

WEEK 19, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

# CHINA INSIDER

## ‘CATASTROPHIC ERROR’

CHINA’S ‘ZERO-COVID’ STRATEGY  
HAS BACKFIRED BADLY, ANALYST SAYS

See Page **4**

A worker wearing a protective gear stands next to barriers during lockdown in Jing'an district, in Shanghai on March 31, 2022.

HECTOR RETAMAL/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES



CCP INTERFERENCE

# Chinese Embassy Pressures Local Officials to Block Shen Yun Performances in Mexico

EVA FU

A New York-based performing arts company that's on a mission to revive traditional Chinese culture on the world stage has continued to find itself the target of Beijing's extensive interference campaign.

Beginning with its inception in 2006, Shen Yun Performing Arts has been confronted by plays arranged by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that range from applying diplomatic pressure on host theaters and governments to running state media-backed ad campaigns designed to thwart or sabotage Shen Yun's annual world tour.

This time, with Shen Yun's performance seeking to depict "China before communism," the CCP's sabotage activities have

The email turned out to be the beginning of a multi-day effort on the part of the Chinese Embassy to influence Mexican authorities and theaters to ban Shen Yun from performing in the city.

followed the company to Mexico, where two weeks of performances in five cities were scheduled to kick off on May 10.

Chinese Embassy officials have contacted Mexican officials through letters, emails, phone calls, or social media messages in at least three cities, according to documents and details shared with The Epoch Times.

**An Email Request**

After initially making contact on Instagram with the mayor's office of the central Mexican city of Santiago de Querétaro, the Chinese Embassy in Mexico sent a round of emails and letters in an attempt to pile on the pressure.

"Falun Dafa Association Mexico ... will organize a tour of 'Shen Yun' in the Teatro Metropolitano in Querétaro on May 10th and 11th of this year, an event

the Chinese Party firmly opposes," Zhao Heng, an embassy attaché, wrote in a May 4 email to the agenda coordinator for the Querétaro government, Alma Izaguirre, a copy of which was obtained by The Epoch Times.

Falun Gong, or Falun Dafa, is a spiritual practice originating in China in the 1990s, composed of meditative exercises and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. It was immensely popular at the time, until the Chinese regime, perceiving the practice's vast following as a threat, moved to systematically root out the faith by launching a sweeping persecution against its adherents. Millions of adherents have been detained by the regime in facilities where they're subjected to slave labor, torture, brainwashing, and forced organ harvesting.

The persecution of the spiritual group, lasting more than two decades, has been depicted in segments of Shen Yun's productions over the years.

In the email, Zhao asked if the Chinese Embassy could send a "note" to the city government, through email or other means, to explain "what Falun Dafa and the Shen Yun tour are."

"We request the Local Government of Querétaro to take the necessary measures to prohibit the 'Shen Yun' events to avoid the Mexican people being deceived and taken advantage of," Zhao said. "It would be a great pleasure and honor" to be connected on WhatsApp with "competent persons so it can be communicated well."

After receiving the letter, city officials contacted the local presenters of Shen Yun to hear their side of the story.

Shen Yun presents what China would be like if communism didn't exist.

Carlos Guzman, member, Falun Dafa Association in Mexico



Two Chinese police officers arrest a Falun Gong practitioner in Tiananmen Square in Beijing on Jan. 10, 2000.

"A large percentage of people" who bought tickets to Shen Yun's 2020 show, which was ultimately canceled due to the pandemic, kept their tickets instead of seeking refunds, with the expectation of seeing the performance when the company returned, he said.

Attaching a schedule of the performances, the embassy said that the "Chinese side is gravely concerned" that the event is taking place, according to a copy of the May 5 letter obtained by The Epoch Times.

Some segments of the show "attack the Chinese government," claims the letter, which bears the red seal of the embassy. The Chinese Embassy reminded Querétaro officials of the 50 years of diplomatic relations between Mexico and China, asserting that allowing the Shen Yun performances would undermine such a friendship.

"The Chinese Embassy in Mexico earnestly requests the Querétaro government to take necessary steps to ban Shen Yun from being hosted in the city and remind Querétaro officials of all levels, council members, scholars, and reporters to keep their distance," the letter reads.

**Standing Its Ground**

While the Chinese Embassy didn't specify which particular segments drew its ire, Guzman believes it has something to do with Falun Gong's values.

"Falun Dafa promotes three important pillars: truth, compassion, and tolerance, but it seems that the Chinese consulate and the Chinese Embassy are on the other side," he said. "While Falun Dafa promotes truth, they promote lies."

The Chinese regime's pressure is occurring as its practice of forced organ harvesting, one of the CCP's worst abuses against Falun Gong adherents, is attracting growing scrutiny in Europe.

The European Parliament on May 5 adopted a resolution to mark "serious concern about reports of persistent, systematic, inhumane and state-sanctioned organ harvesting from prisoners in China, and more specifically from Falun Gong practitioners."

Josep Borrell, the European Union's

top diplomat, said in prepared remarks on May 4 that the EU "condemns in the strongest possible terms the criminal, inhumane and unethical practice of forced organ harvesting."

The Chinese officials' interference didn't stop in Querétaro, as the Shen Yun presenters soon found out. After hearing about the Querétaro episode, Maru Ruano, a spokesperson for the Falun Dafa Association in Mexico who is overseeing Shen Yun's Mexico City tour, quickly made a call to the Auditorio Nacional, the venue where Shen Yun is slated to perform beginning on May 13. The theater told her the embassy had called them two weeks ago to have the show canceled.

The theater refused outright, telling the embassy they were going to "continue with the shows as they had been scheduled from the beginning," according to Ruano.

They said "the auditorium always has the doors open for this type of show," Ruano told The Epoch Times.

Audiences at the auditorium voted Shen Yun as one of the best live performances presented in Mexico in 2018 and 2019.

"When I asked them why they hadn't told me, they told me I had nothing to worry about because 'this is resolved. The auditorium has a firm position to continue with the show as we have in previous years,'" Ruano said.

The mayor of San Luis Potosi also received an email from the Chinese Embassy asking the city not to promote scheduled performances on May 17 and May 18, according to the local presenter.

The secret to Shen Yun's success in spite of Beijing's persistent pressure lies in the message it brings to people, according to Guzman.

"Shen Yun presents what China would be like if communism didn't exist and presents a show where they show you ... all the culture that was literally annihilated by the Chinese Communist Party," he said.

Ruano believes the Chinese sabotage activities won't succeed in Mexico.

"We are a free country, and we have freedom of expression," she said.



The audience at Shen Yun Performing Arts touring company's curtain call at Auditorio Nacional in Mexico City on April 6, 2019.

ORGAN HARVESTING

## 'Criminal, Inhumane and Unethical': EU Passes Resolution Condemning Chinese Regime's Forced Organ Harvesting

EVA FU

The European Parliament has adopted a resolution voicing "serious concerns" about the Chinese regime's ongoing forced organ harvesting, while calling on its member states to publicly condemn the abuse.

"Parliament expresses serious concern about reports of persistent, systematic, inhumane and state-sanctioned organ harvesting from prisoners in China, and more specifically from Falun Gong practitioners," reads a statement dated May 5



EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell delivers a speech on the situation in Afghanistan during a plenary session at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, on Sept. 14, 2021.

following the adoption of the text.

The Parliament members "consider that the practice of organ harvesting from living prisoners on death row and prisoners of conscience in China may amount to crimes against humanity," it reads.

A 2019 independent panel, called the China Tribunal, found that the Chinese regime had for years been killing prisoners of conscience for their organs for transplant on a substantial scale, a practice that's still going on. It concluded that such actions amounted to crimes against humanity and that the main victims were detained Falun Gong practitioners.

Falun Gong is a spiritual practice consisting of meditative exercises and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. In 1999, adherents became the target of a sweeping persecution campaign by Beijing after the practice's vast popularity was perceived as a threat to the communist regime's authoritarian control on society. Millions of detained Falun Gong practitioners around the country were essentially turned into a large involuntary organ bank for the Chinese regime's hungry organ

transplant system.

Since reports of forced organ harvesting first emerged in the mid-2000s, the Chinese regime has repeatedly denied the allegations but has also refused outside access to medical and detention facilities to verify its claims.

The EU resolution noted that the regime refused to testify before the China Tribunal.

The resolution further denounced the lack of independent oversight on whether detainees had given consent to organ donation, and the Chinese authorities' silence on reports that families were being prevented from claiming the bodies of loved ones who died in detention.

The four-page resolution, adopted by a show of hands on May 5, was the first public statement from the European Union on the issue since 2013, when the European Parliament first put Beijing on notice that the practice of forced organ harvesting was unacceptable.

Besides condemning the abuse in public, the resolution said, the EU and its member states should raise the organ harvesting issue "at every Human Rights Dialogue,"

raise the issue in engaging with partners, and take necessary actions to prevent their citizens from participating in transplant tourism to China. Relevant institutions, it said, should reconsider their collaboration with Chinese counterparts on transplant medicine, research, and training.

The passage of the resolution came three days ahead of U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet's planned trip to China, and the European Parliament in the resolution urged the human rights body to investigate the issue during the visit.

EU's top foreign policy official Josep Borrell a day earlier highlighted the issue during a parliamentary debate, saying the 27-member bloc "condemns in the strongest possible terms the criminal, inhumane and unethical practice of forced organ harvesting."

"Respect for human rights is not an option, but a requirement in all areas, including in the challenging medical and ethical area of organ donation and transplantation," he said in prepared remarks delivered by Jutta Urpilainen, commissioner for international partnerships, on his behalf.

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Josep Borrell, foreign policy chief, EU



Falun Gong practitioners participate in a parade to commemorate the 23rd anniversary of the April 25th peaceful appeal of 10,000 Falun Gong practitioners in Beijing, in Flushing, N.Y., on April 23, 2022.



COVID-19 IN CHINA

# China's Extreme COVID-19 Lockdown Policy Was a 'Catastrophic Error': Think Tank President

Lockdowns and other harsh quarantine measures have now been largely abandoned by Western governments, as countries seek to coexist with the virus.

FRANK FANG & DAVID ZHANG

The Chinese Communist Party's continued insistence on its "zero-COVID" strategy to tackle local outbreaks isn't so much about science, but rather the choice of its top leader Xi Jinping, who ties the success of the strategy to his own greatness, according to Jeffrey A. Tucker, president of Texas-based think tank the Brownstone Institute.

"Xi Jinping made a profound error in believing that his prowess and the personality cult that surrounds him was capable of taking on the greatest challenge in the history of humanity," Tucker recently told EpochTV's "China Insider" program.

On Jan. 23, 2020, Xi put Wuhan, a city of 11 million people where initial infection cases were reported, under a harsh lockdown. Tucker said the initial positive reactions from around the world to the Wuhan lockdown had gotten to Xi's head, possibly making him "flush with pride" about his achievement in apparently preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The lockdown in Wuhan would eventually last 76 days, during which residents were sealed inside their homes, many infected individuals were forcibly sent to makeshift quarantine hospitals, and nonessential businesses were shut down. These measures would eventually make up the core of the regime's zero-COVID strategy.

Tucker pointed to how the World Health Organization (WHO) was singing praises to China early on. A week after the Wuhan lockdown began, the WHO's chief, Tedros Ghebreyesus, lauded China for "setting a new standard for outbreak response."

More praise from the world health body would come on Feb. 28, 2020. That day, the WHO released a report applauding China for having taken a "bold approach" to containing the spread of the virus and "having played a significant role in protecting the global community."

By early April 2020, lockdown measures were in place in more than 90 countries, affecting more than 3.9 billion people, with Italy being the first country outside of China to impose a nationwide lockdown.

"So now, he [Xi] bet everything, his political future, the status and credibility of the CCP, the entire China model of governance and economics and culture and technology, everything on this one claim, that 'we're using the right strategies and right kinds of science,'" Tucker said.

"And I think that's what accounts for what's going on in Shanghai today."

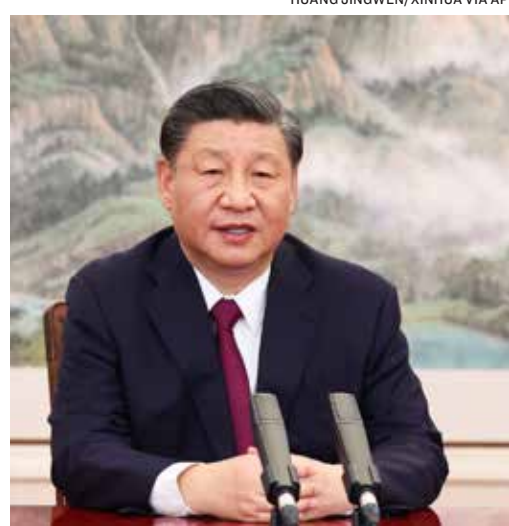
## A Discredited Strategy

Shanghai, a city of 25 million people, has been under lockdown since early April. Many residents in the city have voiced complaints about the measures, which have included excessive testing for COVID-19, shortages of food and medicine, forced separation of infected children from their parents, poor conditions at quarantine centers, and rough treatment at the hands of local pandemic control officers.

Some of those dead in Shanghai weren't killed by the virus, but rather by being denied medical care for their underlying illnesses. For instance, a nurse died from asthma after being denied treatment at the hospital she worked in. A senior woman died waiting for her COVID-19 test results since a negative test was a requirement for admission to the emergency ward.

Workers in protective suits keep watch on a street during a lockdown amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Shanghai on April 16, 2022.

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Chinese leader Xi Jinping delivers a speech via video link to the opening ceremony of the Bo'ao Forum for Asia in southern China's Hainan Province on April 21, 2022.

test results since a negative test was a requirement for admission to the emergency ward.

Lockdowns and other harsh quarantine measures have now been largely abandoned by Western governments, as countries seek to coexist with the virus. By contrast, the Chinese regime has refused to move away from the strategy, despite its heavy economic toll and mounting public anger.

"Zero-COVID strategy has been discredited," Tucker said. "The world discovered that China was wrong two years ago, that it didn't actually get rid of the virus, the virus is spread all over the world."

But being proven wrong didn't sit well with Xi, Tucker said.

"Xi Jinping believes this is an insult or a challenge to his greatness," he said. "If I'm right about this, this could be a very serious threat to political stability in China."

Political stability is critically important to Xi now, perhaps more important than at any other time after he took the helm of the CCP in 2012, because the Chinese leader is seeking an unprecedented third term in office, a decision to be made during a major political conclave in late 2022.

Fundamentally, Tucker said China's zero-COVID playbook was never meant to be a success.

"The China model of disease management is an eradicationist agenda. It's not to slow the spread. It's not to reduce infections. It's not to preserve hospital capacity. It is to get rid of the virus. That is impossible, it will never happen."

In January, John Hopkins University published a meta-analysis of several studies, concluding that lockdowns were ineffective against COVID-19.

"While this meta-analysis concludes that lockdowns have had little to no public health effects, they have imposed enormous economic and social costs where

they have been adopted. In consequence, lockdown policies are ill-founded and should be rejected as a pandemic policy instrument," the report stated.

"We find little to no evidence that mandated lockdowns in Europe and the United States had a noticeable effect on COVID-19 mortality rates."

## Impacts

Tucker said that lockdowns, by nature, aren't good, for they impinge upon human rights, liberties, property rights, and the freedom to exchange.

His concern was recently shared by Wang Yaqiu, senior China researcher at New York-based Human Rights Watch. She criticized the regime for its lockdown measures in Shanghai, saying that "denying people's human rights in the name of addressing the new spike in COVID cases is counterproductive."

Lockdowns also exact a large economic toll, Tucker said, adding that not a single economy in the world is "resilient enough to withstand lockdowns." The economic downturn in China resulting from its zero-COVID policies will also have a negative impact outside its borders, he added.

"This is devastating, not just for China, but for the whole world, really, it's going to be a real problem for Americans," he said. "We're going to be experiencing that as we go into the November elections, more goods shortages, food shortages, challenges in every area of economic life."

China's manufacturing activity last month, measured by the country's official manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), slumped to its lowest level since February 2020. Its PMI stood at 47.4 in April, below the 50-point mark dividing expansion from contraction.

Mike Pompeo, former secretary of state under the Trump administration, sounded a similar warning to Americans in an opinion article published by Fox News on May 4. He said the American people and the U.S. economy will feel the effects of lockdown in Shanghai "for months," since the city is home to the world's busiest container port.

"A backlog of cargo ships at the city's ports will drive inflation to ever-higher levels, hurting the American working and middle class especially," Pompeo said.

With the Chinese regime continuing to see lockdowns as the best way to tackle outbreaks, Tucker questioned whether Beijing is headed for instability, knowing that "authoritarian regimes are never as stable and invulnerable as they appear."

"I think a lot comes down to whether and to what extent the political establishment in China can admit that it's made a catastrophic error, and somehow change and turn the corner," he said. "Is that possible? I don't know."

REUTERS/JALY SONG



Feng Zijian (C), deputy director general of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, answers a question during the press conference of the Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism of the State Council in Beijing on July 31, 2021.

## PANDEMIC HANDLING

# Top Chinese Officials Offered to Brief US Officials on COVID-19 in Closed-Door Meeting, Emails Reveal

EVA FU & ZACHARY STIEBER

Top Chinese health officials offered to brief U.S. counterparts on the "new coronavirus in Wuhan" in a closed-door meeting in early 2020, newly obtained emails show.

As health officials in the United States and around the world were scrambling to respond to the emerging COVID-19 outbreak from China, Lance Rodewald, a senior adviser to the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC), floated an offer to have an "informal discussion" regarding the new illness.

"I'm writing to explore whether you may be interested in an informal presentation/briefing/discussion about the novel coronavirus by Dr. Feng Zijian at a side meeting around the time of the February ACIP meeting," he said in an email dated Jan. 23, 2020, sent to eight U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) officials.

ACIP is a panel of health experts that advises the CDC on vaccine recommendations. The panel typically meets at the CDC headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia.

The same day Rodewald made the offer, the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus first originated, entered into a full lockdown. The virus had been spreading in the city and around the world undetected as the Chinese regime suppressed crucial information about the outbreak and delayed acknowledging for weeks that the virus could transmit among humans.

The regime was also stonewalling repeated U.S. requests to send experts into China and get on-the-ground data.

Feng was the deputy director for the Chinese CDC at the time. He and Ma Chao, an official with China CDC's National Immunization Program, were preparing to visit Atlanta for another conference, Rodewald told CDC officials in the email.

"I think that most of you know Dr. Feng Zijian," he wrote, describing Feng as the architect of China's National Immunization Advisory Committee. Feng "has visited US CDC many times, including for 6 months during the H1N1 influenza pandemic and in 2016 during an ACIP meeting," he said. Feng was leading China's investigation into and response to the Wuhan virus, Rodewald said. "As such, he knows pretty-much everything about the investigation and response, including the virology, epidemiology, clinical spectrum, and mitigation measures being taken over here."

Because of Feng's responsibilities, Rodewald cast doubt on Feng's ability to make it to the United States, but wanted to gauge whether U.S. officials were interested in meeting him if he did. Ma, he indicated, was more likely to go.

The offer elicited a warm welcome from Anne Schuchat, then the principal deputy director of the CDC.

"If they visit we are delighted to meet on the sidelines of acip," she wrote back hours later. "Together we can figure out who will be able to meet. Of course I remember Feng Zinjian well."

Rodewald in reply said it was "great news" to see the "interest and willingness for Feng

Zijian to meet at CDC."

"Many, many thanks," he wrote in the email closing.

The emails were obtained by The Epoch Times through a Freedom of Information Act request.

It's unclear whether Chinese officials ended up meeting with CDC officials, though Ma did ultimately travel to the United States.

Minutes from a Global NITAG Network (GNN) meeting that took place on Feb. 24 and Feb. 25 in 2020 show Ma presented during the meeting on off-label vaccinations in China.

Feng's name didn't appear.

During the ACIP meeting one day later, Dr. Amanda Cohn, one of the CDC officials on the emails, said that the CDC had hosted the GNN meeting.

"Those meeting attendees will be coming in and out and watching the meeting, both in another space as well as in the room," Cohn said.

Neither Ma nor Feng appeared during the ACIP meeting, the last to be held in person since the pandemic started.

The CDC, Cohn, and other top CDC officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Queries sent to the Chinese scientists bounced back.

Chinese media did not report on the GNN or the ACIP meetings.

Additional Freedom of Information Act requests have been lodged seeking to confirm whether any Chinese scientists met with U.S. officials before, during, or after the ACIP meeting.

Two ACIP members, Dr. Kevin Ault and Dr. Pablo Sanchez, told The Epoch Times they did not recall speaking with Chinese scientists in Atlanta. A third, Arkansas Health Secretary Jose Romero, said through a spokesperson that he "did not meet with the Chinese scientists."

Paul Mango, a former Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) official, suggested the Chinese officials might have initiated the offer out of individual goodwill.

"There were some Chinese scientists who wanted to collaborate, yet were perhaps discouraged from doing so by their government," he told The Epoch Times.

HHS is the CDC's parent agency.

A number of Chinese doctors were punished by regime authorities in the early days of the pandemic when they tried to warn the public about the virus. A Shanghai lab that published the world's first COVID-19 virus sequence was shut down the same day.

Chinese media reports show that Rodewald, of China's CDC, appeared to be an admirer of China's COVID-19 response.

In a government-sponsored forum in Shanghai in October 2020, he was asked about China's shortcomings in scientific research in pandemic response efforts.

"You asked the wrong person," he said while laughing, according to Chinese media reports. "I really respect the measures China has taken in fighting the outbreak. I'm just a witness." He added that other countries should learn from how China traced and isolated close contacts of the infected.



JADE GAO/APF VIA GETTY IMAGES

A health worker takes a swab sample from a woman to be tested for COVID-19 at a makeshift testing site in Beijing on April 27, 2022.



## MIDTERM ELECTIONS

# Tough-On-China Stances May Prove Critical for Midterm Candidates: Analysts

MICHAEL WASHBURN

U.S. relations with China are an issue that increasingly commands the attention of voters, who are likely to cast their ballots in the November midterm elections largely on the basis of which candidates are toughest on China, experts say. But the same experts do not always agree as to whether jobs and trade, or national security, is the most important piece of the U.S.-China puzzle.

"In general, I think China will be kind of like background music throughout the entire campaign coming up in the fall. It has been before and will be again. Certainly this year, with Republicans up in the polls and being identified with the Trumpian attitude toward China, we're going to see a need for every candidate to set himself or herself up as tough on China," said Douglas H. Paal, a distinguished fellow of the Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington.

The question of China's importance in the November midterms was the subject of a Wall Street Journal article on May 2 which compared the number of times that leading Democratic and Republican candidates in some of the most closely primary contests—those in Ohio and Pennsylvania—have made reference to China in their campaign ads. Leading the pack is Trump-backed Mehmet Oz, who has enjoyed a modest lead in polls against former hedge fund CEO David McCormick as they compete for the nomination to run for the Senate seat currently held by Pennsylvania Sen. Pat Toomey, who is retiring. The primary election will take place on May 17.

As of May 2, Oz had mentioned China 8,351 times in his ads, significantly more than the next-highest candidate ranked in this category, Tim Ryan of Ohio, who had made reference to China 3,417 times, the Journal reported.

Oz has mentioned China more than three times as often as his rival McCormick, who has mentioned China 2,580 times.

As Oz's thin lead in the polls indicates, endorsement by Trump is not, by itself, a guarantee of overwhelming support from Republican voters, and the extent of Trump's continuing influence within the party is the subject of some controversy. Candidates who want an edge with the voting public in the primaries and the midterms need to make clear that they are well attuned to the issue—China's role in the world—that preoccupies millions of voters and especially those in middle American states hit hard by overseas competition, experts say.

## The Foreign Policy Challenge

The message of many candidates may focus heavily on economic and trade issues. But for some observers, the economic populism of candidates catering to voters who have lost jobs or fear losing jobs to overseas competition may be missing the point, given the extremely serious foreign policy and national security concerns of an Asia-Pacific region where Beijing's expansionist aims stir continual uncertainty.

Although taking a firm stand on China may be a tendency often associated with the Trump wing of the GOP, that does not mean that activism around the issue will be mostly limited to the Republican side.

President Joe Biden plans to visit Asia from May 20 to 24, and in preparation for the trip, he is likely to make a case that Democrats are tough on China issues, said Paal.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, such as Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio) and Rep. Ami Bera (D-Calif.), have cautioned strongly against complacency in a world where Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine may have emboldened other aggressors and the United States remains heavily dependent on China for rare earth minerals such as cobalt and lithium.

The self-governed island of Taiwan, which Beijing has repeatedly threatened to unite with mainland China, by force if necessary, does not really have a broad choice when it comes to political leaders in the United States, he said.

"History dealt Taiwan a tough hand. They will always do their best to cooperate with the prevailing administration of either party in Washington," Paal observed.



Pennsylvania Republican U.S. Senate candidate Dr. Mehmet Oz joins former President Donald Trump onstage during a rally in support of his campaign at the Westmoreland County Fairgrounds on May 6, 2022 in Greensburg, Pa. Former President Trump endorsed Dr. Oz in the Pennsylvania Republican primary race for the U.S. Senate over his top opponent David McCormick.

But Paal said he does not consider an invasion of Taiwan to be likely to happen tomorrow, what with the 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) coming up in the fall and the manifold preparations this much-anticipated event requires. Nor does Paal believe that Beijing is yet in a position to try to use nuclear blackmail to advance its territorial aims.

"They're building [armaments] like crazy to put themselves in a more equal position, but they're not there yet, they're still constructing. They're not being presented with opportunities too good to resist right now," Paal said.

Nor can Beijing afford to ignore the steep consequences of the massive sanctions levied against Moscow, its banks, and its oligarchs in the wake of Russian leader Vladimir Putin's Feb. 24 invasion.

"China has to look at their own potential shortcoming, and they have to look at the consequences of economic sanctions. There are lots of reasons why, in my view, Beijing ought to be more reluctant to think about using military force against Taiwan after the invasion of Ukraine than they were before," Paal said.

But the long-term threat remains. In this scenario, opportunities exist for those politicians and candidates who can make a point of promoting strategies to lessen U.S. dependence on China, such as in raw earth minerals.

"Research and development are leading to new substitutes so we don't have to have the kind of dependency on the things we're getting from China" that has long characterized the trade relationship, Paal said. It is possible to develop alternate sources, following the example of Japanese manufacturers who are striving to find new ways to source the raw materials for microelectronics and cell phones, he continued.

## The Trade Wars

Other experts acknowledge the importance of Taiwan and other foreign policy concerns but affirm the wisdom of

candidates focusing on trade and jobs and tailoring their campaign strategies accordingly, especially in the hard-hit rustbelt states.

"Clearly, being tough on China is likely to be a litmus test in elections across the country, particularly on the Republican side. We are at a point in time when the Republican Party, in particular, and most national security professionals in the U.S. view China as a strategic competitor, and anyone who appears not to sufficiently share that concern is going to be questioned," said Cleve Willems, a partner at the law firm Akin Gump and Special Assistant to the President for International Trade, Investment, and Development during the Trump administration.

The paramouncy of the trade issue is not going away, in Willems's view. While some people in Washington, including former Trump officials, view any modification of the tariffs that Trump imposed on China as a betrayal of that president's legacy, Willems believes it is imperative to look at how those tariffs have played out over the last few years. Trump-era tariffs remain in place on more than \$300 billion of Chinese goods. Some may have hurt China but others have hurt U.S. competitiveness, he argued. Candidates in the midterms cannot afford to ignore this reality.

"You have to modify the tariffs, and not modifying them is not going to be an effective China strategy. Let's be smart about how we're tough on China," Willems said.

Willems said that addressing abusive Chinese practices, and in particular Beijing's failure to adhere to the "phase one" trade deal that is part of Trump's legacy, will be a top campaign issue for Republicans. He expressed doubt that Democrats will be able to capitalize as successfully on this issue.

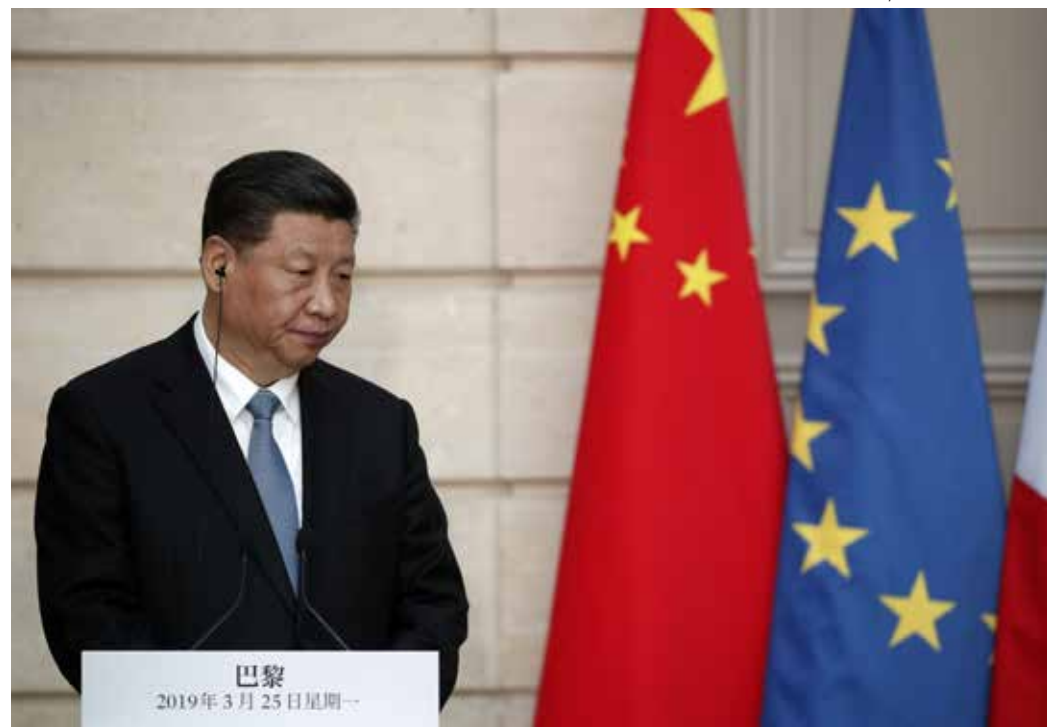
"I think President Biden and the Democrats have huge headwinds due to inflation, mismanagement of the economy, and foreign policy problems, including in Afghanistan. I think they've failed to deliver on much of their agenda, and that's the bigger issue," he said.

Stephen Ezell, Vice President of Global Innovation Policy at the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a Washington-based think tank, said it makes sense that many campaigners have focused to such an extent on China.

"The United States lost as many as a million manufacturing jobs over the past decade as a result of trade with China. Clearly, that has hit the industrial Midwest the hardest. Those issues are going to find a more receptive audience there," he said.

Ezell differs slightly from other experts as to which specific China topic will be of primary concern to voters this election season.

"When it comes to China as an issue, it's going to have a lot more salience from an economic than a national security perspective," he said. "This could change, obviously, if something were to happen in Taiwan."



Chinese leader Xi Jinping listens during a press conference with the French President after their meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris on March 25, 2019.

## ANALYSIS

## China Unveils Global Security Initiative: A Move Toward CCP-Led Globalism

ANTONIO GRACEFFO



At the Boao Forum last month, Chinese leader Xi Jinping blamed America for war and the global economy's state, without actually naming the United States, while unveiling the "Global Security Initiative." This is another vague plan for Beijing's global expansion.

The Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) is an annual Chinese-led forum of 28 countries modeled on the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland. The BFA is named after Bo'ao, a town in China's Hainan Province, where it has permanent residence despite its headquarters operating in Beijing.

This year's Boao Forum, which ran from April 20 to April 22, was titled "The World in COVID-19 and Beyond: Working Together for Global Development and Shared Future."

Xi talked about cooperation, integration, trade, and economics in his opening speech at the forum. This type of language is a veiled attack on the United States, which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) portrays as isolationist and protectionist even though Chinese tariffs on U.S. imports are higher than U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports. Furthermore, China has virtually unrestricted investment and market access in the United States, whereas Chinese markets are heavily restricted.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a multilateral free-trade agreement that China strongly supported and the United States withdrew from, also convened this year, and many of the member countries were in attendance. This worked well for the CCP's framing of the United States as a protectionist state despite the number of bilateral trade agreements America already has with RCEP members.

Along with blaming the United States for impeding world trade, the CCP criticizes the U.S. Federal Reserve (the Fed) and the European Central Bank for raising interest rates. In fact, one of the BFA sessions was called "Global Inflation, Interest Rate Hikes and Economic Stability."

In March, the United States was facing 8.5 percent inflation while Europe was experiencing a record inflation rate of 7.5 percent. The European Central Bank and the U.S. Fed have been raising interest rates to combat this inflation. Meanwhile, China is expected to cut interest rates to compensate for the negative impact of continued COVID lockdowns in major cities and commercial centers.

Beijing has been critical of Washington for hiking rates, saying that the United States should consider how its actions impact developing countries. However, Beijing is noticing that as lockdowns persist, the likelihood of hitting its modest 5.5 percent growth target this year is declining. Furthermore, the U.S. rate increases will negatively impact China's growth as investors will be lured away from China and into the United States.

In a move toward Chinese-led globalism, Xi said that the world should "embrace a global governance philosophy." He went on to say that nations must "firmly safeguard the international system with the U.N. at its core and the international order underpinned by international law."

Although the CCP talks of supporting the

United Nations and international law, it refuses to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine or the coup in Burma (commonly known as Myanmar), which ousted duly-elected Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Among other topics, Xi talked about global security and reforming "the world's security governance system." He used the phrase "territorial integrity," which is a subtle reference to Taiwan, implying that the United States should not interfere if China invades the island nation.

Xi urged nations to "reject the Cold War mentality," "group politics," and "block confrontation." This was a veiled reference to NATO, the Quad, the Five Eyes, and AUKUS multinational security organizations that were formed to protect democracies from the likes of Russia and China. He also mentioned the "legitimate security concerns" rhetoric that the CCP had previously used to justify the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

While there is nothing new about the CCP blaming the United States for most of the world's ills, including those that China is guilty of, what was most noteworthy was the unveiling of the Global Security Initiative. Not much concrete detail was given, but Xi used "invisible security." Russian President Vladimir Putin used the exact words to justify his confrontation with Ukraine in a Feb. 2 phone call with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In his opening speech at the Boao Forum, and statements later published in state-run media Xinhua, Foreign Minister Wang Yi provided greater detail about the security initiative. He said, "The initiative contributes Chinese wisdom to make up for the present peace deficit."

Chinese state-run media Global Times interpreted Wang's statement as, "China will never claim hegemony, seek expansion or spheres of influence, nor engage in an arms race." However, the CCP has done and is doing all of those things. Global Times subtly accused the United States of undermining the global security order by seeking hegemony in the name of democracy.

One of the six component areas of the Global Security Initiative is "stay committed to taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously, and uphold the principle of indivisible security." Once again, the key words "legitimate security concerns" and "indivisible security" were present.

Although it is unclear exactly what form this security initiative will take, it seems clear that it seeks to legitimize the Russian invasion of Ukraine and support the CCP's position to take Taiwan. Geopolitical scholars from Europe, India, Australia, and the United States agree that these are the greatest threats to global security.

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

*Antonio Graceffo, Ph.D., has spent more than 20 years in Asia. He is a graduate of the Shanghai University of Sport and holds a China-MBA from Shanghai Jiaotong University. Graceffo works as an economics professor and China economic analyst, writing for various international media. Some of his books on China include "Beyond the Belt and Road: China's Global Economic Expansion" and "A Short Course on the Chinese Economy."*

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