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# CHINA INSIDER



THE RACE FOR  
**HYPERSONIC  
DOMINANCE**

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The U.S. Department of Defense launches a sounding rocket from NASA's launch range at Wallops Flight Facility carrying hypersonic weapon experiments that will inform the development of the hypersonic class of weapons, on Wallops Island, Va., on Oct. 26, 2022.



REUTERS/EVELYN HOCKSTEIN

## ANALYSIS

# China Leading US in Race to Hypersonic Dominance: Analyst

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

When news broke last year about a secret Chinese hypersonic missile test, the world was stunned. Pentagon officials appeared blindsided as news reported that a hypersonic missile had circled the earth and struck down towards a target. Lawmakers demanded that long-delayed military research be reinvigorated to counter the threat.

The United States and China have both worked tirelessly to further develop their hypersonic capabilities since then and, according to one expert, the United States is losing the race.

"China has effectively taken the lead in the hypersonic weapons race due to the breadth and depth of its technology investments," said Rick Fisher, a senior fellow at the International Assessment and Strategy Center, a security-focused think tank.

"We are only seeing the beginning of their weapons developments in this field."

According to Fisher, the United States and China are in a race to develop hypersonic weapons, and who deploys the weapons first may decide who guides the international order in the coming decades.

## No Defense Against CCP's Hypersonic Weapons

The reason that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is so interested in developing hypersonic weapons technology is fairly simple: the United States cannot defend against it. At least, not yet.

During his testimony to Congress on the subject back in 2018, then-Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering Michael Griffin said that CCP forces were already developing the hypersonic capabilities necessary to hold U.S. assets at risk.

"China has fielded or can field ... hypersonic delivery systems for conventional prompt strike that can reach out thousands of kilometers from the Chinese shore and hold our carrier battle groups or our forward-deployed forces on land ... at-risk," Griffin said.

"We, today, do not have systems that can hold them at-risk in a corresponding

manner, and we do not have defenses against those systems."

That's because the type of hypersonic missiles being developed by the CCP behave in a manner far different from the traditional ballistic missiles that the United States missile defense architecture was designed to counter.

While the technical definition of a hypersonic missile refers to any missile that travels at least five times faster than the speed of sound, or Mach 5, common parlance typically uses the term to refer to one of two varieties of missile.

The first is hypersonic cruise missiles, which use high-tech jet engines to propel them at super speeds. The second is hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs), which are launched on a regular missile before detaching and navigating through the atmosphere at high speed.

Unlike traditional ballistic missiles, HGVs do not follow a parabolic trajectory into and out of the atmosphere, and can maneuver through the atmosphere as they fly to their destination.

Because of their speed, maneuverability, and lack of a ballistic trajectory, the weapons can evade earth-based radar systems until the final segment of their flight and, even when such sensors

register a hypersonic launch, there are few systems capable of doing anything about it.

It is a fact that makes the weapons incredibly enticing to CCP authorities eager to gain a technological edge against the more advanced U.S. military. Moreover, just like in 2018, the United States still does not have the capacity to defend against such technology, as was affirmed in October 2021 by then-U.S. ambassador for disarmament Robert Wood.

"We just don't know how we can defend against that technology," Wood said of the test. "Neither does China, neither does Russia."

## US Hypersonics Programs Struggling to Catch Up

To say that China's HGV launch caught the United States on the back foot would be an understatement. Though the United States began research into hypersonic missiles in the early 2000s, the nation largely abandoned its HGV research following two failed tests in 2011.

Indeed, from April 2010 and July 2022, the United States conducted just 21 hypersonic missile tests. The CCP, meanwhile, conducted hundreds.

Gen. John Hyten, then-vice chairman

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in October 2021 that a "brutal" Pentagon bureaucracy and risk-averse culture among military leadership had stifled efforts to build credible hypersonic weapons systems. In turn, he said, the CCP had seized the initiative.

"Single digits versus hundreds is not a good place," Hyten said of the hypersonic tests conducted by the two countries.

"The pace [at which China is] moving and the trajectory that they're on will surpass Russia and the United States if we don't do something to change it. It will happen."

The CCP's hypersonic test in 2021 demonstrated that if push came to shove the regime could strike the U.S. homeland with a nuclear missile. The United States is responding, but it is unclear whether it will meet the threat in time.

There are at least eight programs across the U.S. Air Force, Army, Navy, and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) dedicated to the development of hypersonic systems, many of which received bumps in funding following the CCP's hypersonic demonstration.

Fisher believes that such efforts are vital if the United States is to field its own capabilities and begin to retake China in

REUTERS/JASON LEE



Military vehicles carrying hypersonic DF-17 missiles on display at Tiananmen Square during a military parade in Beijing on Oct. 1, 2019.

the hypersonic race.

"For its part, the United States in the next three years will deploy medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles armed with a maneuverable hypersonic warhead that eventually could hit moving targets like ships at sea," Fisher said.

"There are also U.S. programs to develop hypersonic tactical range cruise missiles but these may not emerge until much later in this decade."

The Pentagon, however, has not made a final decision on whether it will acquire the weapons once they are completed. None of the eight prototypes mentioned are associated with programs of record.

That's problematic for U.S. efforts to deter CCP aggression given that an October report by the Congressional Research Service found that China has likely already fielded operational HGVs, potentially armed with nuclear warheads.

The Pentagon has not publicly released the findings of its classified reports analyzing the readiness of the CCP's programs, but the regime's latest, highly accurate hypersonic capabilities are expected to be fielded by 2025.

The United States' hypersonic projects, meanwhile, are slated to appear between 2025 and 2028.

Aside from new hypersonic weapons, the United States' Missile Defense Agency and Space Development Agency are developing a hypersonic missile defense system which, according to a separate briefing by the Congressional Research Service, will deploy a satellite-based tracking layer for global detection of hypersonic missiles launches by 2023, though it too will likely not be fully operational until 2025.

That means that, should the United States fail to deploy new hypersonic weapons before 2028, the CCP will have an unprecedented strategic and nuclear advantage for as long as three years.

As of yet, however, the United States lacks the capability to defend against an attack by a HGV such as the one the CCP launched last year. In the best-case scenario, the United States will have deployed the systems necessary to detect and track such missiles by next year, but not necessarily to destroy them.

## China Investing in Wide Array of Hypersonics

As the United States struggles to kickstart its long-neglected hypersonic weapons programs, the CCP and its military wing, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), continue to advance hypersonics development in a black box of uncertainty.

Behind a new Iron Curtain, little can be said of the regime's current hypersonic capabilities. What is known is that the regime has developed several hypersonic-capable weapons, many of them nuclear capable.

Most famously, the regime's Dongfeng-17 (DF-17) missile was developed explicitly to be equipped with a HGV. Other missiles in the PLA arsenal could be outfitted with similar technology, however, including variants of the DF-16, DF-21, DF-26, DF-31, and DF-41.

According to Fisher, this means that the CCP's hypersonics program could affect short, medium, intermediate, and intercontinental-range ballistic missiles (ICBMs). In other words, missiles of all ranges.

"There are indications that future versions of PLA ICBMs will be armed with multiple small HGV warheads," Fisher said.

"In addition, the PLA has tested orbital launched HGVs from a Fractional Orbital Bombardment System (FOBS) that may or may not represent an in-production weapon."

The most dangerous scenario, Fisher said, was that the regime could decide to use the threat of such bombardment to deter the United States from defending its allies or partners. Such a threat could only meaningfully be countered by the deployment of new space-based systems.

Fisher said that the greatest threat facing the United States in the near term was the possibility that China would field ICBMs each equipped with multiple nuclear HGVs. The United States would only be able to defend against such weapons, he said, with space-based energy weapons that would target the missiles in their boost phase, before they reached orbit and became untrackable.

Fisher's comments resembled similar advice made by a Congressional report, which found that "interceptor missiles, hypervelocity projectiles, laser guns, and electronic attack systems," could be used to defend the United States from China's new weapons.

The problem with that situation is that those technologies either do not yet exist or have not yet been deployed.

Given that fact, Fisher said that the



An artistic rendition of DARPA's Hypersonic Technology Vehicle (HTV-2). The Chinese regime recently held its fourth test of a hypersonic missile.

## China has effectively taken the lead in the hypersonic weapons race due to the breadth and depth of its technology investments.

Rick Fisher, senior fellow, International Assessment and Strategy Center

United States would have to pursue other options if presented with the threat of hypersonic warfare from China. Namely, disrupting the attack by striking the systems used to track and control them.

"The U.S. has non-missile interceptor options for defeating or degrading PLA FOBS-launched HGV strike weapons," Fisher said.

"It can make sure that the PLA does not exploit its bases in Antarctica for tracking and guidance of FOBS platforms, [and] destroy the PLA space tracking and control base in Argentina immediately during any conflict."

Fisher's comments referred to one of the CCP's space observation stations in Patagonia which is operated by the PLA in pursuit of a top-secret mission, possibly including missile guidance.

## CCP Seeks to Coerce US With Nuclear Weapons

Fisher's fears that the CCP could deter the United States from involvement in a future conflict appear to align with most research on the subject.

A 2021 report by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, an influential congressional advisory body, found that the CCP was working to develop and deploy HGVs alongside multiple retargetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), a form of warhead which contains multiple smaller warheads that can each be directed toward a separate target.

Likewise, defense officials have long warned that the CCP was modernizing its military with the explicit purpose of developing technologies capable of undermining and overcoming U.S. defenses. The worry is that the CCP does not seek security, but to fundamentally alter the rules-based international order by replacing the United States as the world superpower by using nuclear coercion.

"China has ambitions to be the great power on the face of the earth," said Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall earlier in the year. "They have ambitions to be the global great power."

"To do that, they basically have to displace the United States."

"They are studying how we fight ... and designing systems that are intended to defeat us," Kendall said.

To that end, one key reason the CCP is developing hypersonic weapons appears to be the ability to deter the United States from involving itself in a conflict that China starts, whether that conflict is over

the future of Taiwan or something else entirely.

The CCP's actions also suggest that the regime hopes its burgeoning hypersonic arsenal will allow it to mold U.S. behavior. Just days before a visit of U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan, for example, the regime released the first-ever public footage of the DF-17 hypersonic missile during a test fire.

Analysis of how the regime is deploying its newfound capabilities may also indicate its intent.

A new report by Blue Path Labs, published by the China Aerospace Studies Institute, found that the PLA increased the number of its missile brigades by 33 percent between 2017 to 2019.

Vitaly, three separate brigades are believed to be equipped with the DF-17 and its HGVs. These are the 614, 627, and 655 Brigades, of which both the 614 and 627 maintain either garrison or headquarters in provinces immediately adjacent to Taiwan.

In all, however, there is perhaps no better indicator of the regime's intent than in the hypersonic nuclear weapons themselves.

Whereas most of the United States' burgeoning hypersonic missiles are not nuclear capable, up to half of the PLA's 40 missile brigades likely are, according to the 2022 Index of Military Power, published by conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation. And there is a real fear that China's lack of investment in precision weapons, as opposed to massively destructive nuclear first-use weapons, demonstrates its dedication to nuclear proliferation and blackmail.

James Acton, co-director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, wrote in 2017 that one way to determine whether the regime intended to use nuclear coercion was to look to whether it developed more accurate HGVs.

"One possible indicator of China's intentions is the accuracy of its glider," Acton said. "For a conventionally armed glider to be militarily effective, it must have an accuracy of a few meters. A nuclear-armed glider would be effective if it were 10 or even 100 times less accurate."

The CCP has now developed and tested its glider and, when the regime launched its HGV last year, it ultimately landed some 24 miles from target. Too far away for a conventional warhead to matter, but not for a nuclear one.

STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



A Long March 5B rocket lifts off from the Wenchang launch site on China's southern Hainan island on May 5, 2020. Another variant of the Long March rocket was used to get China's hypersonic missile into orbit in July 2021.

# US Reporter Manhandled by Chinese Official Ahead of Biden–Xi Meeting Sheds Light on CCP’s Repression: Advocate

DOROTHY LI & STEFANIA COX

When a U.S. producer asked President Joe Biden ahead of a Nov. 14 meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping whether the president would raise human rights issues during their first in-person talks, a man from the Chinese delegation “instantly ... yanked the producer backward by the backpack,” according to an account by a White House pool reporter.

“She lost balance without falling and was pushed toward the door. Two White House staff members intervened, saying the producer should be left alone,” the reporter said.

The manhandling of the American reporter at the Indonesian resort island of Bali that hosted this year’s G-20 summit offered “a very small glimpse of what the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] is engaged in worldwide, to silence dissident voices, to silence journalists, to silence anybody who is going to shine a light on the human rights abuses in China,” said Levi Browde, executive director of the Falun Dafa Information Center, a nonprofit.

A 2021 report by nonprofit Freedom House found that “China conducts the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign of transnational repression in the world.”

CCP officials “go after any voice that tries to give a voice to people who are being persecuted in China, or just say something that the CCP doesn’t like,” Browde said during a Nov. 14 interview with NTD, a sister media of The Epoch Times.

The Nov. 14 assault came less than a month after a violent scene outside the Chinese consulate in Manchester, England, prompted public outcry and raised alarm among British lawmakers.

Last month, when UK activists demonstrated against the CCP’s repression in Hong Kong, a group of men emerged from the Chinese consular building, pulling off their protest banners and dragging one protester into the compound. They pulled his hair and beat him before a police officer rescued him. According to British officials, one of the most senior Chinese diplomats, Zheng Xiyuan, participated in the scuffle.

“They systematically attack those people in Western democracies, let alone other countries around the world,” Browde said.

Referring to adherents of Falun Gong raising awareness about the communist regime’s brutal persecution of the spiritual group inside China, Browde said, “Going back in the last 20 years, we’ve had our own people, if they try and demonstrate in front of a Chinese leader or something like that, when they’re traveling delegations around the world, we’ve gotten beaten, shoved.”

Falun Gong, a spiritual practice consisting of meditative exercises and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, became hugely popular in China in the 1990s, with an estimated 70 million to 100 million adherents by the end of the decade.

Viewing the popularity as a threat to its power, the ruling communist party



Chinese leader Xi Jinping attends a session during the G-20 summit in Nusa Dua, Indonesia, on Nov. 15, 2022.



Levi Browde, executive director of the Falun Dafa Information Center, at a Falun Gong rally at New York’s City Hall on May 11, 2016.

**Ignoring the CCP’s abuses against Falun Gong amounts to ‘ignoring ... the largest population of people being persecuted in China,’ said Levi Browde.**

launched a nationwide persecution in 1999. Since then, millions of Falun Gong adherents have been thrown into prisons, labor camps, and brainwashing centers across the country, where they’re subjected to torture, forced labor, or even forced organ harvesting.

Those living in the United States who try to shed light on the ongoing persecution also face consistent pressure from the CCP and its proxies. In February, police in New York arrested and charged a man with a hate crime after witnesses reported seeing him vandalizing Falun Gong information stands in Flushing.

“We’ve had people beaten, harassed, their businesses threatened, their family members back in China threatened,” Browde said.

## Ignoring the Persecution of Falun Gong

The advocate noted that there was no specific mention of the persecution against Falun Gong in the White House readout of the Nov. 14 meeting between Biden and Xi.

“President Biden raised concerns about PRC [People’s Republic of China] practices in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong, and human rights more broadly,” according to the Nov. 14 statement.

Browde noted that Falun Gong’s popularity in China indicates that its adherents are the largest group being targeted by the CCP.

“What people don’t realize is that there were 100 million people practicing Falun Gong in China when this persecution started,” he said. “That’s more than twice the number of everyone living in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Uyghurs in Xinjiang combined. It’s an enormous population of people.”

“It’s throughout China and every single province, from university professors to housewives to senior military leaders, Falun Gong was everywhere, and it is today.”

For Browde, ignoring the CCP’s abuses against Falun Gong amounts to “ignoring ... the largest population of people being persecuted in China.”

He noted that tens of millions of Falun Gong practitioners inside China, despite being targets of persecution, are engaged in a “very peaceful grassroots disobedience movement to inform the public about, not only the abuses against themselves but the tyrannical history of the CCP more broadly.”

“It’s really helping Chinese people wake up,” Browde said.

The CCP has insisted that Western governments should only criticize the regime’s human rights record behind closed doors, according to Browde. But it would be “much more effective” to publicly and specifically denounce the regime’s human rights abuses, he said, although many governments may not appreciate the effect of such actions.

Both the Trump and Biden administrations have imposed sanctions on Chinese officials for their role in persecuting Falun Gong adherents.

“That has [had] ripple effects throughout China in ways that maybe many people don’t realize,” Browde said.

“Chinese officials, Chinese police chief start worrying that they’re going to get sanctioned. And they start easing up in some cases on persecuting Falun Gong and other people inside the country.”

The advocate urged more governments to take this kind of action.

“Those kinds of specific actions are the only thing we’ve seen that Western governments have done so far that have actually had an impact on the lives of people inside China. We need more of that,” Browde said.

White House officials didn’t respond to a request by The Epoch Times for comment by press time.



Falun Dafa practitioners meditate after a march through the center of Warsaw, Poland, on Sept. 9, 2022.

## US–TAIWAN

# US Must Increase Taiwan Military Spending to Counter China: Congressional Report

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

A top congressional advisory body recommends that the United States establish multiyear funding and other mechanisms to bolster Taiwan’s defenses against unprecedented aggression from communist China.

The recommendation proposes establishing a joint planning mechanism and encouraging increases in Taiwan’s defense spending to ensure that the island is arming itself to the best of its ability.

The U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC) released its annual report on Nov. 15, which said the measures would be necessary to deter an invasion by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

“2022 may prove to be a watershed year for the Chinese Communist Party and for America’s response to its ambitions,” said USCC Chair Alex Wong during a meeting introducing the report’s publication.

“This was anything but a smooth year in U.S.–China relations. But it has been a clarifying year.”

Wong said that the CCP seeks to isolate the island from the rest of the world through diplomatic, economic, and military coercion. The regime’s goal is to compel Taiwan into accepting communist rule by any means necessary. To that end, he said, the United States and Taiwan would need to increase their cooperation to ensure their victory in the event of a conflict with China.

“We recommend the creation of an economic and security preparedness and resilience office to ensure that we ourselves are prepared to withstand and win long-term competition and conflict,” Wong said.

“We recommend that Congress make available significant additional multiyear defense funds to our military in conjunction with a U.S.–Taiwan joint planning mechanism that would bolster Taiwan’s own commitment to increasing its defense spending.”

## China Seeks to Devour Taiwan

The CCP claims that Taiwan is a rogue province of China that must be united with the mainland and refuses to rule out the use of force to achieve this goal.

However, Taiwan has never been controlled by the CCP. The island nation has been self-governed since 1949 and boasts a thriving democratic government and market economy.

The United States diplomatically recognizes but does not endorse China’s claims and maintains legal ties with Taiwan, ensuring that it will provide the arms necessary for the island’s defense.

Wong and the USCC believe that both the United States and Taiwan will need to do more to arm and train for the possibility



A Navy Force helicopter under the Eastern Theatre Command of the Chinese army takes part in military exercises in the waters around Taiwan, at an undisclosed location, on Aug. 8, 2022.

of a war with China, which the report says has become more likely following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

CCP authorities have become increasingly bellicose in recent years and have threatened military violence on a number of occasions.

Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe vowed this year to “start a war no matter the cost” to prevent the international recognition of Taiwan’s independence.

Likewise, CCP leader Xi Jinping said to President Joe Biden this month, “Cross-Strait peace and stability and ‘Taiwan independence’ are as irreconcilable as water and fire.”

## US Must Increase ‘Capacity to Resist Force’

The USCC’s new report contains an entire chapter dedicated to the issue of Taiwan and outlines how the CCP has increased its efforts to push the international community away from helping Taiwan in order to tighten the noose.

“In 2022, China adopted a significantly more aggressive stance toward Taiwan, ramping up displays of military force in addition to diplomatic and economic coercion,” the report said.

“Beijing has also carefully observed Russia’s war on Ukraine, presumably drawing

**2022 may prove to be a watershed year for the Chinese Communist Party and for America’s response to its ambitions.**

Alex Wong, chair, U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission

lessons that would inform its approach if Chinese leaders ultimately decide to force unification with Taiwan.”

The report says that the United States will need to increase its readiness for military conflict in the Indo-Pacific region, and seek to bolster its own military forces and those of its partners and allies in the region.

To that end, the USCC recommends that “Congress direct the U.S. Department of Defense to produce a classified report on current and future military posture, logistics, maintenance, and sustainment requirements to bolster the United States’ ‘capacity to resist force’ in the event of a Chinese attack and attempted invasion of Taiwan.”

Ultimately, it was the opinion of the USCC that the CCP under Xi had committed itself to a dangerous desire for historical relevance, and would seek to cement its legacy through increased violence and destabilization. The United States, the USCC maintained, must therefore prepare itself to defend the values of the Democratic West and like-minded nations of the world.

“Xi’s personal and strategic ambitions for his and China’s place in history are clearer than they’ve ever been before,” Wong said, “and so is the need for the United States to take resolute steps to preserve and defend our interests and ideals in response.”

## CCP INFLUENCE

# ‘Casino Loyale’: Company Owned by Chinese Billionaire Guilty of Paying \$1 Million in Bribes to LA Councilman

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

A Los Angeles real estate firm owned by a Chinese billionaire is guilty of paying more than \$1 million in bribes to a Los Angeles city councilman as part of a scheme that involved luxury cruises, high-rolling trips to casinos, and prostitution.

Shen Zhen New World I, a real estate firm owned by Chinese billionaire Wei Huang, was found guilty by a jury after less than three hours of deliberation on Nov. 10. The charges included “three counts of honest service wire fraud, four counts of interstate and foreign travel in aid of bribery, and one count of bribery,” according to a statement by the Justice Department.

According to Forbes, Wei also owns one of China’s largest real estate firms, Xinhui Zhongbao, where his son is a company manager.

The verdict was the climax of an ongoing saga of alleged crimes revolving around Wei’s firm and its efforts to bribe then-Los Angeles Councilman José Huizar into approving the redevelopment of a 77-story skyscraper in downtown Los Angeles, according to the Justice Department.

Shen Zhen purchased the L.A. Grand

Hotel in downtown Los Angeles in 2010 on Wei’s behalf. Huizar, at the time, represented the district that the building was in and was also chair of the Planning and Land Use Management Committee, which oversees major commercial and residential development projects in the city.

The campaign of bribes continued from 2013 through 2018 and benefited both Huizar and his aide, George Esparza. The bribes included direct cash payments, stays at luxury hotels and casinos, private flights, expensive meals, spa treatment packages, prostitutes, and political contributions.

The company and Wei also provided a \$600,000 payment to Huizar for him to confidentially settle a sexual harassment lawsuit made by a former staffer, which threatened his career.

Federal prosecutors have now convicted nine defendants in the case and received more than \$3 million in criminal penalties to resolve their investigation into two other major real estate development companies resulting from Operation “Casino Loyale.” Casino Loyale is an ongoing corruption investigation into Los Angeles City Hall

**The campaign of bribes continued from 2013 through 2018.**

being jointly conducted by the FBI and the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

Huizar was arrested on federal corruption charges in 2020, and Shen Zhen is expected to face a multimillion-dollar fine during a sentencing hearing in January.

Wei is currently a fugitive and is believed to be in China.



Downtown Los Angeles on Jan. 20, 2022.

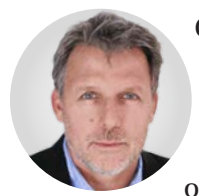


Chinese soldiers operate with their Type 96A tank during the tank biathlon competition at the International Army Games 2022 in Alabino outside Moscow on Aug. 16, 2022. Moscow has announced joint military exercises with China, India, Mongolia, Belarus, and Tajikistan.

## OPINION

# Ready for World War Xi?

JAMES GORRIE



Chinese dictator Xi Jinping has announced China is "prepared to confront any nation that dares stand in their path of national rejuvenation."

In the process of establishing himself as China's undisputed totalitarian leader in October's 20th Communist Party Congress, Xi expressed his plans for China's future in terms of "national rejuvenation."

**Where's the National Rejuvenation?** Taken at face value, a national rejuvenation conveys the idea of rebuilding and restoring the nation's economy and culture, both of which are currently languishing. That would make perfect sense.

China could certainly use a national rejuvenation. The country's economic outlook isn't good with the collapse of its real estate development sector, high unemployment, loss of foreign investment, and the mass departure of foreign manufacturers. In fact, conditions continue to deteriorate.

**China Collapsing Under One-Man, One-Party Rule** Culturally, the Chinese people are unhappy with the trends they see and are doubtful about the future. COVID-19 lockdowns have led to a rapidly contracting manufacturing sector, loss of earnings, and shortages, which results in unrest.

Additionally, the urban young face growing despair and disillusionment. A 20 percent unemployment rate shows few signs of abating. What's more, there's a growing rejection of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) totalitarian policies and political legitimacy among the younger generation.

To address these very real and destabilizing threats, the CCP is taking control of every aspect of Chinese society.

**National Rejuvenation Means War and Threats of War** Repairing domestic conditions isn't Xi's top priority. In fact, Xi's definition of "national rejuvenation" has little or nothing to do with improving the lives of the Chinese people but rather with China taking its rightful place in the world as the "Middle Kingdom."

That self-referential description refers to more than just China's geographic location. Xi's vision is to remake the

world in his own image, which involves putting China, not the United States, at the center of the world's culture, political ideas, and economic activity.

That puts a fine point on Xi's statement that China's national security was facing "increased instability" that would require "arduous" labor from the "People's Liberation Army."

The "arduous labor" of armies is, of course, waging and winning wars. That objective was made clear in a number of overt statements by Xi and top CCP officials in various contexts. For example, regarding the role of the PLA, Xi's ultimate goal is unmistakable.

"The entire military must... focus on combat ability as the fundamental and only criterion, concentrate all energy on fighting a war, direct all work towards warfare and speed up to build the ability to win."

In short, Xi seeks to position China as the new and pre-eminent leader in global governance. That means replacing the United States as the global hegemonic power. That certainly adds context to Beijing's state media outlets that typically talk about the United States as a potential threat to the Party.

By its very nature, hegemonic power is complex and multi-layered, but ultimately, it is based on the threat and application of unrivaled military power. That is precisely why military preeminence is at the top of Xi's list on the way to ruling the world.

**A Long List of Military Possibilities** What does that mean going forward? How will China's behavior beyond its shores differ from what we've seen up to now?

Xi has already warned the rest of the world of what he wants to do, which is to keep China on a trajectory that will lead to confrontation with the West. The obvious beginning would be Taiwan, but there are other places Beijing could interject itself militarily.

The Malacca Straits, for example, remains a strategic vulnerability for China, as its largest source of oil (about 70 percent) from the Mideast must pass through that narrow passage. Solving the "Malacca Dilemma" remains a high priority for Beijing.

Japan is also well aware that it is on Beijing's radar as a regional nation to be persuaded to follow China's lead one way or another. Tokyo is busily re-arming the nation as you read this.

China's navy is now a regular presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, providing

**COVID-19 lockdowns have led to a rapidly contracting manufacturing sector, loss of earnings, and shortages, which results in unrest.**

a very real challenge to the Western powers. Moreover, its vast Djibouti military base positions China to quickly project power in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Further afield, China has invested heavily in both the Atlantic and Pacific sides of the Panama Canal. It's no secret that the passage between the two oceans has military and commercial strategic value. It has yet to militarize the canal region, but Beijing has provided Venezuela with anti-ship missiles. It has done so with Iran as well.

If Xi plans to assert China's power backed by military prowess on the road to global hegemony, these would be some of the likely places to do so.

On the flip side, there is a bit of myth-building in Xi's aspirational rhetoric. China has never been the world's cultural, political, and economic center. But it does put pressure on Xi and the CCP to deliver on the rhetoric.

Of course, Xi wouldn't be the first megalomaniacal dictator to openly fabricate myths of the past or promote his visions of the future as a prelude to changing the world.

There once was a failed artist from Austria with a mustache who moved to Berlin.

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

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Beijing's epidemic control policy has hit China's food and beverage industry hard. The picture shows a restaurant in China with no customers coming to the door.

## OPINION

# Taiwan the Porcupine Prepares for War

Local industry prioritizes missiles, drones, and satellites

ANDERS CORR



Chinese leader Xi Jinping is talking about war again. On Nov. 9, he called on his military to train for a "new era" and prepare for military conflict over "increased instability and uncertainty." That brave new world could come sooner than most realize and at the point of a People's Liberation Army (PLA) bayonet. Since Hong Kong and chunks of India and the South China Sea have already fallen, the most likely next target is Taiwan.

U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl said an attack on the island democracy could come anytime. "I don't think in the next couple of years they're likely to invade Taiwan. But you never know," he said on Nov. 4. Xi "has certainly given his military the charge to have that capability by the end of this decade and probably by 2027."

The government in Taipei isn't waiting to find out. Defense preparations are underway now, with a strategic shift from purchases of large prestige systems, like fighter jets and naval vessels, to smaller but just as lethal anti-ship and surface-to-air missiles.

Known as the porcupine strategy, Taiwan's shift takes advantage of China's chief weakness, moving soldiers by ship and plane across 110 miles of water called the Taiwan Strait. Taipei has an asymmetric advantage as the missiles required to hit Chinese planes and ships are much cheaper than their targets.

The United States and Japan would most likely assist Taiwan with not only weapons systems, but direct intervention. China's expansion poses a bigger threat to both countries than Russia's because China's economic power is about 10 times greater. Allowing China to take Taiwan would also make Japan's southernmost islands vulnerable and would break the first-island chain that contains China's navy.

President Joe Biden has increased the level of commitment to Taiwan by saying, on four occasions, that the United States would defend Taiwan with military force. This hasn't changed U.S. policy on Taiwan because it was always, arguably, to defend the country. It also hasn't drastically changed strategic ambiguity because the White House usually followed up on Biden's threats with more circumspection. What Biden has done is dialed up the military commitment to Taiwan, which helps deter China.

But after watching the Philippines, Ukraine, and India lose territory to China and Russia, Taiwan cannot rely entirely on U.S. intervention. In addition to missiles, Taiwan is prioritizing armed drone production and cyberdefense.



Taiwanese navy launches a U.S.-made Standard Missile from a frigate during the annual Han Kuang Drill, on the sea near the Suao navy harbor in Yilan county, Taiwan on July 26, 2022.

Ukraine's military has proven the effectiveness of drones, whether of the type that fires missiles and returns to base or of the smaller kamikaze variety. Taiwan has purchased numerous armed drones from the United States but is also developing its own indigenous industry in case the PLA navy succeeds in blockading the island.

Taiwan's ability to use the internet to inform the world about an ongoing attack will also be important to garnering global public support. If China attempts to cut Taiwan's access to the internet, for example, by severing underwater cables, Taipei's two-month-old Ministry for Digital Affairs is developing a backup service that does not rely on foreign governments or corporations. The ministry plans to connect 5G mobile towers to 700 satellite receivers in mid-or low-earth orbit.

"Beijing has used its information warfare machine to undermine Taiwanese people's confidence in their government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic," according to Josh Rogin in *The Washington Post*.

"Chinese influence campaigns promote pro-Beijing candidates in Taiwanese elections ... [and focus] on convincing Taiwanese people that their democracy is a facade and that their leaders are controlled by the CIA."

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan in August was a dress rehearsal. Afterward, Chinese cyberattacks disabled Taiwan government websites and projected disinformation. Regular Taiwanese citizens organized

against disinformation through fact-checking campaigns.

While Taiwan is taking concrete steps to defend itself, the Biden administration and Australia's leftist government are asking for an audience with Xi and doing little, on Taiwan's soil, to demonstrate their commitment and deter war. Too much rhetoric and flashy diplomacy without American and Australian boots on the ground to back it up could actually increase the risk of conflict.

Biden and Australia's prime minister, Anthony Albanese, appear to think "jaw-jaw is better than war-war," as a British prime minister once said. That may not be true with Xi, in which case meeting him just appeases his ego, obscures the danger from the public, and kicks the can of war down an increasingly precipitous road.

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

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## SURVEILLANCE

# TikTok Is a National Security Threat: FBI Director Wray

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

Social media giant TikTok presents a unique threat to U.S. national security because of its ties to communist China, according to FBI Director Christopher Wray.

Speaking during a hearing of the House Homeland Security Committee, Wray said TikTok, which is owned by Chinese company ByteDance, poses significant national security concerns to the United States.

"I would say that we do have national security concerns, at least from the FBI's [perspective] about TikTok," Wray said. "They include the possibility that the Chinese government could use it to control data collection on millions of users or control the recommendation algorithm, which could be used for influence operations if they so chose, or to control software on millions of devices which gives it opportunity to potentially technically compromise personal devices."

Wray delivered the comments in response to a line of questioning by Rep. Diana Harshbarger (R-Tenn.), who asked

if the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which rules China as a single-party state, was actively using ByteDance or TikTok to surveil U.S. citizens.

The questions directly referenced reporting in October from Forbes, which uncovered a plot by China-based employees at TikTok to surveil the location and personal information of specific Americans for no known reason.

In addition to the already chilling effect of being surveilled, the report has shed light on TikTok's problematic relationship with ByteDance, as CCP laws require any data stored within China or by China-owned companies to be handed over to the CCP if deemed an issue of national security. This means that any data TikTok stores in China or sends to ByteDance could be obtained and exploited by the CCP.

Wray declined to comment openly about whether the CCP was directly using either company to undermine U.S. national security or what such operations might look like. However, he said he could deliver classified information to the committee to help inform its judgments about the issue.

**I would say that we do have national security concerns, at least from the FBI's [perspective] about TikTok.**

Christopher Wray, director, FBI



FBI Director Christopher Wray in Washington on Nov. 15, 2022.

"As to what is actually happening, actually being done, that's probably something that would be better addressed in a closed, classified setting," Wray said. "It is certainly something that is on our radar." Representatives for TikTok didn't respond by press time to a request by The Epoch Times for comment.

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