyes were almost triangular—you couldn't see the eyeballs at all."

She started a hunger strike and was sent to the hospital four times due to failing health. There, a guard hit her head with an iron rod after spotting her doing Falun Gong's qigong exercises.

She lost around 66 pounds—approximately half of her body weight—over the months of brutal detention.



Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) during a hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on May 14, 2020.

Those times were marked with confusion and fear, noted Shi, who now resides in New Jersey.

"We were merely trying to be good people. Why would it come to this?" she said of the Chinese authorities.

She cited the death of a friend whom she suspected had been a victim of statesanctioned forced organ harvesting. Shi said that when the woman's family went to see her body in the hospital, hours after the police had claimed that she was dead, they saw tears coming out of her eyes when they cried and called her name—indicating she was still alive. The family begged doctors at the hospital to help her, but none would, and by the next day, she was dead. Her husband was also tortured after questioning her cause of death and died under mysterious circumstances two years later.

"There were no reports on this. None," Shi said. "Who has the guts to report on this in mainland China? ... They kept silent in the face of crimes."

Bilirakis was one of the original sponsors for a House resolution a decade ago that called for an end to the ongoing persecution of Falun Gong.

Now, it's time to bring another one to Congress's attention, he said.

It needs to be brought to the forefront again," Bilirakis said. "It's going to be a

strongly worded resolution. "We're not going to back down, and we're not going to be intimidated by the Chinese Communist Party."

SUHAIMI ABDULLAH/GETTY IMAGES

**OPINION** 

# China: Building a Modern Air Force

**RICHARD A. BITZINGER** 



The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is engaged in a de`cades-long, concerted effort to modernize and upgrade its capabilities. Most recently, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has laid out a nearly 30-year-long

agenda for the development of the PLA. In the first place, Xi Jinping and the CCP want the PLA to be a "fully modernized" 
The Chinese defense industrial military by 2027, the hundredth anniversary of its founding. The PLA is expected to achieve both "mechanization and informatization." This entails upgrading existing military equipment and introducing new types of conventional weapons, together with a longer-term transformation of the PLA along the lines of "informationization"—that is, harnessing the information technologies-based "revolution in military affairs" (RMA).

By 2035, the PLA expects to achieve "complete military modernization." According to the U.S. Defense Department, this means comprehensively advancing "the modernization of military theory, organizational structure, military personnel, and weaponry and equipment in step with

the [overall] modernization of the country." In particular, this phase entails moving from "informationized warfare" to the next

base has extensively expanded and modernized, bankrolled by generous increases in military expenditures over the past 20

years or more.

level of military modernization, which the PLA and the CCP have termed "intelligen-

tized warfare." Intelligentized warfare es-

sentially entails the PLA's weaponization of

such cutting-edge technologies as artificial

intelligence in order to gain a predominant

technological advantage over its rivals, par-

ticularly the U.S. military, according to the

Consequently, by 2049—the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic—the PLA is to be transformed into a "world-class" military, capable of fighting and winning future intelligentized wars. In support of this ambitious agenda, the Chinese defense industrial base has extensively expanded and modernized, bankrolled by generous increases in military expenditures over the past 20 years

Since the beginning of the 21st century,

China's arms industry has churned out an increasingly impressive array of modern armaments, including state-of-the-art destroyers and cruisers, new types of submarines (both nuclear and conventionally powered), all manner of advanced missile systems, improved tanks and armored vehicles, and so on. Many of these weapons systems are competitive with their Western counterparts.

Perhaps no segment of the Chinese defense industry has witnessed more progress than its aerospace sector, particularly when it comes to combat aircraft. Not too long ago, the Chinese fighter jet industry was notorious for its poor quality and obsolete products. Its "best" fighter jets were the J-7 and the J-8II; the former was a clone of the Soviet-designed MiG-21—a plane that first flew in the 1950s—while the J-8II was a problem-plagued indigenous project so bad that the PLA never fully embraced it.

Things began to turn around in the first years of the 21st century. Around this same time, China began manufacturing its first indigenous "fourth-generation" combat aircraft, the J-10. The J-10 is a highly agile fighter jet roughly in the same class as a late-model F-16. It features a fly-by-wire flight control system, an advanced radar, and a glass cockpit featuring several liquidcrystal multifunction displays. The J-10 first flew in 1997 and went into production in the early 2000s. Upwards to 500 J-10s have been so far delivered to the PLA Air Force

(PLAAF), at a rate of about 30 aircraft a year. In addition, China has two "fifth-generation" combat aircraft programs—the J-20 and the J-31—currently in the works. The J-20 first flew in January 2011, and the J-31 followed suit in October 2012. The J-20 is already in low-rate production for the PLAAF. Meanwhile, the J-31 was recently spotted at a naval aviation training facility in Wuhan, driving speculation that it may be the PLA Navy's next-generation carrierbased fighter jet.

At the same time, China's modern fighter jet programs remain cloaked in mystery and even deceit. It is believed, for instance, that the J-20 and J-31 have benefitted heavily from industrial espionage aimed at foreign fighter programs, particularly the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. At the same time, the actual details surrounding both the J-20 and J-31—how stealthy they are, how advanced is their radar and other avionics, what kind of sophisticated weaponry do they carry, etc.—remains sketchy. Consequently, one should be skeptical as to how much these planes are true fifth-generation fighters.

For its part, the J-10 experienced a troubled and protracted development process, and rumors abounded that it depended on considerable amounts of Israeli technical assistance. Other so-called "Chinese" combat aircraft—the J-11B, J-15, and J-16—are mostly reverse-engineered versions of extant Russian fighter jets, such as the Su-27 and Su-30.



J-10 fighter jets of China's People's Liberation Army Air Force Ba Yi aerobatics team perform an aerial display during the Singapore Airshow media preview in Singapore on Feb. 9, 2020.

fighter jet is based on stolen or copied technology. Even then, the Chinese aerospace sector has witness significant technological snags. Most critically, perhaps, it has been unable to produce a reliable and powerful enough turbofan engine.

has suffered long teething problems. Even so, according to a recent Business Insider article, the WS-10 can barely operate 30 hours before failing.

As a result, most Chinese fighters continue to rely on Russian-built engines. Even

then, Russia has been reluctant to export its best jet engines, knowing that China will try to reverse-engineer them.

Nevertheless, even with a continuing dependency on Russian-supplied jet engines,

the Chinese aerospace industry—and by

extension, the PLAAF—have made remark-

able progress over the past two decades. In particular, the J-20 and J-31 programs demonstrate China's ambitions—and the aggressive steps it is prepared to take—to claw its way up into the vanguard of advanced fighter-jet producers.

Overall, the PLAAF is increasingly a service dominated by fourth- and fifth-generation fighters, and this has made it a much greater force to be reckoned with. According to China's 2019 defense white paper, the PLAAF is "accelerating the transition ... from territorial air defense" to more offensive operations. It is conducting forceprojection combat patrols in in areas where it did not previously operate, particularly in the South and East China Seas and into the western Pacific. Together with an increasingly modernized and capable PLA Navy, the PLAAF is advancing toward meeting the CCP's and PLA's joint goal of creating a "world-class" Chinese military by the middle of the century.

Richard A. Bitzinger is an independent international security analyst. He was previously a senior fellow with the Military Transformations Program at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, and he has held jobs in the U.S. government and at various think tanks. His research focuses on security and defense issues relating to the Asia-Pacific region, including the rise of China as a military power, and military modernization and arms proliferation in

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