

WEEK 27, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER

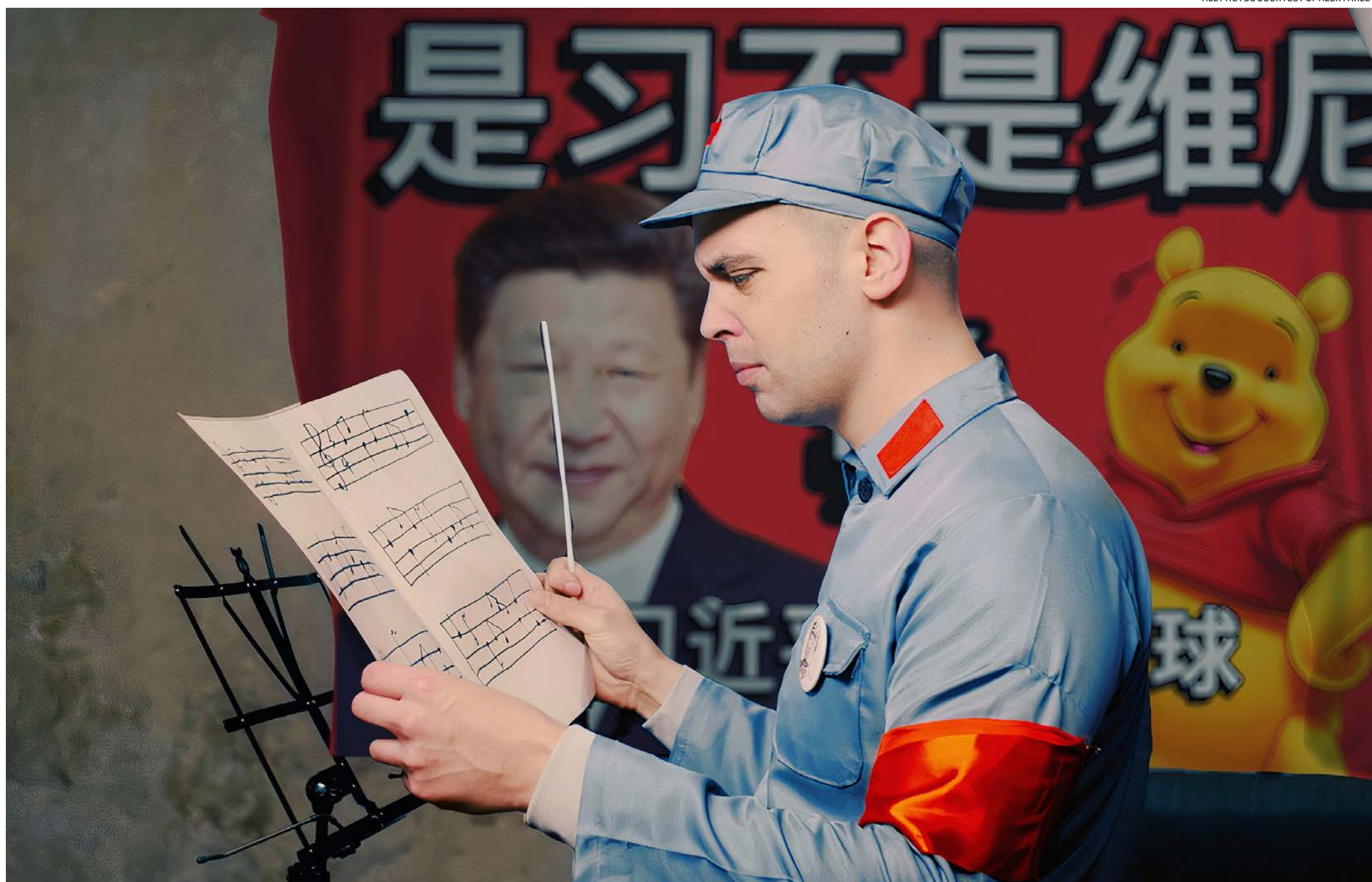
COURTESY OF ALEX FARLEY

Alex Farley
during the filming
of "Behind the
Spotlight" in 2017.

'LET THEM SPEAK'

AMERICAN YOUTUBER CHOOSES CHINESE
PEOPLE OVER COMMUNIST PARTY

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Alex Farley during "The Party's MC" music video shoot in 2022.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

'Let Them Speak'

American YouTuber Chooses Chinese People Over Communist Party

TERRI WU

A 31-year-old American has the perfect arsenal to become a celebrity in China: native-level Mandarin skills, credentials from a Confucius Institute language center and the prestigious Central Academy of Drama in Beijing, and an extroverted, fun personality.

That is, if only he could commit to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and be one of the "yang wumao," or "foreign 50-cent army," a term Chinese use to describe Westerners who do the CCP's bidding in the media and online.

The 50-cent army is the CCP's notorious network of online trolls who steer discussion in favor of Beijing's propaganda points. The name is derived from the half a Chinese yuan they're reportedly paid for each online post.

But being a foreigner doing this work is much more lucrative.

"I tried to be like a 'yang wumao,'" Alex Farley, who goes by the stage name Lele Farley, told The Epoch Times. "I tried to be a sellout. I was just really bad at it."

He now thinks of himself as the "facilitator" to bridge between Americans and the Chinese people because of his unique background and his understanding of China.

"If you want to sum up my entire political stance when it comes to China in three words, it's 'Let them speak,'" he said, referring to the Chinese people.

Stifled Entertainment Industry

Farley's first trip to China was in the summer of 2007 as a part of a student exchange program. He was 16. Two years later, he got an internship in Shanghai. He saw construction projects everywhere in the city and considered China the land of opportunity.

After graduating from Emory University in Atlanta with a double major in economics and Chinese studies, he went to the Confucius Institute at eastern China's Nanjing University to learn Chinese in 2014. A year later, he went to the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing to study performing, broadcasting, and hosting.

The first experience that gave him pause about his time in China came in 2016 when

The only reason everybody's doing it is that they are doing it for the person above them to not get in trouble. It's systematic.

Alex Farley, YouTuber

he was a student at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing. It involved the usage of the term "fu er dai," or "second-generation rich," referring to offspring of CCP elite or other wealthy families.

Farley was working on a talk show at the time. While filming, he was comparing studying as a foreign student in China versus in the United States, and used the word "fu er dai."

"Stop!" The producer immediately paused the filming and ran up to him, "Lele, you cannot say 'fu er dai.'"

"What? Why not?" asked Farley.

A "fu er dai" just did a hit-and-run in a luxury car and got away from it, the producer said. The incident got nationwide attention; many Chinese were angry about it. Therefore, the phrase was lousy publicity and might bring trouble to the program.

That got Farley thinking.

"As a younger man, I was okay with using whataboutism to excuse the atrocities committed by the [Chinese] government," he said.

"I just went, 'Well, America does this, too.' Then I wouldn't think any deeper about it.



"But once I started to be in the entertainment industry and see how much the government stifled entertainment, I really started to think, 'OK, this is kind of [expletive].'"

That's when Farley knew he couldn't last long in the CCP propaganda game. He told himself to endure it for a few years to become famous. Then he could return to the United States to host his own "honesty radio show" or "honesty podcast."

He dropped out of the Central Academy of Drama and took a job at a local Chinese TV station in Los Angeles in the summer of 2017. From the fall of 2017 to the summer of 2018, he hosted a show in Los Angeles, interviewing Hollywood artists for iQIYI, one of the largest Chinese online video platforms.

Returning to China

During the program, he realized his Chinese needed to reach another level. So he applied for the Shanghai Theatre Academy's master's program in intercultural communications. He got in and went back to Shanghai in the fall of 2018.

When he was in the central Chinese city of Wuhan hosting an event, he saw a program on cable TV in the hotel room. The hostess read CCP leader Xi Jinping's letter to his father when he had to miss his father's birthday party in 2001 due to a business trip. All the students in the audience looked like, "Oh my God. It's the greatest thing ever," Farley recalled.

"That, with him [Xi] also throwing away Hong Kong law by going after those book salesmen," said Farley, "I was like, 'This is bad. This is really, really bad.'"

During his previous stay in China in 2015, five book salesmen associated with Hong Kong's Causeway Bay Bookstore—a shop known for selling books banned in the Mainland about the lives of CCP officials—disappeared. In 2016, they were confirmed to be detained in mainland China.

This time, China gave Farley more than a pause; he started seeing "commonalities from the Cultural Revolution and what was happening in China."

During his Chinese studies at Emory University, he took a course on the Cultural Revolution, a period of intense social

Alex Farley at a local farmer's market in Dali, Yunnan Province, China, in 2015. In 2015, Farley went to the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing to study performing, broadcasting, and hosting.

In Farley's view, the CCP instills its 'holy trinity' into Chinese people's minds like a 'religious doctrine': the CCP, the Chinese people, and the country of China. To the Party, they are the one and the same.



The thumbnail of Alex Farley's "Cold War 2020" YouTube video that got him banned in China.

upheaval at the hands of the CCP from 1966 to 1976. His final project was to act in a Cultural Revolution play.

One characteristic of plays during that period was the actors' eyebrows, Farley noted. "Their eyebrows are really tensed. Looking at the eyebrows, it looks like they are angry. But then they are smiling at the same time.

"They are pretending to be self-righteous. It's all a show."

In the TV program he watched in the hotel room in Wuhan, Farley saw the same thing in the hostess and the kids in the audience. Everyone acted as if someone required them to "stand up straight, tuck your back in, put those eyebrows up, and smile bigger," he said.

"The only reason everybody's doing it is that they are doing it for the person above them to not get in trouble. It's systematic. It's messed up. It's really messed up," he said, "because when you compare that to a genuine Chinese person's reaction, to a genuine Chinese person's laughter or anger, it's very different.

"And it steals the human honesty element out of Chinese people, which is one that I'm very familiar with."

Then, the final straw happened.

In December 2018, shortly after Canada arrested Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou at the request of U.S. prosecutors, two Canadians were detained in China on spying charges. The businessmen were released in September 2021 right after the U.S. Department of Justice settled its charges with Meng, allowing her to return to China. Farley remembered watching the news on TV in 2018. He said to himself, "That's it. I'm out."

"It was a very logical decision of, 'I'm investing my time into this country, which is going down the drain. And if I continue to do this, I will go down with it.' And then I'm better off to just cut loose now," he said.

Back in America and Overcoming Fear He returned to the United States before Christmas 2018, after one semester with the Shanghai Theatre Academy. He had sold everything before leaving for China, since he had planned to stay for at least three years. Therefore, when he returned, he had nothing. So he went to his parent's house in Vermont.

One sunny but freezing day in January 2019, he was listening to a Chinese band, and the song was very good. He had a revelation that this was what he wanted to do: bilingual rap and comedy.

"I want to rap about the fact that the friends I have, the people that I know, and that I have run into throughout my very long time studying Chinese are so much more similar to my American friends than they are different," he said in his YouTube video "How I Got Banned in China."

"It's the powers above, the so-called leaders above, telling us to attack each other. When in reality, we all want the same thing. We all want a better world, a better environment, and a better life."

At that time, he was still careful with his word choices so as not to offend the CCP. To him, the costs were too great: Speaking out against the Party would result in him not being able to return to China, which would mean giving up an important part of his life. Some of his closest friends lived in China, and he lived most of his 20s there.

He moved back to Los Angeles in February 2019 and made a living there doing stand-up comedies and hosting bilingual events. He had improved his hosting skills and made good money there. At the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, he lined up about 10 Chinese New Year gala hosting jobs.

Then COVID-19 hit. As a result, all his Chinese New Year gala events were canceled, along with his income stream, which would support him most of the year. He saw many Americans confused about what happened in China. Many people didn't know that the CCP should be the responsible party for the pandemic, given its coverup of the initial outbreak in Wuhan. "I just thought that the world needs

someone like me to come out and be like, 'This is what's happening. This is who the Chinese government is,'" Farley said. He would know; he had worked at People's Daily, the CCP's official mouthpiece, for a year and a half and hosted many events for the Chinese regime agencies in China and Los Angeles.

"I've always had a deep understanding of the Chinese government, and I've always wanted to speak out about it," he said in his YouTube video. "I was just scared to. I didn't want to lose China."

Finally, through his family and friends' encouragement and watching Dave Chapelle, Farley decided to do what he had always wanted: political satire. He thought that as an artist, he had the responsibility to rise up to help people process what was happening because it was so crazy.

As soon as he decided to speak out, "the creativity surged through my brain like electrical circuits." He wrote a song soon after. He thought the song's release would get him banned in China. However, the ban came sooner than that.

In one of his "Cold War 2020" videos on June 4, 2020, he wore a Winnie the Pooh onesie and impersonated the CCP leader in "Xi Jinping Finds Hope in America's Turmoil." Xi is nicknamed "Winnie the Pooh" among Chinese netizens for his apparent likeness to the cartoon bear. Within a matter of hours, Farley was banned in China.

Today, one can't find his account on Chinese social media platforms. Only one video of his father and uncles commenting on Chinese rock music remains.

CCP's 'Holy Trinity'

In Farley's view, the CCP instills its "holy trinity" into Chinese people's minds like a "religious doctrine": the CCP, the Chinese people, and the country of China. To the Party, they are the one and the same.

Yet, Farley chose the Chinese people over the CCP. During then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's China policy speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in July 2020, Farley spoke with Chinese American attendees outside the venue.

"For the first time in my life, I could freely engage with Chinese people in an unrestricted, unfiltered discussion. It was awesome, an incredible time."

"Chinese people do have a thirst for debate and discussion," Farley said. "I hate when Chinese people tell me, 'We are not interested in politics.' It's like, 'You don't even know that.' If you give them the option to be interested in it, I guarantee they will be interested."

Since he was banned in China, Farley hasn't been able to host events for Chinese regime agencies. And the occasional China-related business opportunity also disappeared after recruiters reviewed his YouTube videos.

This type of loss was expected.

However, he thinks the world is not too far away from seeing large companies running advertising campaigns touting the fact that they don't bow down to China. To him, the hurdle is that these companies don't want to be perceived as racists or against the Chinese people. Yet once they know that the CCP isn't the same as Chinese people and that Chinese people are victims of the CCP, these companies will speak out.

Farley makes enough from his bilingual YouTube channel now to cover his monthly expenses, and he just got there two months ago. He's opening a new English YouTube channel "Farley's Far East" in early July to expand his English-speaking audience base.

He describes himself as a "struggling artist." However, "I have not regretted it. I would tell you if I regretted it, but—not for a moment."

For Farley, it's not about going after a big noble cause. "I just get a kick out of honesty," he said. "I think great comedians through history feel that when you make a joke and someone laughs, there's a moment there and a connection.

"An honest and absolutely visceral reaction, I crave that."

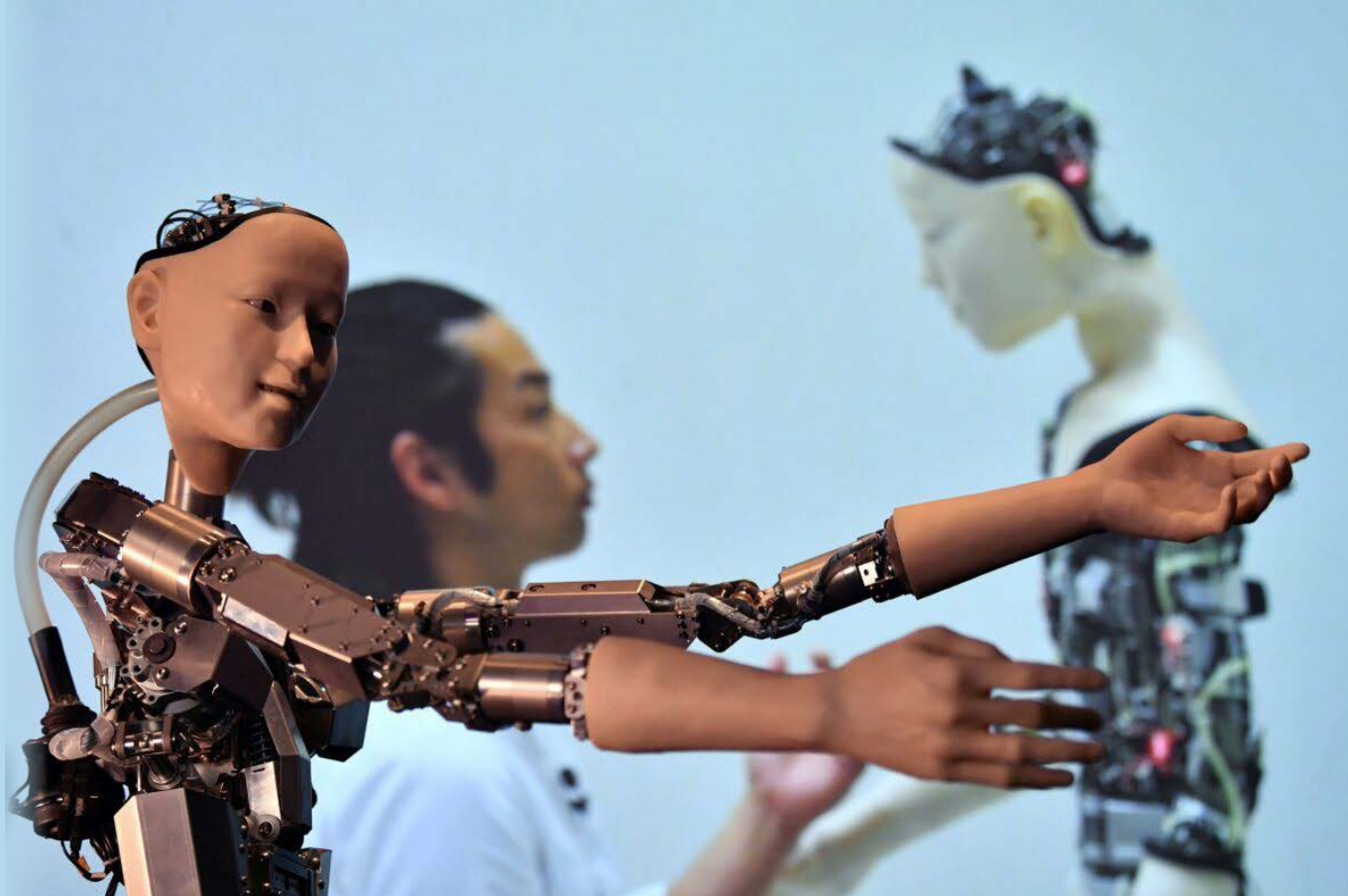


Alex Farley (C) with friends at the Tiananmen Square in Beijing, in 2010. Some of Farley's closest friends live in China, and he lived most of his 20s there.

BEN STANSALL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

MILITARY COMPETITION

Chinese Military Relies on American Computer Chips to Advance AI Technology: Georgetown University Report



An AI robot with a humanistic face is pictured during a photocall to promote the forthcoming exhibition entitled "AI: More than Human", at the Barbican Centre in London on May 15, 2019.

KATABELLA ROBERTS

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is largely dependent on computer chips designed by American companies for its progress in artificial intelligence (AI) technology, according to a new report by researchers at Georgetown University.

The authors of the study, published in June, analyzed 24 public contracts awarded by PLA units and state-owned defense enterprises in 2020, sifting through thousands of purchasing records to find out exactly how the Chinese military comes to acquire AI chips.

They found that the PLA is placing orders for AI chips designed by companies in the United States and manufactured in Taiwan and South Korea, despite efforts by both the Trump and Biden administrations to limit technology exports to the Chinese military.

Those AI chips could effectively bolster the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in its efforts to be a world leader in AI.

Of the 97 individual AI chips identified in public PLA purchase records, nearly all were designed by Nvidia (which currently dominates the AI chip market), Xilinx (now AMD), Intel, or Microsemi, according to the report.

"By comparison, we could not find any public records of PLA units or state-owned defense enterprises placing orders for high-end AI chips designed by Chinese companies, such as HiSilicon (Huawei), Sugon, Sunway, Hygon, or Phytium," the authors noted.

The report comes as China continues to make great strides with its advanced machine learning systems, which are powered by AI chips, and plans to become a global leader in AI by 2030.

The authors found that the PLA is placing orders for AI chips designed by companies in the United States and manufactured in Taiwan and South Korea, despite efforts by both the Trump and Biden administrations to limit technology exports to the Chinese military.

Competitive Advantage

Such technology could give the CCP a stronger competitive advantage over the United States, particularly in terms of its military, which could become one of the most capable in the world.

According to a 2017 plan released by Beijing titled "New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan," China has ambitious goals with regard to developing AI, including achieving "major breakthroughs in basic theories for AI" by 2025.

Those breakthroughs, according to the document, will be so significant that "some technologies and applications achieve a world-leading level and AI becomes the main driving force for China's industrial upgrading and economic transformation."

By 2050, China also hopes that the AI industry will "enter into the global high-end value chain."

"This new-generation AI will be widely used in intelligent manufacturing, intelligent medicine, intelligent city, intelligent agriculture, national defense construction, and other fields, while the scale of AI's core industry will be more than 400 billion RMB (\$59.8 billion) and the scale of related industries will exceed 5 trillion RMB (over \$747 billion)."

"The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) will profoundly change human society and life and change the world," the 2017 plan states. "To seize the major strategic opportunity for the development of AI, to build China's first-mover advantage in the development of AI, to accelerate the construction of an innovative nation and global power in science and technology, in accordance with the requirements of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council, this plan has been formulated."

Increased Restrictions

While the Chinese military's progress in artificial intelligence largely depends on its ability to obtain AI chips, both the Trump and Biden administrations have attempted to curtail technology exports to military end-users in China through various restrictions and policies.

During his time in office, President Donald Trump expanded the China-specific "military end user" rule so that it applied to basic semiconductors, semiconductor production equipment, and other items, restricting those items from being exported to China, and banned Americans from doing business with multiple Chinese technology companies, citing national security concerns.

President Joe Biden, meanwhile, has substantially increased restrictions on American investments in a string of Chinese companies, particularly those tied to the defense or surveillance technology sectors.

However, the authors of the Georgetown University study note that current policies put in place by the United States government are insufficient to limit Chinese military access to AI chips.

Instead, they suggest that the Biden administration adopt new export control measures in an effort to keep the powerful AI chips from falling into the hands of the PLA.

"Ultimately, effectively limiting Chinese military progress in AI and other cutting-edge technologies will require the U.S. government to adopt novel forms of export control, which extend well beyond the current focus on visible end-users and end-users," the authors wrote. "At the same time, the U.S. government should seek to improve its own situational awareness by better harnessing open-source information and sharing relevant export information with allies and partners."

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WANG ZHAO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



A Chinese J-20 stealth fighter performs at the Airshow China 2018 in Zhuhai, south China's Guangdong Province on Nov. 6, 2018.

TAIWAN

China Unlikely to Invade Taiwan If It Affects Economy: Ex-TOPGUN Commander

ELLA KIETLINSKA & JOSHUA PHILIPP

If the United States opposes a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, Beijing, will be unlikely to take the island because the Chinese economy will not withstand the potential sanctions and possible separation from the global economy, said James Robb, former TOPGUN commander and retired Navy admiral.

"For China to cut itself off from the United States economy would be really almost like setting himself on fire," Robb said on EpochTV's "Crossroads" program.

China needs the U.S. economy, the global economy, and global trade to grow, and this hedges against a possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan, he explained.

Robb thinks the Chinese side tries to determine whether the United States will support Taiwan in the eventuality of a Chinese invasion, and calculate "what kind of pain they are willing to suffer to take over Taiwan."

"If the United States said no, and seriously went over there and did things that they are trained and planned for, then, I think, that's a deterrent to China."

In the Gulf War of 1991—when the United States and international coalition forces attacked Iraq by air—"the real victory was that the enemy left the air," the former TOPGUN commander said.

TOPGUN fighter pilots took part in combat but "there weren't a lot of enemy airplanes shot down during the Gulf War," Robb said. The enemy knew that "the Americans were going to swiftly come through there, they weren't going to be able to hold up their own, and would die if they did not leave," he said.

"It's pretty clear evidence that they had a respect for us [knowing] that we were going to be the superior force."

TOPGUN is the Navy's elite fighter training program that has been synonymous with aviation excellence, according to the Department of Defense.

CCP's Long-Term Strategy

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has a long view, Robb said. The country has 5,000 years of history and its leaders want another 5,000 years, but they "would like to be the key influencer around the globe," Robb pointed out.

To achieve this goal, the Chinese leadership needs to ensure that it is able to control its people, which means that it should be able to feed them and sustain its economy so people will not stage a revolution, the commander said, calling it a defensive side of the Chinese plans.

On the offensive side, the CCP will advance slowly in small steps such as taking some islands on the south side, exerting its influence on the South China Sea, Panama Canal areas, Cuban oil, and South American nations, Robb explained, describing the Chinese tactics as "very quiet in many

ways but ... very effective."

The Chinese influence has also reached the United States and it can be seen in the American economy and social media, Robb said. Walmart and Costco are flooded with cheap Chinese goods, and Americans like good deals, he added.

"Where there's not enough baby formula, or there's not enough food, there's shortages that are in reality caused by this reliance on China for a certain amount of goods and services."

"They slowly buy companies, and then they steal the technology. They're inside much more than you think."

"[The Chinese] think the Americans fall asleep to that, and they don't pay attention. It's a slow but serious effort to just take over," Robb warned.

Total War

The United States' strategy is mostly to react, while the first part of the Chinese strategy is to convince the United States that China is going to launch a total war, Robb said. "In other words, it's propaganda."

If Americans do not believe it and will not prepare to counter it they can only react, Robb said.

Americans tend to believe that certain military options are not feasible, he added. "However, we have a lot of evidence over time of people doing things that were just not feasible. For example, airplanes [that crashed] into [World Trade Center] towers was not feasible in the mindset of the United States' people before it happened."

America is not prepared to fight a total war against another country because the cooperation across governmental agencies does not work well, Robb said. "Total war is the ability to bring all elements of power together" so to prepare for it a country has to take a total government approach, he explained.

The Department of Defense executes well but when other elements of the government

need to get involved in a war "they don't train together, and they're not really prepared to fight together," said Robb, who is also the president of the National Training and Simulation Association.

"It's sort of an innocence of America," he said, that makes people believe that the United States can establish friendly relations with other countries and there is a way to negotiate with them.

"There's certain factions, that we found over time, that they just hate us and their will and their desire is more focused on just barbarianism than it is [on] negotiations."

The authors found that the PLA is placing orders for AI chips designed by companies in the United States and manufactured in Taiwan and South Korea, despite efforts by both the Trump and Biden administrations to limit technology exports to the Chinese military.

Stealing Technology By the CCP

Robb said that during his trips to China in the 1990s the Chinese leaders declared the nation a third world country and it was "pretty far behind." At that time, the Chinese leaders "had decided to bring Western economics into China," Robb said.

Reforming the Chinese trade and investment and introducing incentives led to a surge in foreign direct investment in China beginning in the early 1990s, according to a congressional research report from 2019. Such foreign investment inflow has been "a major source of China's productivity gains and rapid economic and trade growth," the report states.

Economically, China afforded itself the opportunity to compete with the United States materially in the military world, Robb said. "They've also done extremely well at stealing our secrets."

Americans spend years and billions of dollars to develop a product, but the Chinese steal the design and replicate it without incurring the research costs and spending time on design, he continued.

Robb said he flew in the 1980s a Chinese fighter jet, the F-7 (an export version of F-7), which was a knockoff of the Russian fighter aircraft MIG-21.

Many experts consider the Chinese fifth-generation stealth J-20 fighter jet to be a copy of the American F-35 stealth fighter in terms of both stealth and conventional capabilities—with blueprints and other technology probably obtained illegally from U.S. firms such as Honeywell, wrote Stu Cvrk, a retired U.S. Navy captain.

China should have been officially moved from its third world country status to the first world probably in the mid-2000s, Robb said. "[It is] now that pacing threat from a technology point of view with our military."

China's status as a developing country at the World Trade Organization (WTO) was reaffirmed in June by Chinese Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao in a WTO statement.

The WTO does not have any definitions of "developed" and "developing" countries. It is up to each member state to declare itself as a "developed" or "developing" country, according to the WTO's website.

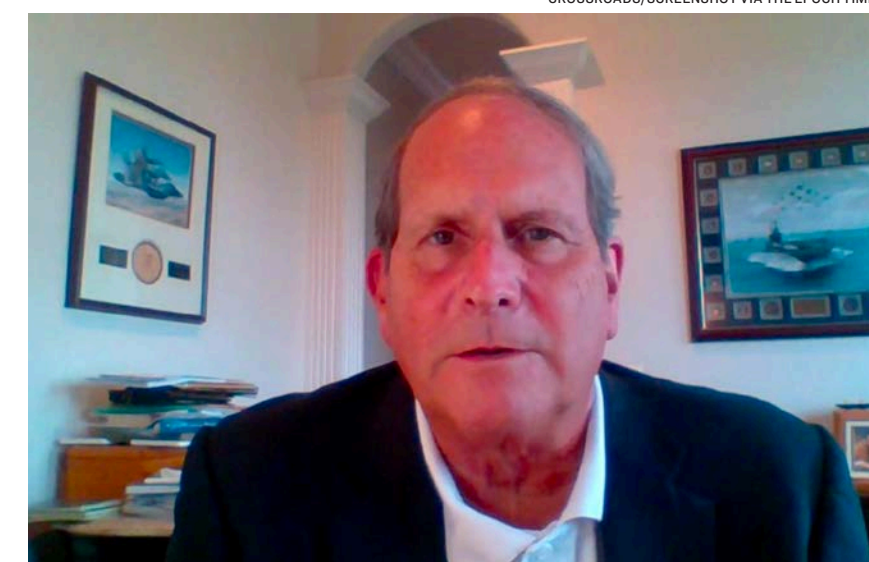
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James Robb, former TOPGUN commander, retired Navy admiral, and president of the National Training and Simulation Association in June 2022.

PETER PARKS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



A special unit of the Hong Kong police provides security in the city's Wanchai district as Chinese leader Xi Jinping arrives in Hong Kong on June 30, 2022, to attend celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the city's handover from Britain to China.

HONG KONG TODAY

Hong Kong Was Once My Home—Today It's a Police State

My friends are in jail and I've been threatened with imprisonment

BENEDICT ROGERS



Twenty-five years ago this month, Hong Kong was handed over to China and the last governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, sailed out on the Royal Yacht Britannia.

Two months later, as a young fresh graduate, I flew in to begin my first job and career as a journalist and activist. I had the privilege of living in Hong Kong for the first five years after the handover. I had the opportunity to witness history as an observer of the beginnings of "one country, two systems"—the principle established by former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and on which the handover of Hong Kong was based. I also had the privilege of beginning my working life in a city that was the gateway between East and West—the bridge between the democratic world and the world's largest remaining communist dictatorship.

And to be honest, for those first five years, by and large, it appeared as though the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) kept its side of the bargain. Hong Kong's freedoms remained largely, its autonomy was high, and the rule of law continued.

I worked as a journalist, first as an editor of a niche business journal and then as the lead writer and columnist for a pro-democracy daily newspaper—now defunct—known as the Hong Kong iMail. I wrote editorials and columns about the leaders in Beijing and their quislings in Hong Kong that would land me in jail if I were in Hong Kong today. While the then-Secretary for Security Regina Ip complained about me to my editor at a reception, his response was to return to the newsroom laughing, telling me that "Regina isn't happy."

I managed to get one edition of the management journal I edited—China Staff—banned in mainland China because I had interviewed Chinese labor rights activist Han Dongfang, who had warned that "one day, the workers will take to the streets." But other than that, I wrote freely.

Alongside my journalistic career, Hong Kong became for me a hub from which to champion freedom for others across Asia who were denied it. I met humanitarian workers trying to help North Korea and Christian missionaries working

in China. I worked with East Timorese refugees in Macau to lead a march through central Hong Kong in protest at the carnage in East Timor in 1999. I led groups from Hong Kong churches to help refugees on the Thailand-Burma border and in East Timor.

Hong Kong, for me, from 1997 to 2002, was a base in Asia from which to help those in urgent need in places of conflict and repression. I never expected one day to be protesting for Hong Kong or founding an advocacy organization to defend the rights of Hongkongers. I never expected to see my friends in Hong Kong in jail, in exile, or silenced.

A quarter of a century on, Hong Kong has changed beyond all recognition. It has transformed from one of Asia's most open cities to one of its most repressive police states. Within the past two years, since the imposition of the CCP's draconian National Security Law, Hong Kong's press freedom, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, basic liberties, autonomy, and the rule of law have been shredded. In a city that was once an oasis of freedom, no one can speak freely.

In what was once the "Pearl of the Orient," everyone lives in fear. In what was once "Asia's most free city," people no longer dare communicate with foreigners who

might be politically risky. Before July 2020, I was in daily contact with dozens of friends in Hong Kong. Today, I am hardly in touch with anyone for fear of putting them in danger.

In 2017, I was denied entry to Hong Kong—the city that had once been my home. Since then, I have experienced a flurry of abuse—dozens of anonymous threatening letters to my home in London, my neighbors, my mother, my employers, and members of Parliament, as well as efforts by the Chinese Embassy to lobby parliamentarians to persuade them to silence me.

Then, in 2022, I was directly threatened by the Hong Kong Police Force and the National Security Bureau with a heavy fine and a prison term of one year, or three years, or potentially life in prison for threatening China's national security. But I am in London and banned from Hong Kong—so how will they enforce that? I might have to be mindful of countries with extradition agreements with Hong Kong or China, but that's all.

Of far more serious concern is the fate of Hongkongers 25 years on from the handover.

Britain and China made a deal. That deal was enshrined in a treaty—the Sino-British Joint Declaration—which was lodged at the United Nations and is

valid until 2047.

That deal said that Hongkongers' freedoms, basic human rights, autonomy, the rule of law, and way of life would be protected.

Halfway through that treaty, Beijing totally reneged on it. Chinese leader Xi Jinping has torn it apart.

For that, there must be consequences. Two key actions come to mind: Let us provide a lifeline to those who need to get out and cut the lifelines for the regime and those who are complicit with it.

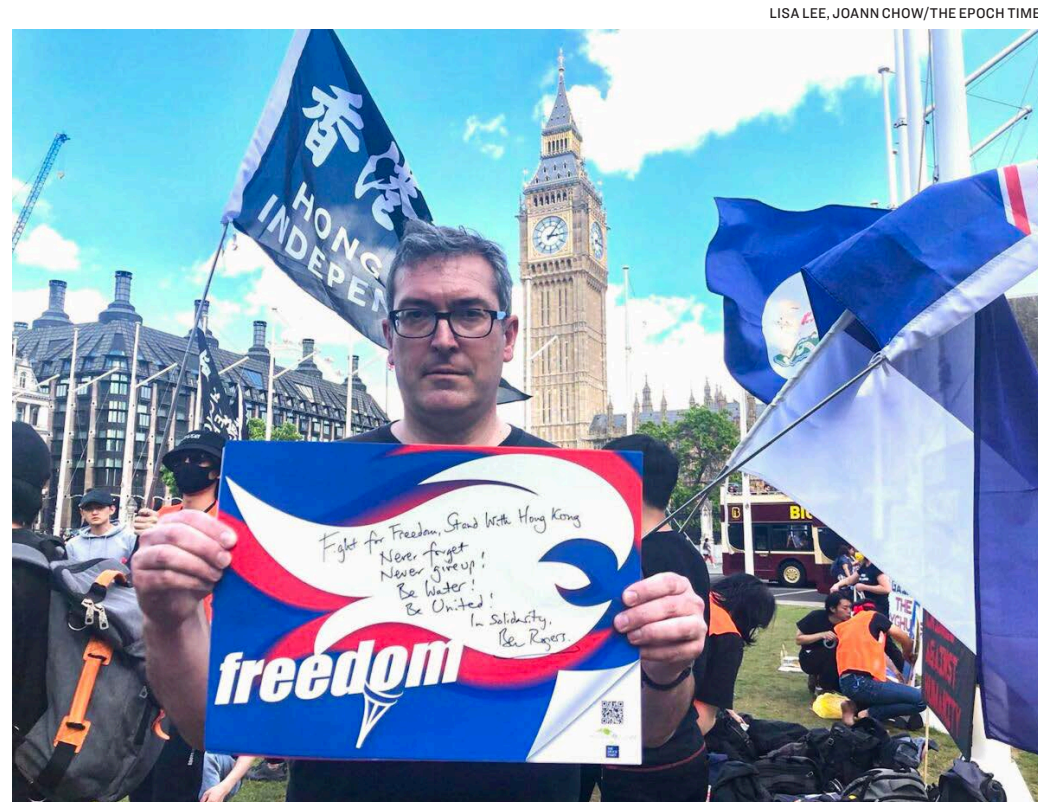
The United Kingdom has led the way with its courageous and generous British National Overseas (BNO) scheme, enabling hundreds of thousands, potentially several million, Hongkongers to build a new life in freedom. Canada and Australia have also opened pathways for Hongkongers, although they could do more. The United States and the European Union, perhaps along with New Zealand and Japan, should join us and open their arms to Hongkongers who need to get out.

The free world as a whole must be bolder in reducing our economic ties with a genocidal, mendacious, malevolent, and brutal regime. We must diversify our economic relationships and ensure that our pensions are not invested in the tools of genocide, crimes against humanity, repression, and surveillance.

And we must ensure that those responsible for dismantling Hong Kong's promised freedoms are held accountable for their actions—and that they pay the price. We need the world's major democracies to implement tough, targeted, and coordinated sanctions against Beijing's tyrants and their Hong Kong quislings.

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

Benedict Rogers is a human rights activist and writer. He is the co-founder and chief executive of Hong Kong Watch, senior analyst for East Asia at the international human rights organization CSW, co-founder and deputy chair of the UK Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, and member of the advisory group of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC), the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China, and the Stop Uyghur Genocide Campaign.



Benedict Rogers holds a placard that reads: "Fight for freedom. Stand with Hong Kong. Never forget, Never give up. Be Water. Be United. In solidarity," at a rally in this undated photo.

BELT AND ROAD

Competing Directly With Belt and Road Initiative Spells Disaster for Western Taxpayers

ERIC LOUW

U.S. President Joe Biden's announcement at the 2022 G-7 meeting that \$600 billion would be given to the developing world should set off alarm bells across the West.

What is driving this massive transfer of wealth from the developed world to developing countries?

The reason is the U.S. State Department and Biden managed to persuade G-7 leaders in Germany that Western democracies need to match Beijing's bribery of the developing world.

The State Department argues that China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is successfully recruiting "third world" leaders into a maturing Beijing-Moscow bloc, and it was, therefore, imperative the West create a counter-BRI—in this case, the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII).

So the G-7 has effectively announced a new kind of "Cold War" to win over the underdeveloped world between Beijing and the West.

So with the BRI expanding China's influence and control over ever-growing portions of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific, the State Department has decided to get back into the business of so-called "development aid," which it hopes will buy the support of third world leaders.

In its previous Cold War iteration, competition between America and the Soviets saw the building of substantial foreign aid industries, which then shovelled enormous amounts of money into the developing world, where it then produced dependency and corrupt elites who would lord it over their impoverished populations. But importantly, it did not create much "development."

Not 'Aid or Charity' Apparently

Biden claimed that this new G-7 development industry was not "aid or charity." Perhaps he felt compelled to say this because the old foreign aid industry was discredited precisely because it became a system of "well-meaning" but hopelessly ineffectual charity.

It produced dependency and poor governance and enriched both corrupt third-world leaders and Western bankers who happily accepted these leaders' unethical deposits.

The old Cold War foreign aid industry was a shameful system that cost Western taxpayers a fortune simply to prop up ineffectual and corrupt Afro-Asian elites, who then turned around and bit the hand that fed them by attacking the West as imperialist, colonial racists.

A more foolish foreign policy is hard to imagine.

The billions handed out by the West and Soviets simply paid for the survival of bad governments. The fact that all this money did not manage to buy solid "allies" or result in helpful third world "development" was scandalous. Now with PGII, the G-7



President Joe Biden speaks at the "Global Infrastructure" side event as Prime Minister of Japan Fumio Kishida and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau look on during the G-7 summit at Schloss Elmau near Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, on June 26, 2022.



Chinese leader Xi Jinping poses with African leaders, including Malawi's President Arthur Peter Mutharika (2nd row, 2nd R), during the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing on Sept. 3, 2018.

wants to rebuild this foreign aid industry and recreate the second round of scandalous bribery.

Also, as the dust settled from the G-7 announcement, one could feel the excitement building in capital cities around the developing world, where third-world elites realized the good old days of money pouring into their coffers were about to return.

Can the West Outspend Beijing?

For underdeveloped countries that have long demonstrated that they cannot get it together, it is party time once again because they can now play Beijing and the G-7 off against each other to see which of BRI or PGII offers them the biggest bribes.

It is worth noting that the plan Biden took to the G-7 appears to be a rebranding of a

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part of the "Build Back Better" program, which was blocked by the Republicans.

Significantly, the plan's vision embedded in PGII encodes all the usual left-wing rhetoric about climate change, Green New Deal spending, gender politics and women's equality. From another perspective, Western taxpayers are now paying for the rollout of left-wing projects across the developing world.

In the United States, this amounts to a \$200 billion contribution of taxpayers' money. The rest of the \$600 billion funds will come from the other G-7 members and through leveraging private sector investments in areas like digital communication and mining for precious earths.

In contrast, given Beijing does not have to worry about taxpayer revolts when it throws money around the developing world, it is a moot point as to whether the West can ever realistically outspend China in any bribery competition to win over third-world leaders.

Getting involved in a bribery contest with an authoritarian regime not accountable to voters or taxpayers seems foolish indeed. Any realistic chance of competing in this field would require democratic governments to start printing cash en masse—in turn, driving up inflation even higher.

Taxpayers Need to Keep an Eye on Where the Money Flows

It is noteworthy that the PGII projects so far announced by the G-7 involve a heavy weighting towards climate change, clean energy infrastructure (including solar and battery projects), low emission transportation, clean energy supply chains, gender equity, women's employment and childcare, health infrastructures, and building a global digital-communication infrastructure plus submarine cables that China cannot hack into.

Western taxpayers should pay serious attention to these PGII plans to ensure they meet the expectations voters have for how their dollars are being spent.

One can only hope that this time, taxpayers will pay more attention to the failings of foreign aid and third-world development programs than they did last time and avoid breeding mass corruption, waste, and poor governance in distant lands.

Eric Louw is a retired professor in political communication with a career spanning South African and Australian universities. Prior to that, he was a former activist, journalist, and media trainer under the African National Congress, where he worked on South Africa's transition into the post-Apartheid era. Louw is an expert on affirmative action, and Black Economic Empowerment policies. His Ph.D. was in the study of Marxism and its post-modern developments. He has authored nine books including "The Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid" and "The Media and Political Process."

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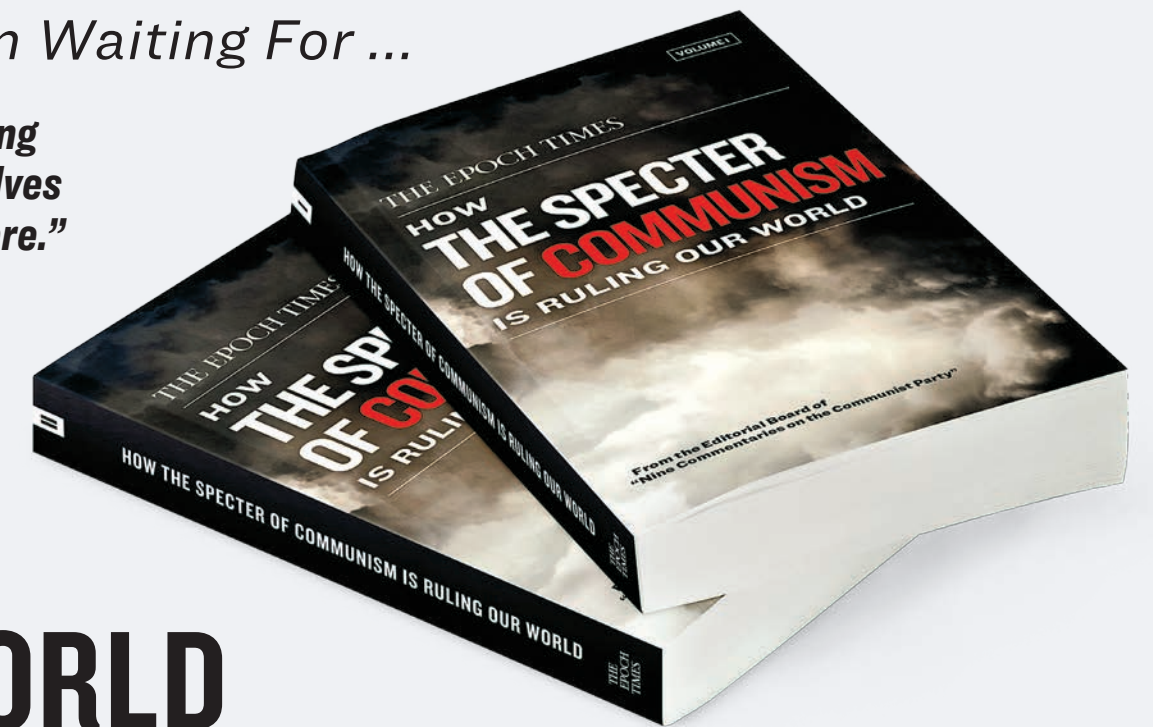
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