

WEEK 22, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

# CHINA INSIDER

# CASINOS AS VEHICLES OF CCP INFLUENCE

BEIJING LOOKS TO EXPAND ITS  
FOOTHOLD IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

See Page 3

CCP

# CCP's Extreme Lockdowns Prompt More Chinese to Quit the Communist Party

MARY HONG

As of May 30, at least 396 million Chinese have quit the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its associated organizations, according to Tuidang.org, the Global Service Center for Quitting the CCP.

Recent testimonies from those who quit the Party have shown that living under Beijing's strict "zero-COVID" policy, which has resulted in mounting tales of suffering as waves of cities go into full or partial lockdowns, has caused people to reevaluate their perspective of the communist regime and renounce their ties to the CCP.

The Epoch Times in 2004 published the Nine Commentaries on the Chinese Communist Party, an editorial series on the CCP's history of deception and brutality. It later led to the "quit the CCP," or "tuidang," movement in China.

The following are statements from some of the Chinese people who severed all their ties to the CCP in May.

## 'CCP Knows Nothing of Shame'

Luo Qi, Zhang Xintong, and Ge Yijie, residents of Shanghai, quit the CCP through Tuidang.org.

In a statement, they said that they have been victimized by the CCP's virus containment policy.

"We have had no food, but the state propaganda machine, CCTV, claims the food supplies are plenty, and life is good," they wrote.

They said, "The wicked CCP knows nothing of shame."

They vowed that only by quitting the CCP will they erase any complicity with the party's evil deeds in staying silent, and they would be free from being enslaved by the CCP.

## Former Party Supporter Quits the CCP

Chu Junwen from China's coastal province of Shandong said that he used to be a believer of the CCP, but he has since awakened to its true nature in the pandemic.

In the statement, he revealed the inhumane treatment he received after he was confirmed of the infection. "They welded my door, I could not go grocery shopping or work, and the staff of the pandemic control office kept harassing me and interfered with my regular life and activities," he wrote.

He even dropped to his knees and begged for their sympathy, but their ignorance finally cost him his job because he's absent from his work.

He finally realized the so-called "traitors and rumormongers" as labelled by the CCP and state media were telling the truth.

After searching for the truth online by bypassing the CCP's firewall, he realized that he's been "the accomplice of evil" and he felt "ashamed of his ignorance."

He wrote, "I hope many more Chinese will see through the CCP, and stop the violent machinery."

## 'CCP Will Get Its Retribution'

Yin Fan from Heilongjiang, the northernmost province in China, joined the Young Pioneers of the CCP more than 20 years ago.

He said the extreme measures of zero-COVID had made many more people realize the misery of the Chinese people under the CCP's rule.

In his statement withdrawing from the Young Pioneers, Yin wrote, "Look at Shanghai, the officials profited from the high prices of relief veggies coming from foreign provinces. Some even said that the pandemic should continue so that they can make more money."

He also revealed an incident of a man from Harbin City setting himself on fire because he became heavily indebted over the long period of the lockdown. But state media claimed in their reports that the man was involved in arson, rather than his self-immolation out of frustration.

"The shameless CCP will get its retribution, and I will not be its sacrifice," he wrote.

He stated, "I vow to cut clean from the CCP!"



Falun Gong practitioners gather to support the withdrawal of 390 million people from the Chinese Communist Party and its associate groups, in Brooklyn, New York, on Feb. 27, 2022.

## Seeing Through CCP Propaganda

Fu Gui is a college student from Chongqing city.

He said that as he grew older, he gradually realized the violent machinery of the CCP, "The glamor of the CCP is all propaganda," he wrote.

He stated, "The tragic cases in lockdown Shanghai under the pandemic are the vivid records of cruelty and bloodshed of the CCP."

Fu Gui withdrew from the Young Pioneers of China and the Communist Youth League.

He indicated that after he learned the cruelty and lies of the CCP after visiting overseas websites and reading the Nine Commentaries. He felt ashamed of his "stern support of the evil force in the past" and said his conscience was being tortured under the CCP.

But now, he wrote, "I will never again connect with the evil Party."

## Xinjiang Repression

Lin Haichang and Jin Zhiwei from Xinjiang quit the Young Pioneers.

In their statement, they said that the people in Xinjiang don't have enough to eat; the care and welfare the CCP claims to provide the people of Xinjiang is all propaganda.

They said the stories of forced labor by prisoners in the Xinjiang concentration camps are widely heard.

"The beating, torturing, and even organ harvesting have been talked about in recent years; ethnic minorities are forced to be sterilized," they stated.

They emphasized, "Defeating the CCP is everyone's responsibility!"

## Victims

Many who have withdrawn from the CCP have described the inhuman treatment they have experienced under the communist dictatorship.

Huang Jingran from Shenzhen City said that his father's house was demolished last year. In the course of negotiations with the authorities, his father was badly beaten

The glamor of the CCP is all propaganda.

Fu Gui, student from Chongqing city

I hope many more Chinese will see through the CCP, and stop the violent machinery

Chu Junwen of Shandong Province

by local police. The demolition was then enforced without any compensation, and life became very difficult for the family.

Zhang Yixuan and Ding Zhaoxing were miners from Heilongjiang. They described a coworker at their mine who had embarked on the process of petitioning her unpaid retirement fund. The case was resolved by her being sentenced to a year and a half of imprisonment.

Wu Shengnan is a native of Shijiazhuang. He earns around \$400 a month but was made to tout that "Socialism is good," and to recognize that people in the United States, UK, and Japan are "in distress," he said.

He asked, "If the regime is really good, why do the officials send their relatives to the West?"

He felt he was being exploited for the needs of the CCP.

He wrote, "Every minute and every second under the Communist bandits' ruling is ruthless and dark!"

Jie-Si Lee contributed to this report.



Ms. Huang Yingzhou, an immigrant from China, announces her withdrawal from CCP and its affiliated organizations at a rally in New York on April 18, 2021, to commemorate the 22nd anniversary of the April 25 peaceful appeal.



An empty road during a lockdown in the Pudong district of Shanghai on May 30, 2022.

ZERO-COVID

# China's Flagging Economy Fueled by 'Zero-COVID' Has 'No Cure,' Analysts Say

DOROTHY LI

China's economic outlook is grim after months of on-and-off COVID-19 lockdowns have disrupted industry around the country, and left the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) top leadership on edge.

Local officials were recently ordered to stimulate the now-shrinking economy in this crucial political year, as CCP leader Xi Jinping will make his bid for a third term at the 20th National Congress this fall. But analysts suggest such an order would be hard to implement given weak underlying economic conditions, and that the regime's hardline "zero-COVID" policy has the imprimatur of Xi and is thus unlikely to be eased.

Premier Li Keqiang, China's second-in-command, on May 25 took the unprecedented step of conducting a virtual conference with 100,000 officials from provincial, city, and county-level authorities to issue severe warnings about the state of the economy.

"The difficulties, in some aspects and to a certain degree, are even greater than 2020 when the pandemic hit hard," Li said, according to a short version of his speech published by China's state media.

The warning came amid growing frustration toward CCP leaders' commitment to its zero-COVID policy among economists, foreign business groups, and even the public. Many believe that it's impossible to maintain economic growth while maintaining Xi's zero-tolerance approach toward the virus.

The policy has resulted in dozens of cities going into lockdown since late last year as the regime seeks to contain the fast-spreading Omicron variant, severely disrupting life and businesses in the world's second-largest economy.

Li's move also fueled speculation of a split, or political infighting, within the CCP's top leadership. Some observers pointed out that he didn't even mention Xi's zero-COVID strategy at the conference.

"The messages from Xi and Li are conflicting, so local officials are confused now," said Li Hengqing, a China expert at the Washington Institute for Information and Strategy think tank.

He said officials are now "waiting to see which way the wind blows" before they decide whether to prioritize economic development or COVID-19 control measures.

## Grim Outlook

Xi's zero-COVID crusade has brought dozens of cities to an abrupt halt, shutting factories and shops, adding piling pressure onto the country's shaky economy.

In an extreme case, the financial hub of Shanghai, which experienced a more than two-month-long lockdown starting in March, recorded zero car sales in April, according to Shanghai Automobile Sales Trade Association.

Investment banks have lowered their projections for China's economic growth



A worker produces fiber netting at a factory in Binzhou, Shandong Province, China, on May 31, 2022.

after April's official economic data were released. Even optimistic expectations are below the CCP's official growth target of "some 5.5 percent."

Citigroup and S&P Global expected China's economy to expand by 4.2 percent and 4.9 percent, respectively. UBS cut the gross domestic product (GDP) forecast to 3 percent this year. The grimmest prediction is from Bloomberg economists, who projected only 2 percent growth this year.

Even if the regime misses its growth target, analysts say the CCP will inflate its published data so the target is met on paper—especially given how important this is to Xi as he bids for another term in office at an important party conclave this autumn.

"He definitely will edit the figure if he was in charge [when official data is released]," Li Hengqing said, referring to Xi. "The true data will only be revealed if Xi was not the Party leader or not directly in control."

## 'No Cure'

Despite integrity concerns, official figures in April have already illustrated a sharp slowdown.

As tens of millions of consumers were kept at home, retail sales fell for two straight months in April and hit the lowest level since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, official data showed. Although some workers were allowed to work and live on factory compounds, industrial production in April fell 2.9 percent from a year earlier.

The latest data published by China's statistics bureau on May 31 showed that factory activity still struggled in May, though at a slower pace of contraction. The official manufacturing purchasing managers index fell to 49.6, slightly increasing from

The slowdown of China's economy in recent years was largely a result of Xi's control model, which is like returning to Mao Zedong's era.

Hsieh Chin-ho, a Taiwanese economic scholar



Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing on March 10, 2022.

47.4 in April. The reading still remained below the 50-point mark, which indicates a contraction.

Analysts, however, aren't optimistic, saying Xi's policies have damaged business confidence.

"The slowdown of China's economy in recent years was largely a result of Xi's control model, which is like returning to Mao Zedong's era," said Hsieh Chin-ho, a Taiwanese economic scholar, in reference to the CCP's first leader who attempted to implement a socialist planned economy.

Last year, authorities launched a sweeping regulatory crackdown under Xi's "common prosperity" campaign, wiping billions of values from China's homegrown tech giants, leading to tens of thousands of lay-offs.

The latest COVID-19 lockdown further inhibited demand in the country's labor markets. China's unemployment rate hit a two-year high in April when officials shut down businesses in metropolises such as Shanghai. The urban youth jobless rate for those aged 16 to 24 reached 18.2 percent.

"Many small-and-medium size businesses have bankrupted," a small-business owner in Beijing told The Epoch Times on May 30. "We have already lost confidence, definitely."

The uncertainties from authorities have led to business confidence falling, and residents tend to save up instead of spending, Li said.

"How can you expect a big turnaround in China's economy? There is no cure for China's economy."

Epoch Times staff member Luo Ya and Reuters contributed to this report.

## CHINESE INFLUENCE

# Chinese-Linked Casinos in Pacific Islands Are Vehicles for Corruption, Expanding CCP Influence: Analysts

VENUS UPADHAYAYA

A Fijian court handed down a sentence and ordered a Chinese casino developer to pay \$650,000 on April 28 for causing substantial damage to the environment while undertaking unauthorized development on Malolo Island in Fiji's west.

The case also highlighted the marathon struggle of Australian surfers Navrin Fox and Woody Jack who held a stake in the land adjacent to the one owned by the Chinese company, Freesoul Real Estate. Freesoul had ripped out a part of a reef, dumped waste, blocked other landowners, and disturbed traditional fisheries to build a resort and Fiji's first-ever casino.

Fox and Jack helped bring attention to this case and managed to stop the environmental destruction. Yet many other Chinese-linked casino projects in the Pacific are causing less visible forms of harm, and are flying under the radar away from public scrutiny, experts say.

Casinos are China's tools to serve its expansionist and influence operations in vulnerable, investment hungry economies like those of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs), according to experts and sources who told the Epoch Times that setting up casinos is one of the first things the Chinese ask for when a PIC says it's open to investment.

"I was in a meeting in which Tongan representatives were in London talking to a room full of potential investors and the first thing the Chinese representatives asked about were casinos," Cleo Pascal, a non-resident senior fellow at the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracy, told The Epoch Times in an email.

"They asked repeatedly. The Tongan representative said no, it was against their beliefs. But the Chinese investors will keep asking. And maybe, one day, they will find someone with different (or no) beliefs."

Grant Newsham, a director at One Korea Network and a senior fellow with the Center for Security Policy and the Yorktown Institute, told the Epoch Times that the \$650,000 fine issued by the Fijian court would do no damage to the Chinese.

"[It] is not even a slap on the wrist. The Chinese must be laughing. The \$600,000 bond is maybe 1/1000th of the actual damage. You don't just 'repair' reefs and mangroves. The reefs take thousands of years to develop, and mangroves are only a little faster," Newsham said in an email.

## Casinos and BRI

Within the larger Asia Pacific region, the Pacific has the highest investment need, in percent of GDP, until 2030, at 9.1 percent, according to the Asian Development Bank estimates of 2017, and a 2018 report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said China's "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) can "certainly help" to provide some of this investment.

BRI is a trillion-dollar infrastructure investment project launched by the Chinese regime to bolster its economic and political influence worldwide.

Out of the 15 independent PICs, 10 have signed onto BRI, the latest being the Solomon Islands which joined in 2019 after it switched its 36-year-old diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the Chinese regime.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi landed

in the Solomon Islands on May 26 with a large delegation at the start of an eight-nation tour, and the Associated Press reported that Wang is hoping to strike a deal with 10 PICs during the visit. These deals cover everything from security to fisheries.

The United States in 2020 sanctioned the Chinese gangster and triad boss, Wan Kuok Koi, also known as "Broken Tooth," who owns casinos and VIP rooms across PICs and South East Asia, alleging he was leveraging BRI for corruption in the region.

Wan is a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a political advisory body to the Chinese Communist Party, the Treasury Department said at the time.

He is also "a leader of the 14K Triad, one of the largest Chinese organized criminal organizations in the world that engages in drug trafficking, illegal gambling, racketeering, human trafficking, and a range of other criminal activities," the department said.

The 14K Triad has engaged in similar activities in Palau, an island nation in the Western Pacific, it added.

The Treasury Department also blacklisted an organization based in Cambodia set up by Wan called the World Hongmen History and Culture Association, which officials said was an effort by 14K Triad to legitimize itself.

Two other organizations owned and controlled by Wan were also sanctioned: Palau China Hung-Mun Cultural Association and the Hong Kong-based Dongmei Group.

"The World Hongmen History and Culture Association is spreading across Southeast Asia, establishing a powerful business network involved in the development and launching of cryptocurrencies, real estate, and most recently a security company specialized in protecting BRI investments," the Treasury said.

"The Chinese enterprises behind the BRI projects have several things in common: their leadership has links to criminal networks or actors involved in illicit activities in other parts of Southeast Asia, as well as China; they have pre-existing organizations engaged in casinos and cryptocurrencies; they advertise themselves online to be associated with Beijing's BRI and flaunt connections with key Chinese government agencies, and all of them have established associations that actively seek to assist Chinese nationals," it added.

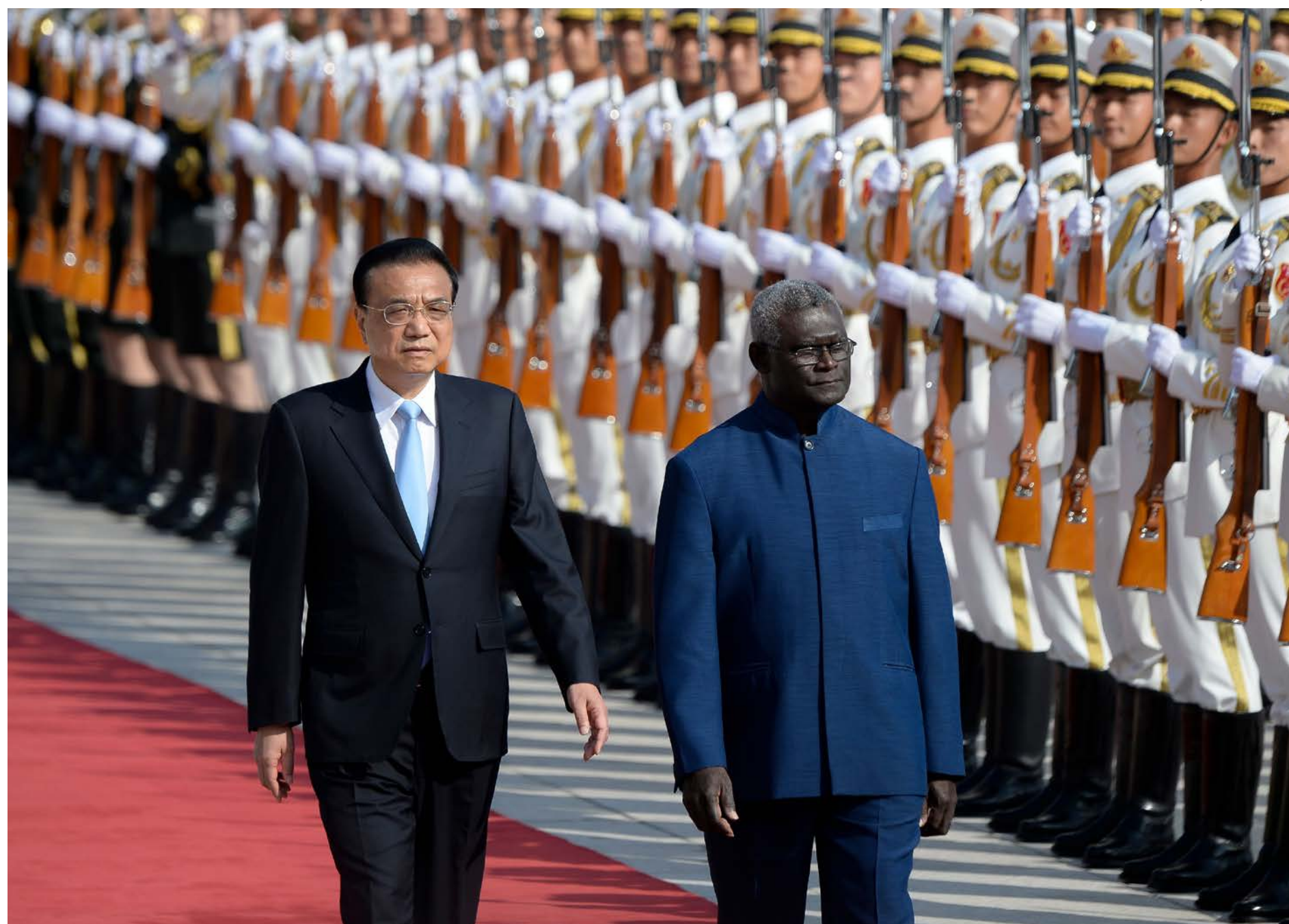
## Broken Tooth in Palau

Wan came to Palau in 2019 and was given licenses to run two casinos in the country then, a research expert with decades of experience in PICs and with knowledge of triads' activities in the region told The Epoch Times under the condition of anonymity.

Chinese media reports at the time said that the then-President of Palau Thomas Remengesau Jr. issued Wan with a Casino gaming license and a Pachinko online gaming license.

"Broken Tooth in Palau established Hongmen Chinese Association and then he brought thousands of Triad members in Palau and then started conducting online casinos in many hotels," said the source.

According to Chinese media reports, Wan was also given the license to create Hongmen Special Economic Zone at the island of Angaur for which a 99-year contract was signed with the Palau government.



Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang inspect honor guards during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Oct. 9, 2019.

**This Chinese presence creates 'influence'. An influence translates into political power, as well as commercial power, and one-day military power.**

Grant Newsham, senior fellow, Center for Security Policy



Celsus Talifilu, a political adviser to the premier of Solomon Islands' Malaita province.

COURTESY CELSUS TALIFILU

The report said that Wan announced that he would raise HK\$200 billion to turn the nine square kilometers of the island into an international gaming and entertainment resort of the century. He also announced that all key payments in the Hongmen Special Economic Zone would be conducted in Hongbi or HB, the cryptocurrency launched by Wan, according to the report.

Another Chinese media report showed images of purported gaming licenses granted to Wan.

Remengesau, however, denied those reports at the time. He told local media the Island Times that he didn't endorse the establishment of casinos in the country since they were illegal.

The then-president said when he met Wan he wasn't aware of his identity and was alerted later to this by the Taiwan government.

The Island Times cited records from the attorney general to show that Wan had registered a nonprofit called the "Palau China Hung-Mun Cultural Association," and noted that nonprofits are not permitted to do business in Palau.

The president's office did not return an inquiry from The Epoch Times about the alleged gaming licenses granted to Wan.

A Chinese woman, Xiaoxue Xu identified as Wan's wife by Palau's Ministry of Justice in 2019 was denied entry into the country for alleged falsification of identity, reported the Island Times.

Palau's administration said at the time that Xu was involved in illegal business activities in the country and the matter was under investigation.

The unnamed source said the Chinese regime, triads, or other criminal gangs operate through their sophisticated connections in PICs, "although they check each other. Criminals can easily gain access to political leaders in small island states, including Broken Tooth, etc" and this can "easily lead" to corruption.

## Casinos and Political Connections

Experts say that the Chinese affiliated entities allegedly work through a complex network of sophisticated business and political connections to run casinos, and carry out crime and other illegal activities in the PICs.

Newsham said that Chinese casino companies usually bribe local politicians and officials and this creates an opening for other Chinese entities in the country.

"It also can lead the country's political alliance to shift towards to PRC—and result in things like shifting diplomatic recognition

from Taiwan to PRC or to vote in favor of PRC positions at the United Nations and other international organizations," he said, referring to the acronym for the Chinese regime's official name, the People's Republic of China.

Newsham, who's also a former U.S. diplomat and business executive with years of experience in the Asia Pacific region, said that building a casino gives China a physical presence in a country or location, adding that this is "part and parcel" of the communist regime's expansionist agenda.

"It also creates a 'pro-China' constituency in a place it did not exist. How so? The casino promises revenue for cash-strapped local governments. The casino also promises plenty of jobs for locals—although this rarely materializes as jobs, including construction and gaming; jobs are usually filled by Chinese workers or other foreigners," he said.

When Chinese players come into PICs legally or illegally—setting up businesses and buying or leasing real estate, they create a pro-China constituency of people who enter into an economic cycle with Chinese entities, according to Newsham.

"All in all, this Chinese presence creates 'influence'. An influence translates into political power, as well as commercial power, and one-day military power—as the PLA gains access," he said, referring to the acronym for the Chinese Communist Party's military, the People's Liberation Army.

The unnamed expert source said growing Chinese influence cultivated through Chinese casinos and business operations could be seen in the Solomon Islands, an island nation in the South Pacific that has recently drawn scrutiny when its prime minister, Manasseh Sogavare, signed a controversial security deal with the Chinese regime late last month.

"The political situation in the Solomon Islands tells this clearly. The current Sogavare government used the Pacific Casino Hotel in Honiara, owned by Late Patrick Leong, as a base of political operation," said the source adding that within the precinct of Pacific Casino Hotel there are multiple businesses, including a major casino licensed to Leong.

Leong was one of the country's richest Chinese businessmen and a naturalized citizen whose properties had been targeted in politically-instigated riots since 2006.

The unnamed source said it's known within the power circles in the Solomon Islands that the Leong family allegedly has ties with the Chinese Communist Party. "CCP utilizes the Chinese diaspora all over the world as their united front," the source said referring

to the regime's "united front" strategy that seeks to coopt and influence local elites to adopt policies friendly to the CCP.

The Epoch Times reached out to the Pacific Casino Hotel management for a response on the allegations against the hotel's owners but did not receive a reply by press time.

Celsus Talifilu, a political adviser to the premier of Solomon Islands' Malaita province told The Epoch Times that casinos in the country are linked to the logging industry. Malaita is the most country's populous province and is at the center of resistance against Sogavare's pro-China policies.

More than half of China's tropical log comes from the Solomon Islands and its neighbor, Papua New Guinea, and for the Solomon Islands, this accounts for 80 percent of its total exports, according to conservation news site Mongabay.

"[There are] lots of connections between politicians and the logging companies. Logging companies affected the political governments as well. And in that sense it's through that connection that there's a connection with the casinos as well," said Talifilu.

Money from the gaming industry influences lawmakers and the connections between that industry and politicians is very visible, according to Talifilu.

"Basically those owners of casinos are mostly people who also participated in the logging industry, not only the Chinese but also the Vietnamese who own casinos," he said.

One of the businesses in the Pacific Casino Hotel is called Cowboy's Grill, which is an entertainment venue opened and operated by Philippine-Chinese logger Johnny Sy, according to the unnamed source.

"This logger (tropical timber logging businessman) was a major supporter of Sogavare and a mentor of Sogavare's nephew, [Robson] Djokovic and also a mentor to current Attorney General, John Muria Junior," alleged the source.

The Island Sun, a leading media outlet in the Solomon Islands, cited documents while reporting that Sy, who is Sogavare's Special Envoy to the Philippines, sold Cowboy's Grill for \$1 million to a company called Clandestine, whose shareholders include Sogavare's Chief of Staff Robson Djokovic, Attorney General John Muria Junior and the lawyer for OUR (Ownership, Unity and Responsibility) Party, Wilson Rano.

The Epoch Times reached out to Muria Junior and Rano on LinkedIn but did not receive a reply by press time. The publication was unable to reach out to Djokovic.

OUR Party was founded by Sogavare in 2010 who was then opposition party leader, with eight opposition MPs. They first contested the election as OUR party candidates in the same year. OUR Party's 2021 convention was held at the Cowboy's Grill, according to Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation.

Pascal, the analyst, accused Sogavare of letting CCP proxies, agents, and companies run riot, "distorting the economies and politics of Solomons" after his government switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the Chinese regime in 2019.

CCP influence in politics has increased so much, according to Pascal, that out of the 50 lawmakers in parliament, 39 who were supportive of Sogavare were last year provided with additional money out of the National

Development Fund, jointly operated by the Solomon Islands government and the Chinese embassy. The 11 left out were those who were "by and large, less supportive" of Sogavare, Pascal said.

In this context of increasing CCP influence, the Pacific Casino Hotel in the nation's capital Honiara, which had borne the brunt of rioters in 2006 and 2019, again became the epicenter of anti-China riots in 2021.

Various political rival camps in the Solomon Islands are known by the names of the plush hotels they frequent in Honiara where they enjoy patronage from its owners. Sogavare's camp has been using Pacific Casino Hotel as a base for political operations, and are thus known as the "Pacific Casino Hotel camp."

Talifilu said that the people in the Solomon Islands are worried about the moral implications of these casinos run by the Chinese or the Chinese diaspora and the country is yet to adopt any legislation restricting casino activity.

"From time to time, you hear people talk about it, especially in the churches, and even common people who are affected by these operations of casinos. People are addicted to it, but there is no support system from the state to rehabilitate those who are addicted," said Talifilu, adding that with casinos comes night clubbing and with that comes along other social problems.

The Epoch Times reached out to Solomon Island's Prime Minister's Press Secretariat on Facebook, the only way to online reach Sogavare for a response against these various allegations including links with CCP through the logging companies and casinos but didn't get a response during the press time.

## Intelligence Gathering

Chinese-linked casinos in PICs are also "useful platforms" for Chinese intelligence-gathering operations and recruitment operations, according to Newsham.

A 2018 report by the U.S-China Economic and Security Review Commission said that Chinese-backed casinos in the Pacific are a threat to U.S. military in the region.

Newsham said that the Chinese establishing casinos in the islands of Saipan and Tinian, part of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. territory, was deliberate, and was aimed at setting up a foothold in a location of strategic importance to the U.S. military and the United States' defenses in the Pacific region.

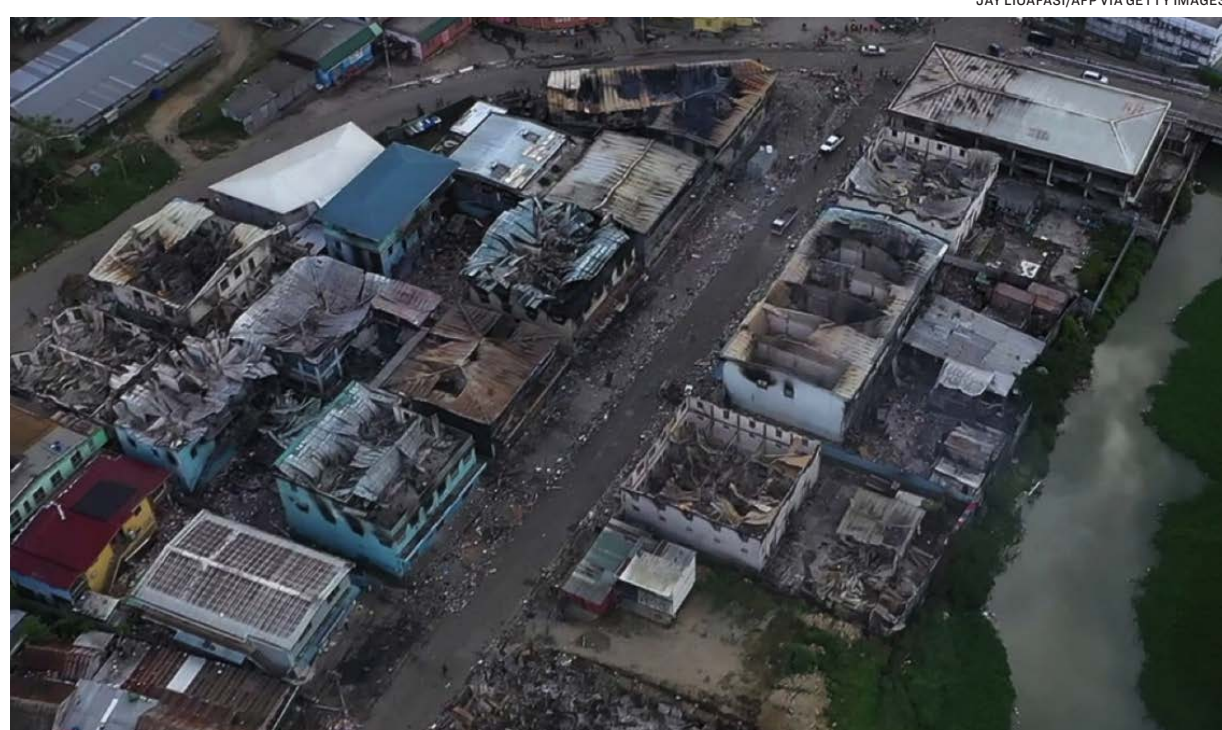
"The Chinese casinos on Saipan and Tinian (U.S. territory) and the Chinese presence that came with them was well-positioned for potential intelligence operations given the proximity to U.S. military installations and U.S. military operations," he said.

Along with intelligence gathering, the Chinese regime also tried to erode the Northern Mariana Islands' longstanding allegiance to the United States and support for U.S. military activities.

"The Chinese casinos are now closed down for not paying taxes and after having been sued for underpaying their labor force. But the PRC did have one major success. They were able to bolster local opposition to a proposed US Marine/US Navy amphibious and combined arms training area in the Northern Marianas. This plan is dead," said Newsham.



Media surround the car as Wan Kuok-koi (C) is driven away from the Macau prison by two unidentified men on Dec. 1, 2012.



An aerial view shows burnt-out buildings in Honiara's Chinatown on Nov. 27, 2021, after calm returned to the Solomon Islands' capital after days of rioting left at least three dead and reduced sections of the city to smoldering ruins.

GREG BAKER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Police officers patrolling Kashgar city, in China's western Xinjiang region, on June 4, 2019.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

# Leaked Xinjiang Police Files Provide 'Absolutely Shocking' Evidence of Mass Persecution: Former US Ambassador

MICHAEL WASHBURN &amp; DAVID ZHANG

A report released by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation that presents leaked documents from the files of the Xinjiang police offers "absolutely shocking" evidence of the chronic abuse and brutality inflicted on the Uyghur population in China's far west region, according to Andrew Bremberg, the foundation's president and a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Bremberg called the leaked documents, known as the "Xinjiang Police Files," a "huge data cache that is unprecedented of its kind" and said that the files contain the personal information of hundreds of thousands of detained persons. Analysts estimate that the Chinese regime is holding more than 1 million Uyghurs and other ethnic Muslim minorities in a network of concentration camps across the region.

The files present "extensive incriminating details from inside China's internment camp system," the foundation stated in a May 23 statement, which went on to describe the contents of the files in more detail. The files purport to reveal thousands of images of Uyghur prisoners, from children to elderly men and women, and pictures of police officers and guards placing handcuffs and shackles on prisoners in the course of drills.

Besides the images of prisoners and guards, the files purport to contain the text of high-level directives and orders from Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials regarding the classification and treatment of the incarcerated Uyghurs. One such directive, according to the foundation, is the exhortation of Chen Quanguo, former Xinjiang CCP party secretary, that officials and police should treat those of different ethnicities as violent criminals.

The files also present a speech from an unnamed "central government official" stating that Chinese leader Xi Jinping issued orders to expand the funding and number of guards available for the highly crowded jails of Xinjiang and to enlarge the internment system within the region.

Speaking to EpochTV's "China Insider" program, Bremberg said that much of what the files have brought to light is consistent with what observers of the human rights situation in Xinjiang knew to be going on, but that it's still shocking to see the images of very young detainees



Andrew Bremberg, president of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, in Washington on Feb. 3, 2022.

and those of advanced age. One of the detainees is a girl photographed at 14 and jailed at 15, he noted.

"Those photos were just shocking and horrifying to see. I'd also say [the same about] some of the other photos that show not just those that have been imprisoned, but show the actual security forces inside those internment facilities and how they operate," Bremberg said.

The former ambassador expressed a highly critical view of the visit by Michelle Bachelet, the U.N.'s High Commissioner for Human Rights, to China, the first trip by such an official since 2005.

"The visit by the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to China right now is very troubling. I've spoken with her many times in the past. We've long advocated the role that her office can play in bringing to light and addressing the human rights abuses happening in Xinjiang, but it's very disappointing that she chose to go at this time, in a way that limits her ability to have any sort of independence or do any sort of investigation," he said.

According to Bremberg, neither Bachelet nor the Chinese regime regards her visit as an investigation of the abuses taking place in China or in Xinjiang specifically, and Beijing is able to use the timing of the visit to hamper any inquiries that Bachelet might make. The ongoing pandemic and the lockdown of Shanghai and other areas of China keep Bachelet in what Bremberg calls "a very tightly controlled, closed-loop with no press moving around."

If the regime insisted on such restrictions as a condition of Bachelet's visit, the appropriate response would have been to decline to visit China at all, on the

grounds that the necessary conditions were not in place, Bremberg argues.

"She's there right now, and the public has been told that she'll have a press conference right before she leaves. I'm very concerned about this visit," he said.

Besides his immediate reservations about Bachelet's trip, Bremberg described a larger concern that he feels about a lack of transparency about the United Nations office's relations with the CCP over human rights and other issues.

"What is the communication they've had with the government of China? And what response have they had? They don't need to condemn China or pass judgment, they just need to be transparent," he said.

"It's up to other countries to then speak out and say to China, why have you refused to meet the conditions that [Bachelet's] office has asked for? But by keeping all of that secret, she doesn't allow the United States or European countries, or other governments around the world, to actually support the work of her office," Bremberg said.

The former ambassador called the visit a mistake and said that a transparent investigation of the issues brought to light in the Xinjiang Police Files is impossible in the circumstances. He went on to express concerns about how CCP officials will spin the visit in their public statements.

"You cannot control what other people say about you. But it's very concerning to imagine how the Chinese government will portray this visit from a domestic or international message or propaganda perspective. And if they make portrayals that suggest that she had this wonderful visit, she really bears a moral responsibility



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet in Guangzhou, in China's Guangdong Province, on May 23, 2022

to immediately and publicly respond and say what were the conditions on this trip, what was allowed and what was not," Bremberg argued.

In response to an email query from The Epoch Times about whether Bachelet's trip to Xinjiang will be an independent investigation, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said that that was "an essential condition."

Bremberg made a passionate case for ending the human rights abuses and repression going on in Xinjiang.

"We are acutely aware of the 100 million victims of communism over the course of the last century, under various communist regimes. And we know that the only way that the victimization ends is when the other countries in the international community stand up and press regimes, like the Chinese Communist Party today, and demand that they change their behavior."

*Michael Washburn is a New York-based reporter who covers U.S. and China-related topics. He has a background in legal and financial journalism, and also writes about arts and culture. Additionally, he is the host of the weekly podcast Reading the Globe. His books include "The Uprooted and Other Stories," "When We're Grownups," and "Stranger, Stranger."*

*David Zhang is the host of China Insider on EpochTV. He is currently based in New York and Washington DC covering China-related news. He focuses on expert interviews and news commentary on China affairs, especially issues regarding the U.S.-China relationship.*

## CCP INFLUENCE

## EXCLUSIVE: Lithuanian Ambassador: Vilnius Withstood Beijing's Coercive Pressure

ELLA KIETLINSKA

When the Chinese regime resorted to political and economic coercion to punish Lithuania for leaving a voluntary grouping of countries led by China and growing its ties with Taiwan, Lithuania did not cave in and withstood the pressure with the support of the European bloc and other countries.

Lithuania informed the Chinese regime in February 2021 about its decision to withdraw from the "17+1" framework, said Diana Mickeviciene, Lithuania's current ambassador to China.

Like other countries participating in the framework, Lithuania had high hopes to advance their exports to China, Mickeviciene told The Epoch Times. "China has been positioned as a very prospective market for [certain] Lithuanian products."

Since the inception of the "16+1" platform in 2012, the successive Lithuanian governments made a lot of efforts in realizing that potential hoping to achieve a major breakthrough in export to China but the numbers were growing very slowly, the ambassador said.

The "16+1" forum—China-Central and Eastern European Countries Cooperation (China-CEEC)—is a Chinese-led initiative aimed at promoting economic, technological, and cultural cooperation between China and participating countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

In 2019, Greece, an E.U. member, joined the forum making it the "17+1" but after Lithuania's withdrawal the platform became the "16+1" again.

Despite having such potential Lithuania could not actually enter the Chinese market, despite its efforts, and for a decade it had been in talks with China about what went wrong, Mickeviciene explained.

Lithuania's exports of goods to China rose from nearly \$86 million in 2012 to nearly \$358 million in 2020, while the country's imports from China rose from nearly \$682 million to \$1.3 billion during the same period of time, according to United Nations Comtrade data.

The Baltic country planned to sell its high-quality wheat on the Chinese market but its efforts to advance wheat exports met with hindrances, the ambassador said. For example, in early 2020 several Lithuanian wheat containers were halted by the Chinese authorities due to allegedly being contaminated with a fungus that does not exist in Lithuania. Mickeviciene said that as an ambassador she tried to resolve the issue but to no avail.

Mickeviciene said she believes that wheat could have been blocked in retaliation for the country's earlier proposal involving the Taiwanese in the general meeting of the World Health Organization made by then-Lithuanian Foreign Minister in his conversation with the Organizations Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

There were lots of barriers preventing Lithuania from entering the Chinese market which "were abolished so slowly or almost not abolished" so the country continued to have a trade deficit with China, Mickeviciene said.

Lithuania's bilateral dialogue with China started turning into discussions with all forum participants, which became the second reason prompting Lithuania's withdrawal from the forum, Mickeviciene said.

"We had our bilateral issues, but we were forced to sort of discussing them in the view of all the 17 countries, which we thought was not justified because the bilateral track is still the main track and every sovereign country wants to have a bilateral track."

Moreover, in the last years, Lithuania has seen certain disguised attempts by China to offer "carrots" to separate countries or a group of countries, which in Mickeviciene's opinion, were undermining the E.U. market. "In the E.U., we have a single market and we have a single trading area." Chinese products are admitted to a single market of the E.U. by one set of principles and standards, she explained.

"We've seen certain efforts of playing us against each other [and] against Brussels." Among the participants of the "17+1" platform are 12 E.U. member states from Central and Eastern Europe and five Balkan countries which are potential candidates to the Union.

The E.U. single market is an entity enabling the free movement of people, services, goods, and capital throughout the territories of all participating countries, according to the European Commission's website.

Lithuania's Foreign Minister Gabrielius



Taipei announced it had formally opened a de facto embassy in Lithuania using the name Taiwan, a significant diplomatic departure that defied a pressure campaign by Beijing, on Nov. 18, 2021.

Landsbergis told BNS (Baltic News Service) when Lithuania's withdrawal was announced that the "17+1" is a "divisive format," according to The Baltic Times.

"I would urge all E.U. member states to seek a more effective 27+1 attitude and cooperation with China. Europe's unity is what makes it strong and influential," Landsbergis said referring to the 27 members of the European Union.

Lithuania also hoped to attract some transit from China due to the Baltic country's favorable geographical location, Mickeviciene said. "We are very much on the crossroads."

### We've seen certain efforts of playing us against each other [and] against Brussels.

Diana Mickeviciene, Lithuania's ambassador to China

China has been also interested in Lithuania's only seaport but the Baltic country has very strict foreign investment screening laws which limit investing in the country's critical infrastructure to members of NATO, the E.U., and OECD (The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), the ambassador said. This rule by definition automatically excludes China, she added.

### Leaving '17+1' Forum

The Chinese seemed to understand Lithuania's decision to leave "17+1" but asked the country to not make it public and Lithuania agreed, Mickeviciene said.

Beijing, however, kept on inviting the country representatives to "17+1" meetings and was displaying the Lithuanian flag during these meetings without the country's permission, she said. The Chinese regime did not honor its own commitment that the participation in the "17+1" is voluntary, she added.

The Lithuanian government had no other choice but to make its decision public and announced it in May 2021, the ambassador said.

After the announcement, the Lithuanian embassy immediately started feeling the consequences, as its cultural projects had been stalled, Mickeviciene said, adding that the Chinese party started declining her meetings.

Chinese students who were studying the Lithuanian language were prevented, under various pretexts such as COVID-19 restrictions, from attending the cultural events held by the Embassy, she said. Galleries and private museums refused to deal with the Embassy saying that they were informed



Lithuania's Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis speaks with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken (not pictured) in the Benjamin Franklin Room of the State Department ahead of a meeting, in Washington, on Sept. 15, 2021.

[Lithuania] to make the same mistake," Mickeviciene said.

"My government took it very seriously as something which was limiting our ability to operate as a sovereign country," she stated.

Lithuania was also accused of violating the one-China policy to which it committed upon the establishment of diplomatic relations with China, the ambassador said. But the office opened by Taiwan has not been given any diplomatic status, so the one-China agreement has not been breached, she explained. "This is not an embassy or sort of semi-embassy."

"Even the Chinese side themselves admitted in their written and verbal communications that we violated the spirit, but not the letter of the commitment."

### Taiwanese Office Opened

After the announcement, a huge number of Lithuanian businesses exporting products to China encountered hindrances from the Chinese, and even a direct train from a Chinese city to Lithuania was canceled, the ambassador said.

When the Taiwanese office was opened a few months later the Chinese regime downgraded its diplomatic relation with Lithuania to the level of chargé d'affaires, a rank lower than that of ambassador, and unilaterally renamed both embassies to the office of chargé d'affaires. Both ambassadors had been recalled earlier by their governments so the embassies could have been headed by chargé d'affaires but neither the international law nor Lithuanian domestic law has any provision for the "office of chargé d'affaires," Mickeviciene explained.

The name "Embassy of Lithuania" was removed from the navigation system, Chinese customs have refused to deal with cargo, banks, and other institutions were informed that the Lithuanian Embassy no longer exists, she added.

The embassy personnel were given seven days to surrender their diplomatic accreditation cards which were the only legal basis for their stay in China, the ambassador said, adding that they did not have Chinese visas on their passports due to a visa-free agreement for diplomatic personnel.

The Lithuanian government decided then to evacuate all the embassy back to Lithuania on the first available flight, she said. "You can't risk the well-being of your employees."

"Depriving the existing embassy of its status, name, and IDs is unprecedented. And I think it's... a huge violation of international agreements."

Since then the Lithuanian Embassy to China operates from Lithuania as an online embassy and is only able to do certain parts of its job, the ambassador said.

The Chinese authorities have also effectively blocked imports from Lithuania by removing the country's name from their customs systems, Mickeviciene said. A day or two later, the name reappeared but the systems did not process any requests if the country of origin was Lithuania, she continued.

Furthermore, the pressure was exerted on supply chains and international companies dealing with China to get rid of Lithuanian components in their products in return for access to the Chinese market, Mickeviciene said.

Although Lithuanian exports to China account only for less than 1 percent of the country's total exports the country is home to hundreds of businesses making components used by international companies to manufacture products for the Chinese market, according to the Gatestone Institute.

The E.U. upon collecting evidence brought a case before the World Trade Organization against China for the economic coercion against Lithuania, Mickeviciene said, adding that her country received a lot of support from the E.U. and individual countries including the United States.

"The collective pushback resulted in more or less leaving alone the multinationals, the global supply chains, yet again, the situation is not completely clear and over."

In February this year, China imposed an official ban on importing certain Lithuanian products such as dairy, beef, and beer, citing problems in sanitary compliance which Mickeviciene dismissed. To mitigate the impact, the Lithuanian government tried to assist businesses in redirecting the goods planned for the Chinese market, she added.

Lithuania has received political support from the United States since the early days when it stood up to the Chinese coercion and it also intensified its economic cooperation with the United States, Mickeviciene said. "Our exports to the U.S. have grown exponentially last year. So we may be losing the China market but I think we have opened a lot of windows into the U.S. market [as well as] other markets."

"We may be a small nation but we are very proud of our sovereignty, we fought very hard to be a sovereign country so we can't compromise on our sovereign decisions," Mickeviciene said.

Frank Fang contributed to this report.

# “A Life-Changing Experience.”

—Stage Whispers



ALL-NEW PRODUCTION  
WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA



## 神韻晚會 2022 SHEN YUN China Before Communism

**“A fascinating insight** into what China’s culture used to be and what I hope one day will be restored to China.”

—Edward McMillan-Scott, former Vice-President of the European Parliament

**“It gave me hope** that even in places and times of oppression and darkness, so much light can come out of that.”

—Paul Skousen, professor and author

**“I encourage everyone to see** and all of us to learn from.”

—Donna Karan, creator of DKNY

**“incredible hope, incredible spirit,** and rising up to the divine, rising up to something greater than yourself.”

—Rita Cosby, Emmy Award-winning journalist

“It’s something unique and I cannot imagine not having seen this, it’s **something everyone should see**”

—Stephen Meringoff, the founder and managing partner of Himmel & Meringoff

“Powerful choreography... Truly magical. **A must-see!**”

—IN New York magazine

Let Shen Yun Take You on an Unforgettable Journey

**June 10-12**  
**Academy of Music, Philadelphia**

240 S Broad St, Philadelphia, PA 19102

TICKETS

Online: [ShenYun.com/Phila](https://ShenYun.com/Phila) | Hotline: 844-888-7469 | Theater: 215-893-1999