

WEEK 3, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER



MONEY MOVERS

**HOW CHINESE MONEY
LAUNDERINGS FUEL THE US
FENTANYL CRISIS**

See Page 4

PANDEMIC COVERUP

China's True COVID-19 Death Toll 366 Times Higher Than Official Figure, Analyst Says

EVA FU & DAVID ZHANG

The Chinese regime has likely understated the country's COVID-19 death rate by as much as 17,000 percent in a systematic data suppression campaign to sustain its political image, according to a U.S. analyst.

That would put the number of COVID-19 deaths in China at around 1.7 million rather than 4,636, the two-year cumulative death figure that the Chinese authorities have maintained on the books. That's 366 times the official figure.

Those findings, made by George Calhoun, director of the quantitative finance program at Stevens Institute of Technology, were based on data as of January generated by a model developed by The Economist.

A vast majority of China's officially recorded deaths came from Wuhan during the first three months of the pandemic, with only hundreds more reported in the rest of the country since then.

The Chinese regime only reported two additional deaths since April 1, 2020, ranking China as having the world's lowest COVID-19 death rate, which Zhong Nanshan, the Chinese epidemiologist overseeing China's outbreak response, boasted about just this month.

But that jaw-dropping data point—hundreds of times lower than that of America,

gave Calhoun pause.

"That's impossible. It's medically impossible, it's statistically impossible," Calhoun told NTD, an affiliate of The Epoch Times.

"Remember, in 2020, there was no vaccine, there was no treatment," he said. "So you had an unprotected population that has shown zero COVID deaths, even though they've had tens of thousands of cases."

Curating public records and previous research reports, and analyzing the regime's pattern of hushing up scandals in the past, Calhoun arrived at a conclusion that to him seems obvious: China has made its "zero-COVID" policy a political objective, and is systematically falsifying data to prop up the claim.

"Somebody put a message out at the end of the first quarter in 2020 and said, 'Okay, we want to see zero COVID. That's our policy.' And it became zero COVID," he said.

Anomalies

The first "smoking gun" is a sudden drop in COVID-19 deaths since April 2020 from mainland China after a "raging" rate of infection, Calhoun said.

From April 1, 2020, to Jan. 8, 2022, over 22,102 cases have been reported in mainland China, according to data from Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center.

Only two deaths were recorded over the



Staff members wearing personal protective equipment spray disinfectant outside a shopping mall in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China, on Jan. 11, 2022.

The first 'smoking gun' is a sudden drop of COVID-19 deaths since April 2020 from mainland China after a 'raging' rate of infection, George Calhoun said.

same period.

By comparison, Hong Kong, which counted about half as many COVID-19 infections over the period, reported 213 deaths.

The case fatality rate (the proportion of those infected who died) in Wuhan during the first three months of the pandemic averaged around 7.7 percent, more than five times that of the United States and four times the world average.

Two scenarios are possible: either the virus was "far more deadly in early 2020 in Wuhan than anywhere else, at any other time," or alternatively, the official infection numbers from China were too small by a factor of three or four, Calhoun said.

Over the following 20 months, there's been a consistent lack of COVID-19 data

from China. As of September 2021, China has become the world's only country that hasn't provided complete data on excess mortality—unexplained deaths beyond normal trends that can offer a crude estimate of uncounted COVID deaths, a survey from the University of Washington shows.

The Economist model seeks to make up for that data gap. Based on the model, Calhoun said China's excess mortality was off by about 17,000 percent. This discrepancy, he said, even surpasses those by countries mired in large-scale civil unrest, such as Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Venezuela. Venezuela, the highest of the four, has an estimated excess COVID-19 death ratio of 1,100 percent.

Undercounting virus deaths is wide-

spread across countries. Based on The Economist's model, the United States' official tally is short by about 30 percent. But China's case is extreme.

"They are through the roof," Calhoun said of the discrepancy between China's official figures and the estimated true death toll.

"Something's driving that."

While the virus might not be all to blame for the jump, tight-lipped Chinese authorities have offered few clues as to what else might have happened.

Calhoun's estimate coincides with anecdotal evidence from local residents, troves of internal documents leaked to The Epoch Times, and research studies into the impact of the virus in China, all of which indicate that the official figures



Residents burn paper offerings during the annual Tomb-Sweeping festival, also known as Qingming festival, in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, on April 4, 2020.



China is the only country that has not provided complete data on excess mortality—unexplained deaths beyond normal trends that can offer a crude estimate of uncounted COVID deaths.

have been grossly understated.

During the early months when the pandemic first broke out in Wuhan, some of the city's funeral home workers told The Epoch Times they were working nonstop to cremate bodies. In March, thousands of ash urns were delivered to one of the crematoriums, when the official death number was over 2,000. The authorities raised the fatality figure by 50 percent a month later, attributing the gap to administrative inefficiencies.

A study published in The Lancet last March said that as many as 968,800 people in Wuhan had antibodies by April 2020, which would mean they had been infected by the virus and developed immunity.

The data inconsistencies are not limited

to Wuhan. During a two-week period in February 2020, an internal document from Shandong health authorities showed that close to 2,000 people had tested positive for the virus, but only 755 infections were publicly recorded.

Leaked documents suggest that the regime has continued to deem virus control a political task.

In files recently obtained by The Epoch Times, a top Chinese official of Shaanxi Province, where the virus-hit Xi'an is the capital, ordered the "toughest measures" to be put in place to block the virus's further spread from Xi'an. With the Beijing Winter Olympics coming up, a spillover would create "systemic risk" and "smear the national image," the document reads.

OPINION

How Good Is China's J-20 Fighter Jet?

RICHARD A. BITZINGER



How good is China's most advanced fighter jet, the J-20? The J-20 is a "fifth-generation" combat aircraft, which ostensibly puts it in the same league as the U.S. F-22 and F-35.

Fifth-generation fighters have certain common characteristics: very low visibility (stealth), the ability to fly at supersonic speeds without using an afterburner (called supercruise), and, most importantly, a highly advanced radar and suite of avionics and onboard computers for "networked data fusion," enabling situational

awareness in the battlespace.

Theoretically, a fifth-generation fighter jet is nearly invisible to ground-based air defenses and other aircraft, and can detect and attack threats from far away.

At the moment, most modern air forces fly what we call "fourth-generation" or "fourth-generation-plus" (4G+) combat aircraft. Fourth-generation fighters include the latest versions of the U.S.-made F-16 and F/A-18 and Russia's Su-30, while the Anglo-German-Italian-Spanish Eurofighter Typhoon, the French Rafale, and the Swedish Gripen are examples of 4G+ combat aircraft.

Technologically, fourth-generation and 4G+ fighters date from the 1970s and 1980s,

The first 'smoking gun' is a sudden drop of COVID-19 deaths since April 2020 from mainland China after a 'raging' rate of infection, George Calhoun said.

although most have undergone significant upgrades over the years. All are multirole aircraft, capable of both air-to-air and air-to-ground missions. They are highly maneuverable, use fly-by-wire flight controls, and can launch "fire-and-forget" active radar-guided air-to-air missiles. 4G+ fighters, in addition, possess a modicum of stealth and improved avionics, such as an active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar.

In general, most fourth-generation and 4G+ fighter jets are basically the same. A Venn diagram of their capabilities would show a lot of overlap. The difference is mainly in the number of engines they have (one or two).

So how does the J-20 stack up? In the first place, the J-20 is certainly the best fighter jet in the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), but this is a skinniest-kid-at-fat-camp kind of argument. The "best of the rest" of the PLAAF fighter force are the J-10—an indigenously developed combat aircraft initiated in the 1980s—and the J-11, basically a reverse-engineered Soviet Su-27, a plane that first flew in the 1990s.

Although heavily upgraded over the years, the J-10 and J-11 are barely fourth-generation fighters. Going up against comparable combat aircraft flown by better-trained pilots (such as Taiwanese F-16s or Japanese F-15s), these planes would be in a decidedly perilous situation.

Hence, the PLAAF's need for the J-20. According to the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the J-20 is an advanced multirole stealth fighter fulfilling both air-to-air and air-to-ground combat roles.

CSIS quotes a 2016 report by the U.S. Department of Defense that states that "the J-20 represents a critical step in China's efforts to develop advanced aircraft to improve its regional power projection capabilities and to strengthen its ability to strike

regional airbases and facilities."

A U.S. Naval War College report adds that the J-20, once deployed, would "immediately become the most advanced aircraft deployed by any East Asian Power."

That said, what we know—and just as importantly, what we do not know—about the J-20 throws a bit of cold water on these assessments. In the first place, details about the J-20's design undercut assertions about its apparent stealthiness. For one thing, the plane is huge—more than 2 meters (about 6.5 feet) longer than the U.S. F-22—and it uses canards (winglets) at the front of the airframe for improved maneuverability. Both of these features make the J-20 more detectable by radar.

Moreover, the J-20 appears to lack nozzle designs that reduce the heat signature coming from its engine exhaust. Therefore, the J-20 may only be stealthy "from the front," according to aviation expert Richard Aboulafia.

The J-20 likely also is underpowered. Early versions used a small Russian engine, which was later replaced by the indigenous WS-20 turbofan; this engine, however, has had its share of teething problems. It's possible, therefore, that the J-20 is incapable of supercruise.

Secondly, what we can't see should also leave us questioning the aircraft's capabilities. In particular, we can't know what kind of radar, sensors, avionics, and computers are internal to the J-20 or how good they are; we mainly infer from what we know about other fifth-generation fighters.

CSIS, for example, claims that the J-20 is "slated" to carry a variety of advanced systems, including "an [AESA] radar, a chin-mounted infrared/electro-optic search and track sensor, and a passive electro-optical detection system that will provide 360-degree spherical coverage around the aircraft." This assessment, however, is based on the argument that "comparable systems" can be found on the U.S. F-35.

It's impossible, short of espionage, to know how good the systems inside the J-20

actually are (Western intelligence agencies might be privy to some of this information, but they're not talking). It's highly likely, however, that avionics on the F-22 and F-35—especially those systems for sensor and data fusion, situational awareness, and connectivity—are head-and-shoulders above those of the J-20.

Consequently, analysts such as Aboulafia and John Venable of Heritage Foundation believe that the U.S. fifth-generation fighter would easily best the J-20 in a modern air-to-air contest, which is based on long-range "first look/first shoot" kinds of engagements, rather than any kind of "Top Gun" dogfight.

The F-22, with its superior stealth, radar, and precision weapons, would "destroy [the J-20] instantly," according to Aboulafia.

It's likely that the Chinese are aware of the J-20's shortcomings, and perhaps that's why the PLAAF has so far fielded only "limited numbers" of the aircraft. Still, it's as dangerous to "under-guessimate" the potential of the J-20 as it is to exaggerate its capabilities.

The PLA has been able to appreciably narrow its military-technological gap with the West over the past 20 years or so. It's incumbent upon the West, therefore, to keep moving the "technological goalposts" in order to stay comfortably ahead.

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



An armed Chinese J-11 fighter jet, a 1992 copy of the Russian Su-27, flies near an American patrol aircraft over the South China Sea in international airspace on Aug. 19, 2014.



Chinese J-20 stealth fighters perform at the Airshow China 2018 in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, China, on Nov. 6, 2018.

An F-35 fighter jet pilot and crew prepare for a mission at Al-Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates, on Aug. 5, 2019.



STAFF SGT. CHRIS THORNBURY/U.S. AIR FORCE VIA AP



Bags of heroin, some laced with fentanyl, are displayed at the office of the New York Attorney General in New York on Sept. 23, 2016.

DRUG CRISIS

China Moves Crime Money to Fuel Fentanyl Crisis in the West, Investigative Reporter Says

FRANK FANG & JOSHUA PHILIPP

Beijing is fueling the fentanyl crisis in Canada and the United States through a sophisticated web involving drug cartels, loan sharks, and foreign casinos, investigative journalist and author Sam Cooper said.

How Chinese money was funneled through such a web was described by Cooper as the “Vancouver model” in his book “Wilful Blindness: How a Network of Narcos, Tycoons and CCP Agents Infiltrated the West,” based on his investigations into crime networks in cities including Toronto and Vancouver.

Cooper said in a recent interview with EpochTV’s “Crossroads” program that Chinese organized crime figures “have become the major movers of financial crime money around the world,” as the model can be found in major U.S. cities.

“We can say that in cities like Los Angeles, Las Vegas, New York City, San Francisco, Boston, Seattle, and others, I can see the very same underground banking, Vancouver-model activity,” Cooper said, where drug money was moved around on secret ledgers without the need for wire transfers across borders.

That model has surfaced because of China’s capital control, Cooper said, because each citizen in communist China has a foreign exchange limit of \$50,000 per year. As a result, in order to move large sums overseas for activities such as buying a condo in a foreign city, wealthy Chinese would, for example, need to seek out under-

ground banking channels.

Cooper explained how the Vancouver model works: Gang members from Vancouver travel to casinos in Macau, targeting wealthy Chinese gamblers, including Chinese officials who wish to get their money out of China. The two sides strike a deal, and Chinese gamblers travel to Vancouver, using cash supplied by local loan sharks who get the money from drug dealers.

Chinese gamblers use the money to buy casino chips, play them, cash them, and walk out with cleaned or laundered money. Then they transfer money from their bank accounts in China to the gangsters’ accounts in China to pay back the debt.

“The proceeds, of course, fund more fentanyl precursor production [in China] ... which sends more drugs into the United States or Canada, produces more drug cash, and the cycle repeats,” Cooper said, adding that the gangsters would loan out the cash again to fund the gambling of more wealthy Chinese in Canada.

Cooper’s book illustrates cases in which state actors from the communist regime directed drug trafficking organizations in Vancouver and intervened in gang conflicts in the city.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more powerful than heroin.

More than 100,000 people in the United States died of drug overdoses from April 2020 to April 2021, a record number during a 12-month

period, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Fentanyl was involved in nearly two-thirds of those deaths.

U.S. officials have been trying to stop the influx of fentanyl into the country.

Gang members from Vancouver travel to casinos in Macau, targeting wealthy Chinese gamblers, including Chinese officials who wish to get their money out of China. The two sides strike a deal, and Chinese gamblers travel to Vancouver, using cash supplied by local loan sharks who get the money from drug dealers.

Earlier this month, U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported that it seized 87,652 pounds of narcotics in south Texas ports between Oct. 1, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021. Among the seized drugs, 588 pounds were fentanyl, up 1,066 percent from the year prior.

In April 2021, a Chinese national was sentenced to 14 years for laundering tens of millions of dollars of drug money for Latin American cartels. Less than six months later, another Chinese national was given a seven-year sentence for running a money-laundering network spanning several countries.

The proceeds, of course, fund more fentanyl precursor production [in China] ... which sends more drugs into the United States or Canada.

Sam Cooper, investigative journalist and author

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OPINION

FAN YU

The new year is less than a month old, and economic challenges are already piling up for Beijing.

It’s a pivotal year for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which is expected to announce a new slate of leadership (besides Xi Jinping) later this year. How well (or poorly) the Party handles the country’s economy and health will be critical going forward.

Real estate risks remain front and center. Despite turning the page to a new year, last year’s property sector issues persist.

Embattled real estate developer China Evergrande remains embattled. After missing an interest payment on a dollar-denominated bond in December 2021, Evergrande’s shares were temporarily suspended from trading in Hong Kong after authorities in Hainan Province ordered the firm to demolish 39 under-construction buildings. Another developer, Shimao, reportedly missed an interest payment on a trust loan product.

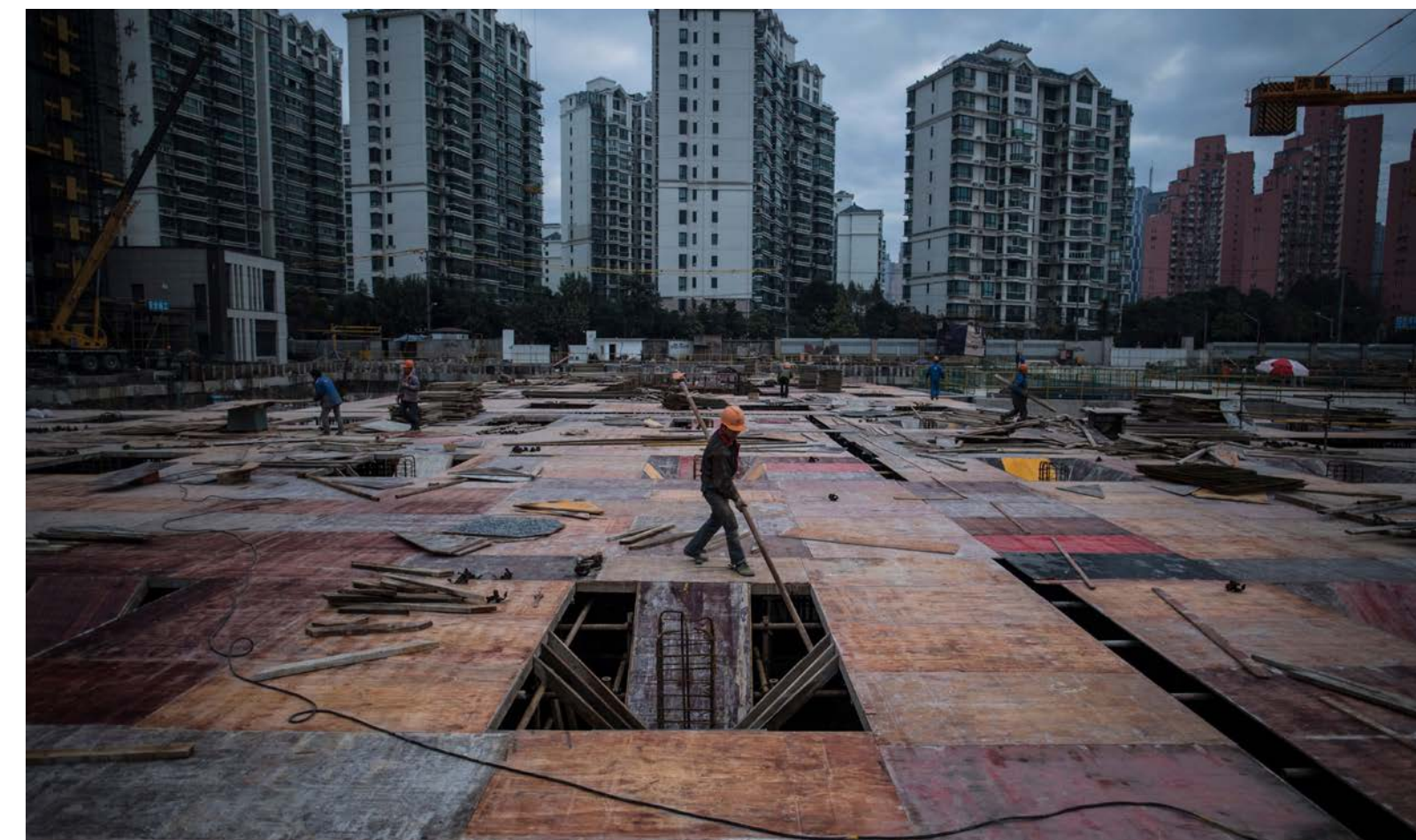
The real estate sector remains an urgent issue for Beijing. Credit-rating firm S&P Global stated this month that real estate developer defaults will accelerate this year if the CCP government policy doesn’t “meaningfully ease.”

And easing isn’t what Beijing wants, even if it has loosened the reins slightly this month. After famously putting limits last year on how much developers can borrow in an effort to deleverage the industry, the CCP is unlikely to open the flood gates.

The catch-22 for the CCP is that if left unsolved, an illiquid real estate market will cause broader issues, especially at local and municipal governments.

We’re not talking about governments of coastal tier 1 cities such as Shanghai or Hangzhou, but smaller cities and municipalities in the interior and the northeast of China. In many cities, sales of land to property developers serve as a critical revenue source, as much as one-third of all fiscal revenues.

This would create a funding crunch for municipalities, which uses the proceeds from land sales for public works and



A man works at a construction site of a residential skyscraper in Shanghai on Nov. 29, 2016.

infrastructure projects to provide both jobs and future revenue streams. So if developers halt new real estate projects, the local governments could quickly see their projects also halted. Many of those projects have their own debt attached. We could very well see a local government default crisis as a next leg following the real estate crisis.

China’s COVID-19 policy also presents a challenge. The country’s long-standing “zero-COVID” policy has meant draconian lockdowns in exchange for suppressing the virus. And in the face of the highly contagious Omicron variant, authorities have shown little willingness to ease the policy.

The CCP has locked down three cities since December, including Xi’an, Anyang, and Yuzhou, for weeks. More recently, the coastal city of Tianjin began testing all

residents to stamp out COVID.

Economically, China’s lockdowns are pretty destructive not just for China but abroad as well. Business activities halt, transportation stops, and factories are shut down. China, as the world’s manufacturing hub, could worsen the ongoing supply chain crisis if the lockdowns become widespread.

Economists are closely watching how the CCP responds to the Omicron variant over the next several weeks.

Chinese New Year begins early this year, on Feb. 1, and the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing begin on Feb. 4 and will last for three weeks. These two major events will drive a significant movement of people and goods. COVID outbreaks during these activities could send the country under lockdown and cause issues for Beijing.

These are a few of the more immediate

troubles facing the CCP in January. And this doesn’t include more macro issues such as the U.S. Federal Reserve’s expected interest rate rises later this year, which could hurt foreign investments into China, or higher global inflation hurting demand for Chinese products.

These challenges coupled with a pivotal political year for the CCP—leadership reshuffle, Taiwan dilemma, and global pushback of Beijing’s agenda—will guarantee an eventful year for the Chinese economy.

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.

ECONOMY

Beijing Will Eventually Squeeze Tesla Out of China in Favor of Chinese EV Makers: Expert

FRANK FANG & DAVID ZHANG

Beijing’s national strategy of forced technology transfer means that Tesla will eventually be squeezed out of the Chinese market, just like the fate suffered by other Western companies in the past, said Robert Atkinson, president of Washington-based nonprofit Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF).

“At the end of the day, the strategy for China is pretty clear. It’s that they will use you and then shove you aside,” Atkinson said during a recent interview with NTD, The Epoch Times’ sister media.

Forced tech transfer, IP theft, knowledge acquisition, whatever you want to call it, is still going to be a core part of the Chinese economy for at least another decade or two.

Robert Atkinson, president, Information Technology and Innovation Foundation

“The Chinese strategy for Tesla, I believe is, hey, we’re going to get some benefits from Tesla. But ultimately, we want companies like Geely and the other Chinese EV [electric vehicle] makers to dominate, not just the Chinese market, but a lot of the world market,” he added.

The Chinese regime is known for requiring foreign companies to enter joint ventures with Chinese companies, many of them backed by the communist regime, in order to obtain their know-how, valuable technology, and intellectual property (IP).

Tesla appeared to have dodged such risk when, in 2018, it became the first foreign automaker to set up a wholly-owned factory in China without a Chinese company as its partner. The factory, located in Shang-

hai, began producing Tesla Model 3s in late 2019.

However, Atkinson said Beijing does get “direct or indirect technology transfer” from Tesla. What’s more, Chinese EV makers are also set to benefit since some of current Tesla workers will eventually switch jobs and work for Chinese EV makers instead, he added.

For example, he pointed to two European telecoms companies Nokia and Ericsson, saying how the two firms used to have a large share of the Chinese market before ceding to their Chinese competitors ZTE and Huawei.

“I think that’s what we will end up seeing [with Tesla] at some point. The real question is how long?” Atkinson said.

But perhaps more important for all foreign companies to know, Atkinson said, is that China is not giving up on its current methods of obtaining Western technologies.

“Forced tech transfer, IP theft, knowledge acquisition, whatever you want to call it, is still going to be a core part of the Chinese economy for at least another decade or two,” he warned.

China’s economy is becoming more sophisticated, rapidly gaining on the United States in the last 20 years, according to global rankings of economic complexity by Harvard University’s Growth Lab. A higher ranking on its Economic Complexity Index (ECI) indicates a country exports more diverse and complex goods.

In 2000, China scored in the 39th spot in the ECI index while the United States was the world’s sixth most complex country in the world. In 2019, China jumped to 16th place while the United States fell to 11th position. Japan ranked first in both 2000 and 2019.

To reverse the trend, Atkinson said the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act (USICA), a bill passed in the Senate in June last year, is a major piece of legislation to build up U.S. capabilities in advanced tech sectors.

If enacted, the bill would authorize about



The Tesla Shanghai Gigafactory in Shanghai on March 29, 2021.

\$190 billion in spending for scientific research and development and \$52 billion in funding to boost U.S. production and research into semiconductors—tiny chips that power everything from smartphones, electric vehicles, to missiles.

The House of Representatives still needs to pass its version of the Senate bill. In November last year, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) issued a joint statement announcing a bicameral agreement to conference USICA.

According to Atkinson, there could be a vote in the House next month.

There is more the U.S. government can do, such as denying Chinese companies that are known to have benefited from IP theft or massive government subsidies from accessing the U.S. market, Atkinson added.

Excessive government subsidies and IP theft were among China’s illegal trade practices U.S. Trade Representative found in its “Section 301” investigation in 2018. That promoted the Sino-U.S. trade war and the signing of a phase-one trade deal in January 2020. Under the agreement, China agreed to buy at least \$200 billion worth of additional U.S. goods and services during 2020 and 2021 and end forced technology transfer.

“I think at the end of the day, what we have to do in America is we have to start pedaling faster,” Atkinson said. “If we don’t do that, then I think it’s essentially game over.”

Frank Fang is a Taiwan-based journalist. He covers news in China and Taiwan. He holds a master’s degree in materials science from Tsinghua University in Taiwan.

ANTHONY KWAN/GETTY IMAGES



A man is detained by riot police during a demonstration in a shopping mall at the town of Sheung Shui in Hong Kong on Dec. 28, 2019.

OPINION

Exiled Hongkongers Seek Help From an Unlikely Place—Interpol

Pro-democracy activists seek protection from Hong Kong authorities and Beijing's draconian National Security Law

PETER DAHLIN



Several high-profile Hongkongers—all former lawmakers and pro-democracy leaders—are now living in exile and seeking help from an unlikely place: Interpol.

Why do I say unlikely place? Because Interpol has been accused of allowing dictatorships to abuse its system, without taking any real measures to punish them for doing so.

These Hongkongers are placing considerable faith in the organization, given that it has failed to protect Idris Hasan, an ethnic Uyghur who's now facing extradition from Morocco to China and life in prison. Interpol failed to properly vet a red notice request from China, and approved it. Only later, when Safeguard Defenders managed to create a media storm around Hasan's case, did Interpol revisit the red notice and realized that it had violated its own rules, and subsequently cancelled the notice. For Hasan, of course, it was too late as he had already been detained, and Interpol refused to assist his legal team in using the cancel-

lation to show Morocco why extraditing him back to China would be wrong.

In seeking aid, Hongkongers are also helping Interpol to protect itself from further abuse, which, if found, could severely undermine its credibility.

Safeguard Defenders revealed in a new report that Hongkongers are in desperate need of protection from the authorities and the National Security Law (NSL), which Beijing implemented in Hong Kong in June 2020. Throughout 2021, the Hong Kong police, the security ministry, and high-level officials have used increasingly hostile language.

For example, they've said how these dissidents are wanted for crimes under the NSL and, as former security minister John Lee said, will be "pursued for life." To make matters worse, the government is now threatening to try to use Interpol to chase them down from their "hideouts" in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and, most prominently, the United States.

"The Hong Kong government, police and courts can work together to take various measures to recapture absconders," Kennedy Wong, a member of Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo), told

China's state-run media Global Times on May 20, 2021. He continued, "The Hong Kong police can make an offer of arrest to INTERPOL."

Wong is not alone. Regina Ip, a pro-Beijing lawmaker and former security minister, brought up the use of Interpol even for countries that have now suspended extradition treaties with Hong Kong.

Other pro-Beijing lawmakers in the Hong Kong government have also made such calls, as reported here.

And they are not empty threats. For example, Danish media revealed that both China and Hong Kong's Interpol bureaus had used the organization's channels to get the Danish police to cooperate in the investigation of two Danish members of parliament, who were accused of assisting pro-democracy leader Ted Hui in fleeing Hong Kong. Hui is a former member of the LegCo and he played a major role in the anti-extradition protests that rocked the city in 2019-2020. Chinese and Hong Kong authorities used a "mutual legal assistance treaty" to seek Danish cooperation, which is another tool that the Hong Kong government has repeatedly threatened to use against these exiles.

The danger here is spread between those targeted by Hong Kong's police and Interpol itself. The threat to these brave politicians and pro-democracy protest leaders is very real, as many countries—such as Portugal, the Czech Republic, India, and Malaysia—still maintain extradition treaties with Hong Kong; and even if other countries choose not to act on any Interpol notice to arrest them, it could still cause significant hassles in their lives, especially for traveling.

For example, one high-profile Hong Kong activist had to seek assurances from the Czech foreign ministry to be able to travel, after being invited, to attend seminars there. No such assurances could be given, but he was brave enough to go anyway. And this happened in the Czech Republic, despite its history of standing up for democracy and freedom of speech. The country of Vaclav Havel—the first democratic leader and co-founder of the pro-democratic Charter 77 movement. However, dissidents are not safe in the country,

as the government has failed to suspend its extradition treaty with Hong Kong.

Yet, due to the very clear charter of Interpol, should it be found to have approved any red notice (or "diffusion," a similar but less well-known tool that essentially achieves the same thing), it would be a tremendous blow to the organizations' legitimacy. Interpol has already taken a hit due to the Idris Hasan case and its failure to penalize China, and others, for using red notices in violation of its charter rules.

Safeguard Defenders and other prominent Hong Kong rights activists, including Nathan Law and Ted Hui, sent an open letter to Interpol on Jan. 13. It should serve as a wake-up call for Interpol that each time it allows countries (particularly totalitarian states) to misuse its system, it damages its own legitimacy and future. The letter also encourages Western governments to create a more comprehensive policy for creating safe havens for targeted activists, so they can start new lives.

Protecting innocent people from the misuse of Interpol's red notice is an essential first step. Moreover, democratic nations—such as Portugal, the Czech Republic, and India—should suspend their extraditions treaties with Hong Kong. Another important step is for Interpol to examine just what value there is in maintaining mutual legal assistance treaties if countries see any attempt at abusing human rights through these agreements.

Peter Dahlin is the founder of the NGO Safeguard Defenders and the co-founder of the Beijing-based Chinese NGO China Action (2007-2016). He is the author of "Trial By Media," and contributor to "The People's Republic of the Disappeared." He lived in Beijing from 2007, until detained and placed in a secret jail in 2016, subsequently deported and banned. Prior to living in China, he worked for the Swedish government with gender equality issues, and now lives in Madrid.

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

OPINION

China's Interests in Kazakhstan

The US is worried about China's growing nuclear arsenal

ANTONIO GRACEFFO



As Kazakhstan was rocked by violent protests, China is worried about its investments in the country and the

United States is concerned about Chinese nuclear assets.

Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev ordered the military and police to "fire without warning" to quell anti-government protests, which began on Jan. 2 as a result of the doubling of the cost of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Tokayev claimed that "20,000 bandits" had attacked Almaty, the largest city, and blamed foreign-trained "terrorists" for the protests.

As the protests grew, the list of grievances expanded to include inequality and authoritarianism. As of Jan. 9, around 5,800 people had been arrested and over 160 people were killed, including two children.

Kazakhstan is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which includes Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. At Tokayev's request, 2,500 CSTO troops were dispatched to the country and he authorized a shoot-to-kill order to quell the unrest.

The BBC reported that Tokayev dismissed calls to hold talks with protesters as "nonsense." "We have to destroy them, this will be done soon," he said in a televised address.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping has expressed his support for Kazakhstan, while accusing and condemning foreign forces for undermining the peace and stability of the country. Beijing is most likely concerned about the safety of Chinese investments in the country and about violence spilling over into Xinjiang.

There's no clear answer as to what was behind the unrest. Pan Guang, director of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Studies Center at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, claimed that terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism (dubbed the "three evils" by Beijing) incited the protests, according to Chinese news site Guancha.cn.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses the "three evils" as an excuse to justify its repressive policies and abuses in Xinjiang. Both the Trump and Biden administrations

have called the repression of Uyghurs a genocide. President Joe Biden signed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act on Dec. 23, banning products made with slave labor.

Over the past two decades, China has built up its relationship with Kazakhstan, eroding the leading role that Russia has historically played in the region. Kazakhstan is a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as "One Belt, One Road". China is Kazakhstan's second-largest trading partner with bilateral trade reaching \$22.94 billion in November 2021. Beijing has invested \$17 billion in Kazakhstan, including an 8.3 percent stake in the country's Kashagan oilfield.

By next year, 56 China-backed projects, valued at \$24.5 billion are due to be completed. China obtains about 20 percent of its natural gas from Kazakhstan. During the unrest, one of the CCP's greatest worries was that the pipelines would be attacked. But state-run media Global Times reassured the Chinese that the pipelines were safe, because they are far away from the cities where the riots took place.

Nuclear energy is another area where the two countries are cooperating and one that will become more crucial in the near future. China is engaged in a massive nuclear power

plant building program—which is designed to quadruple the country's nuclear power generation over the next 15 years. State-owned China General Nuclear Power Group (CGNPG) partnered with the world's largest uranium supplier, Kazatomprom (Kazakhstan's national atomic agency), to construct the Ulba Nuclear Fuel Plant in which the CCP will be taking 49 percent ownership.

While the CCP professes to support Kazakhstan—"forging an even closer community with a shared future" that's predicated on "neighborliness and win-win cooperation"—it's arguable how much Kazakhstan is benefiting from the relationship.

Kazakhstan runs a tremendous trade deficit with China, which is growing. Moreover, China's "zero-COVID" policy has kept the border closed, adversely impacting Kazakhstan's exports. In the first 10 months of 2021, food exports to China decreased by 78 percent. At present, 12,000 railcars are stuck at the border. The border closure seems contrary to the BRI, which was meant to promote trade between its members and China.

Additionally, as wages in China have risen, Kazakhstan had hoped that manufacturing jobs would come back. But so far, this has not happened in significant numbers.

A further problem is China's increased electricity consumption. Chinese Bitcoin miners have crossed the border, using so much electricity that Kazakhstan has had to ask for help from Russia, exacerbating tensions with its larger neighbor.

The Kazakh government has always maintained close ties with the United States, which it sees as a counterbalance to Russian influence. Over the past 30 years, American companies have invested \$38 billion in the country, considerably more than China.

U.S. oil companies, ExxonMobil and Chevron, have multi-billion-dollar operations that were disrupted by the recent violence. Chevron, which owns 50 percent of the Tengiz oilfield, had to cut production because some oil workers had gathered in support of the protests.

In 2020, the United States purchased 22 percent of its uranium from Kazakhstan. America is concerned about competing for more expensive uranium on global markets as China is currently buying up enough of the world's uranium to cause prices to increase.

China's nuclear program in the region, and at home, is a concern for the United States. Parallel to its civilian nuclear program, the CCP has stepped up its nuclear weapons program—setting a goal of producing 700 nuclear warheads by 2027 and 1,000 by 2030.

However, Washington wants to contain Beijing's nuclear expansion in order to avoid a nuclear arms race. CGNPG, the Chinese company that has invested in Kazakh atomic energy, has been under U.S. sanctions for its connection with the Chinese military.

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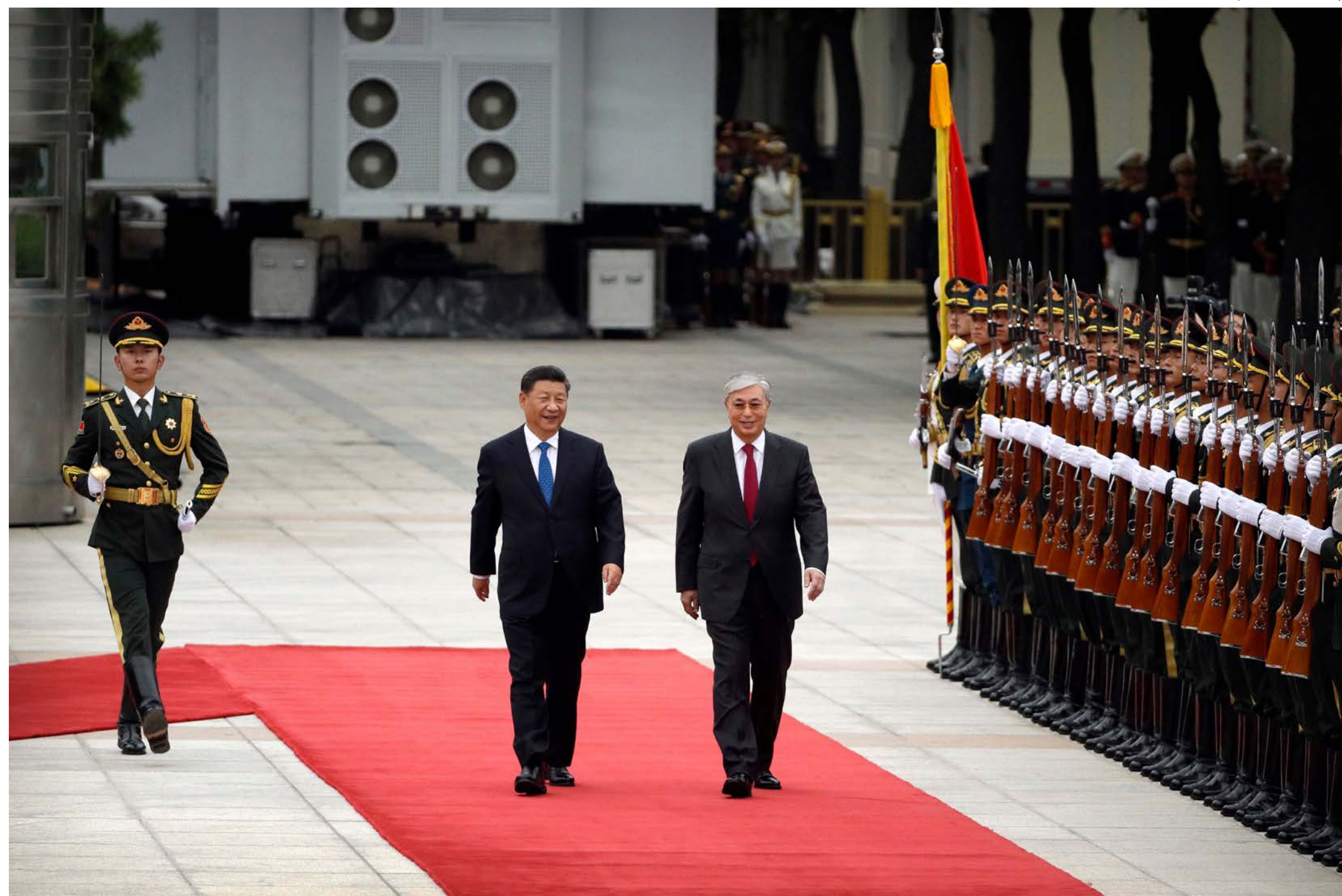
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Riot police gather to block demonstrators during a protest in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on Jan. 5, 2022.

Over the past two decades, China has built up its relationship with Kazakhstan, eroding the leading role that Russia has historically played in the region.

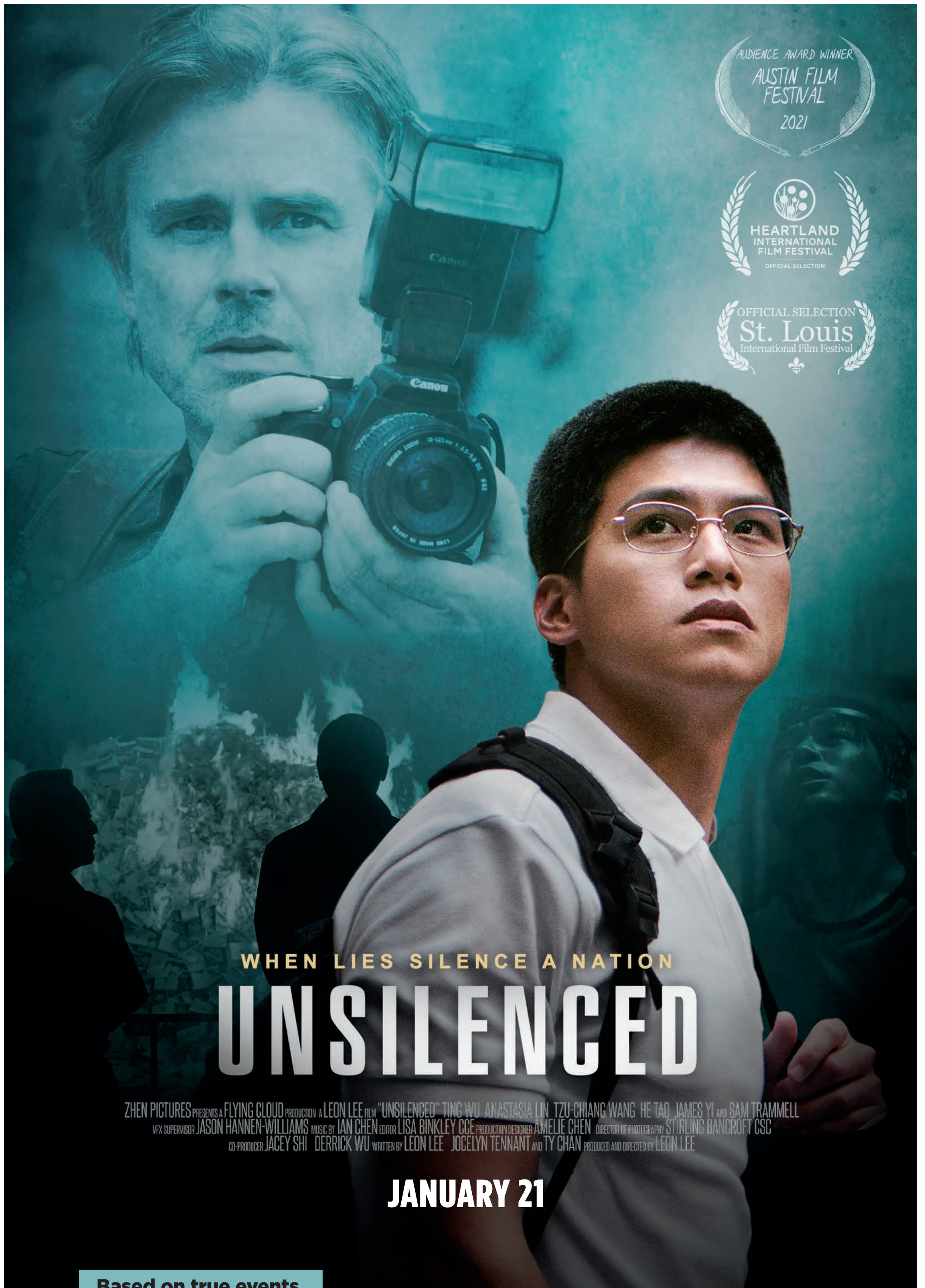
Chinese leader Xi Jinping (left) and Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev review an honor guard during a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Sept. 11, 2019.



MARK SCHEFFELBEIN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



The Interpol logo during the 89th Interpol General Assembly in Istanbul on Nov. 23, 2021.



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