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THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER

MASS DEFIANCE

CCP'S COVID CONTROLS SPARK BOLDEST
DISPLAY OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN DECADES

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People gather on a street in Shanghai on Nov. 27, 2022, where protests against China's zero-COVID policy took place the night before following a deadly fire in Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang region.



Epidemic control workers disinfect an area of the Liangma River in Beijing on Nov. 28, 2022

COVID PROTESTS

Mass Defiance in China Shows Populace Fed Up With Communist Control

EVA FU

A blank sheet of white paper has become the latest symbol of defiance in communist China.

From Beijing to Shanghai, throngs of protesters over the weekend held wordless papers high to vent their frustrations about the regime's harsh COVID rules, while digital white rectangles inundated feeds on the country's largest social media platform WeChat—even as censors scrambled to scrub them off the web.

In a country ruled by a regime notorious for its intolerance of dissent, the blank sheets of paper—a metaphor for what's left unsaid—have become a powerful tool for discontented Chinese, adding fuel to a movement that has spread to a scale unheard-of in recent decades.

Chinese residents in at least a dozen cities took to the streets over the weekend, demanding an end to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) unrelenting zero-COVID policy that, nearly three years into the pandemic, continues to confine millions to their homes while limiting basic daily activities in a bid to tamp down virus cases.

The trigger for the protests was a deadly fire in a high-rise building in Urumqi, the capital of China's western Xinjiang region, where some residents had lived under lockdown for more than 100 days. The blaze on Nov. 24 took 10 lives and injured nine, officials claim, though rights groups contend that the death toll is about four times higher. Videos from the incident showed a desperate woman screaming for help and fire responders unable to reach the apartment, prompting anger and questions as to whether the COVID curbs had hindered residents' escape and rescue efforts, claims refuted by authorities.

What otherwise would have been an isolated incident shook the Chinese public who have lived under the COVID restrictions for three years, which, at times, left people barricaded inside their apartments or even entire residential buildings being welded shut. Others have been transported to mass quarantine centers with no guarantee of basic necessities.

"With the current lockdown measures in place, people are sealed in and if a fire happens... this can happen to anyone, so who wouldn't be afraid?" a Beijing resident surnamed Wang told The Epoch Times on Nov. 27.

The wave of fury that followed swiftly

The Chinese Communist Party is fundamentally at odds with the Chinese people.

Miles Yu, former China adviser, Trump administration

rippled from the city to the rest of the country. Thousands gathered to mourn the victims with vigils and flowers. On college campuses, students held up signs showing a math equation called a Friedmann equation, which is a homophone for "freedman."

'Witnessing History'

Some protesters went so far as to call for regime change and greater political freedoms. "Xi Jinping step down! Communist Party step down!" some chanted in the metropolis of Shanghai, where memories of a months-long lockdown earlier this year are still fresh in the minds of many residents. The lockdown left even the wealthy struggling to source food and caused the death of some sick and elderly who were deprived of medical care.

"The government's lie can no longer deceive us," Mr. Li, who didn't want to give his full name due to safety concerns, told The Epoch Times on Nov. 27, referring to official accounts claiming that "some residents' ability to rescue themselves was too weak" in deflecting blame for the Xinjiang fire fatalities.

"Our Shanghai was locked down for two months, and there were many things we could relate to," he added.

Dong Zhengyi, a recent university graduate who used a pseudonym when speaking with The Epoch Times, said she had

goosebumps at the Shanghai protest scene.

"I felt like I was witnessing history," she said.

On Nov. 27, Dong and her boyfriend joined protests on Wulumuqi Middle Road, a street bearing the same name as Xinjiang's capital, where the fire occurred. While she once trusted that the regime would lead China for the better, Dong watched in shock as dozens of police beat and arrested protesters.

"This is not the way to solve issues," she said, vowing that this wouldn't dampen protesters' resolve to be heard.

Shanghai police that night also briefly detained a BBC correspondent for hours after kicking and handcuffing him, an episode that led the British government to summon the Chinese envoy on Nov. 29.

'A Rebellion'

The widespread demonstrations, according to Miles Yu, a chief China policy adviser under the Trump administration, weren't a mere reaction to the tragedy in Xinjiang, but a reckoning with the regime's rule more broadly.

"Facing the authoritarian Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese people used to think that if they couldn't afford to provoke them, at least they would stay away," he told The Epoch Times in an interview in Chinese. "But the zero-COVID policies... have turned the entire country into a giant prison."

To those who haven't followed developments in China closely, the eruption of the demonstrations could come as a surprise, but not to Yu.

He pointed to sporadic protests from migrant workers in the past. But unlike those instances of unrest, the regime's zero-COVID rules this time around have affected all social classes, including the country's vast middle class, homeowners who have been locked inside their dwellings for inordinate periods of time.

"The Chinese Communist Party is fundamentally at odds with the Chinese people," Yu said.

Echoing Yu, British human rights advocate Benedict Rogers said the protests represent defiance of the Chinese regime's oppressive rule.

"They are, I think, a boiling over of not just frustration at the very draconian COVID lockdowns, but actually rebellion against the very severe repression, the surveillance state that has developed under Xi Jinping

over the last decade," Rogers told Epoch-TV's "American Thought Leaders" program on Nov. 28, referring to the Chinese leader. According to Rogers, the CCP has an unspoken deal with the Chinese people: In return for tolerance of severely limited political and religious freedoms, the Party would preside over an era of economic prosperity, increasing the populace's living standards.

But with the Chinese regime's insistence on its zero-tolerance COVID handling strategy, which has devastated the country's economy, this deal has been put on ice. "It appears that the people of China are increasingly recognizing that Xi Jinping has broken that pact because he's no longer pursuing economic policies that support private enterprise. He's reverting to a much more ideological rule," Rogers said.

Authorities Clamp Down

Since the public outpouring of anger, some Chinese cities have partially relaxed their anti-virus measures, but authorities gave no sign of backtracking on the national policy.

In a press briefing on Nov. 28, foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian responded with a long pause when a reporter asked whether China would consider rescinding the zero-COVID strategy in response to the protests.

He looked down for more than a minute, flipping through notes and requesting the reporter to repeat the question. When he answered, Zhao spoke with less confidence than usual, pausing several times as he asserted that what the reporter had said "does not reflect what actually happened."

"China has always been making adjustments based on the overall dynamic zero-COVID guideline and realities on the ground," he said, adding that the "fight

against COVID will be successful" with the Party's leadership.

The exchange wasn't included in the published transcript of the briefing on the ministry's website.

But concern is growing that the regime will use its well-worn tactic of resorting to violence and intimidation to quell any ongoing shows of dissent. Already, there are signs that the Party's pervasive surveillance apparatus has swung into action to track and identify participants of the demonstrations.

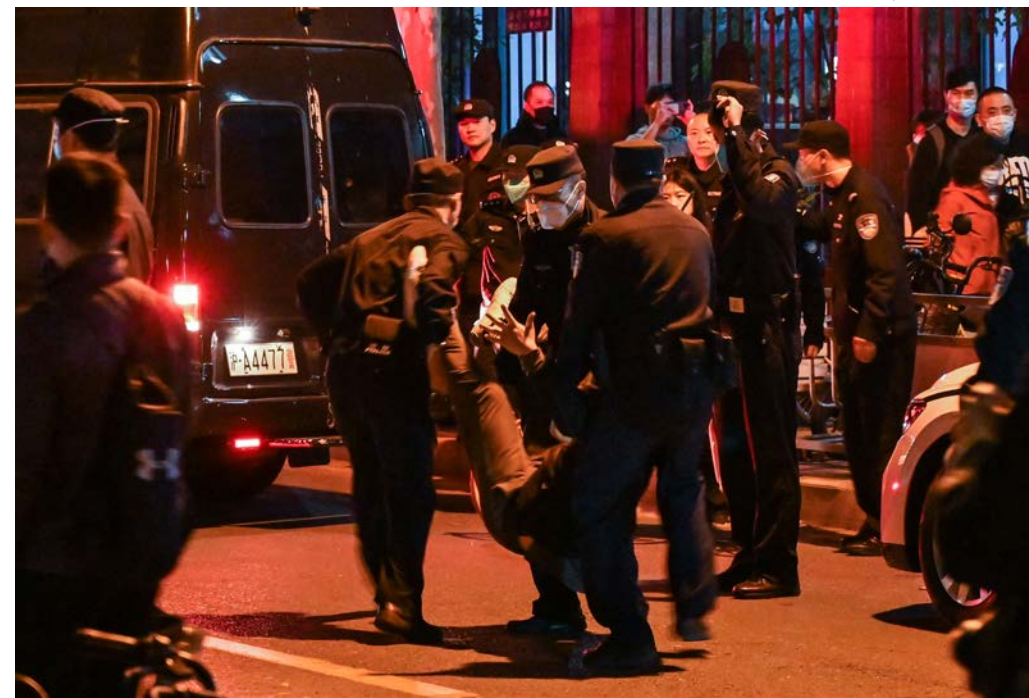
On Nov. 28 and 29, police were out in significant numbers in major cities to discourage protesters from reconvening. Near the protest sites in Shanghai, blue barricades were erected to prevent gatherings, while police at the subway entries and thoroughfares stopped passersby to screen their phones.

In Beijing and elsewhere, reports indicate that demonstrators have received calls from the police asking about their whereabouts over the weekend. One Chinese lawyer told The Wall Street Journal that she suspected police used data on protesters' mobile phones, including those collected by the regime's mandatory COVID tracing app, to ascertain their identities.

For the Party, the stringent virus policy has been elevated to the flagship level, purportedly evidencing socialism's superiority over the West—so there's no turning back, according to Yu.

"It can't admit mistakes," he said of the Chinese regime. "Even though it has reached a dead end and there's no path forward, it still keeps going and eventually has to hit the wall."

Jenny Li, Gu Xiaohua, and Li Xin'an contributed to this report.



A man is arrested while people gather on a street in Shanghai on Nov. 27, 2022.



Protesters march on Hong Kong streets with a sign that reads "Resist Tyranny" during the annual rally on July 1, 2019.

OPINION

Hongkongers Pleading Guilty Is a Sign They're Under Beijing's Control

PETER DAHLIN

It's noteworthy that many Hongkongers charged with national security crimes, including pro-democracy protesters, are pleading guilty. On occasion, such news is met with derision. Some do not realize that it is yet another sign of the sinicization of Hong Kong's legal system—particularly Beijing's implementation of the national security law in the city.

In China, there really is no decision to be made. You confess—always. It's just how the legal system works in the communist country, and to not confess would be foolish in almost any circumstance. Chinese government data for 2021, the year with the most recent complete data, show there are 511 not-guilty verdicts out of 1.7 million verdicts. The numbers are shocking.

Anyone who has ever been arrested is well aware of this. Even though you're innocent, you will be found guilty. You know it; everyone knows it—which is why everyone confesses. Chinese courts rarely trouble themselves with witnesses and technical or forensic evidence; it's simply unnecessary and costly, especially when they already have a confession.

And this goes for human rights defenders, too. They can languish in prison for years, experiencing severe torture that nearly destroys them. Yet once released and recuperated, they all return to the same work. They know it can kill them or, at the very least, destroy their lives. Yet they return, almost without fail. Yet even these people will, with some very rare exceptions, confess. Is it because they are weak or without principles? Of course not.

Anyone who believes they are fighting for a good cause knows that such a fight is only possible when one has freedom. And everyone knows if you confess, your sentence will be significantly reduced. If you know with certainty that you will be convicted, why choose to spend eight years in prison instead of four?

And in those cases where such a logical argument does not work, the police have almost unlimited abilities to force you into a confession instead, from psychological to physical torture, threats against family members, or even detention or arrest of loved ones. If those methods don't work, the police could go further by going after other personal contacts, such as colleagues, business partners, etc., whom they can use as pawns to get a confession.

The fact that so many in Hong Kong—people tied to the anti-extradition and pro-democracy

protests—are pleading guilty is a sign of a complete loss of faith in the ability to get a fair trial, and recent verdicts show clearly why.

The draconian national security law has swung the pendulum further toward the police, prosecutor, and the state, where, for example, the ability for defendants to receive bail pending trial is much reduced while pre-trial detentions are being prolonged. Some, like Gordon Ng, have spent more than one and a half years in pre-trial detention and denied bail. Others, such as Albert Ho, the former leader of the Democratic Party, received bail due to deteriorating health, but with strict limitations, including being unable to meet with foreign officials.

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Politicians in Hong Kong have since repeatedly spoken about introducing further local legislation, where tighter restrictions from the national security law, such as bail conditions, will also apply. Such local legislation is also intended to "fill gaps" left by the Beijing-imposed law, which means the legal framework limiting dissent is likely to worsen as even more acts and speech will become criminalized.

When more people are moved forward to trial, including some of the protest leaders, don't be surprised to see them plead guilty. Their pleading guilty is an indictment of Hong Kong's fallen legal system and their new masters in Beijing, not of themselves.

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

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



Protesters march along a street during a rally in Beijing on Nov. 28, 2022.

OPINION

Is the ‘Unthinkable’ Collapse of Communist China Now Thinkable?

GREGORY COPLEY

The November public protests across mainland China in the aftermath of the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) last month have been focused in a way not seen since the communists took control of the mainland in 1949.

That's not to say that the recent protests have necessarily matched the number of incidents or victims of some earlier protests. What's significant is that they're qualitatively different from the earlier outbursts.

The question is whether this is the wave that finally breaks the CCP's grip on society because the 2022 protests are more focused—and with a broadly agreed national accord—than earlier protests. A concurrent wave of protests in Iran raises similar questions as to whether “this time” the ruling clerics there would also be toppled.

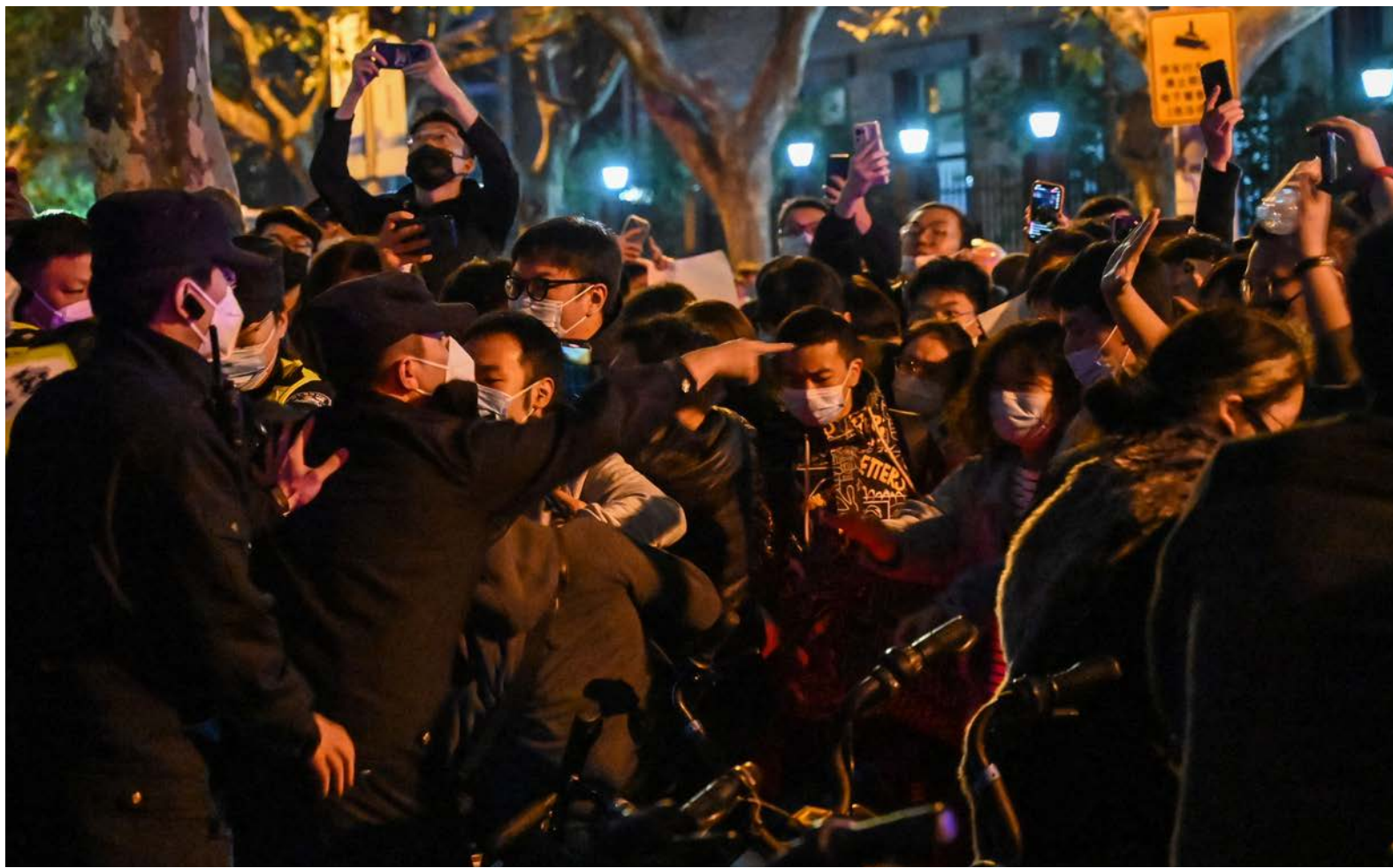
The mainland China protests were given focus just before the CCP's National Congress, when, on Oct. 13, a lone demonstrator unveiled banners across the Sitong Road Bridge in Beijing calling for the removal of Chinese leader Xi Jinping. It presaged the anticipated reality that Xi would gain—as he did—even greater dictatorial power at the Congress. The “Bridge Man” was subsequently arrested and disappeared. Still, he gave iconic impetus to the post-Congress wave of protests that had become entrenched in key cities, such as Shanghai, Beijing, Wuhan, and Urumqi, from Nov. 15 onward.

The protests, too, have been different from those of the past two decades and even the 180,000 separate protests that occurred across mainland China in 2010 or the Hong Kong protests of 2014 that were seen as a more local issue, and Chinese elsewhere could, as Aldous Huxley noted, exhibit that “most human beings have an almost infinite capacity for taking things for granted.”

The late 2022 protest wave had far more focus—and a national focus—than the outbreaks of 2010 or 2014, which were generally more community-related. The current “national” issues then harvest the dissent felt over a myriad of local issues. The anti-zero-COVID campaign coalesced with the rising sense that the CCP had become responsible for a loss of hope, freedom, and wealth.

There appear to have been more focused reasons for the changed nature of the 2022 protests, because the CCP and Xi had ensured that the old community-oriented dissent had become more general in nature: the collapse of the housing (and savings) markets, for example, and the COVID-related health lockdowns that had finally breached any sense of credibility.

The 2022 wave of protests also wasn't surprising because this was the first occasion in the 73 years of communist control in which widespread public hopes had been raised and then comprehensively dashed. Societies can be suppressed almost indefinitely until hope and progress are introduced into the populace. At that point, public demand will always outstrip the capacity of a



Police and people are seen clashing during a protest against China's zero-COVID policy in Shanghai on Nov. 27, 2022.

government to satisfy it.

The Shah of Iran discovered this when, despite an unprecedented era of growth in public wealth and benefits, the growth of demand by 1979 overwhelmed the capacity of the state to satisfy the cravings.

It's at that point, then, that the “social contract” is broken between the governed and the governors. Or at least the social contract has changed to the point in which it has become dysfunctional and must either be reestablished or lost altogether.

The social contract exists in all societies. It's only in so-called democracies—and perhaps it's a hallmark of them—that the social contract is made explicit in the form of constitutions drawn on an initial public consensus and then modified through legal and social practices. The “social contracts” of unapologetically autocratic states exist, but these are implicit. In autocratic states, the implicit social contract is that disobedience within the populace is met with punishment.

Given that the autocratic “social contract” is essentially unilateral—it was never given willing consent by the governed—the point comes when the governed determines that the rulers' enforcement mechanism has collapsed, or lacks will or capability.

The breakdown in the social contracts in societies that have consensus-driven constitutions and in those that don't vary only in the pace and firmness of the suppression of protests against the government.

In societies that began and function to some degree as democratic polities and which were seen to have moved from the public acceptance of their social contract, the breakdown begins with legal and constitutional challenges, seeking to reassert the social contract and only moves toward the realm of physical protest when it becomes clear that the spirit of the social contract itself has been irretrievably violated.



Protesters shout slogans during a protest against the Chinese Communist Party's strict “zero-COVID” measures in Beijing on Nov. 28, 2022.

At some point—perhaps the tipping point—the prestige of the governing authority (system and/or individual) vitiates not just to the point of hatred but to that of outrage and ridicule. What was becoming apparent to many protesters in mainland China in late 2022 was that Xi had made himself the clear author of all of the policies that had led to the collapse of social well-being. In so doing, he made himself a more significant target of opposition than the CCP.

We have just begun to see many indirect messages—and a few direct ones—of ridicule and contempt targeting Xi. As with all such societal collapses through history and even all societal social trends, the process is determined by minority groups. As I've noted for decades, the majority of all populations fear change and will accept any form of repression to avoid it.

By Nov. 29, there was clear recognition within the CCP leadership that either crowd suppression must occur at a major symbolic level and form or that the focus of dissent—largely now Xi—must be removed.

The anti-zero-COVID campaign coalesced with the rising sense that the CCP had become responsible for a loss of hope, freedom, and wealth.

Xi's major function in the years leading up to the 20th Party Congress had been the removal of all potential internal challengers (a function which is largely, but not completely, done). So there may be, in late 2022, insufficient strength within the CCP structure to remove Xi and make him a public scapegoat, which would leave only the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to achieve that task.

But first, the suppression of entire cities was being attempted, and the “zero-COVID” lockdowns—crowd control mechanisms—were being tested to the fullest. As noted before, “zero-COVID” has little or nothing to do with the COVID-19 medical disaster but everything to do with removing hope, mobility, and assets from the broad elements of society that threaten Xi's absolute control.

The question arises as to whether the mainland China protests are giving an example and impetus to the Iranian protests, and/or vice-versa. The potential exists, then, for a near-simultaneous collapse of the governing structures of the Chinese regime, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and even Turkey (where parallels exist in what has now become only a nominally democratic society).

This set of sympathetic disruptions would have a profound impact on the stability and capability of Russia, given that it's under severe containment and strain from external forces. And it would see a significant release of pressure

against the five major Central Asian states, India, and the Southeast Asian states.

But a collapse of power by Xi—who, in order to gain total control, eviscerated the absorptive power of a multi-faction CCP—could lead to a sudden power vacuum in mainland China's regions. The only response capable of restoring order in the short term would come from PLA elements coupled with domestic security forces.

A return to the warlordism of the 20th century and the Maoist period must be considered probable.

All of this brings the potential for rash decisions as the structures collapse, including attempts to seek distractions for the public. The “Galtieri syndrome” must be the most significant option for a collapsing Xi administration, mirroring the 1982 last-minute decision by Argentina's last ruling general, Lt. Gen. Leopoldo Galtieri, to invade and capture the UK's Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic.

A Xi “Galtieri moment” could well include a punitive expedition against Taiwan, even absent any real chance of military success. A similar set of prospects also exists for the besieged presidents/power holders in Iran, Turkey, and, to a lesser extent, Russia. This entire process makes the broad canvas of East, Southeast, and South Asia unstable and clearly would disrupt the global economy profoundly.

That would have immediate ramifications for Australasia—Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific—as well as Indonesia. Such a scenario, assuming that it comes with relative speed as is likely if the protests gain momentum and effectiveness (and this certainly isn't guaranteed), would cause massive displacement of societies throughout the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere, and each society should, at this point, be looking for local containment measures.

I've advocated for some years for societies to plan for the post-China world, but that hasn't been happening. All focus has been on managing, or planning on, the continued growth of China as a market and as a threat.

Now, we're almost guaranteed that a post-China collapse era would be almost entirely reactive on the part of the world's governments, which don't wish to contemplate the extent of disaster management that will be necessary.

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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OPINION

‘Eternal Spring’ Is One of the Great Movies of Our Time

ROGER L. SIMON

Sometimes a movie is so good, it goes past the censors.

That's why it's so surprising that the supremely anti-totalitarian, anti-communist “Eternal Spring” is this year's Canadian Oscar nominee in an unheard-of three categories—best international film, best animation, and best documentary.

The movie is that good. Having just seen it, I would go so far as to say it's the most compelling political film since “The Lives of Others” about life under the East German Stasi that won multiple awards throughout the world in 2007. That movie, however, was fiction, albeit based on the personal experiences of the screenwriter. “Eternal Spring” mixes 3D animation, live interviews, and archival footage to tell the tale of the hacking of the television news in Changchun, China, in 2002 by a small group of Falun Gong practitioners who wanted the public to know the truth about their spiritual beliefs as opposed to the communist propaganda being fed to them.

Directed by Jason Loftus and animated by the absolutely extraordinary Daxiong, who figures himself in the story, the film has you on the proverbial edge of your seat throughout, even though you know—this being China under the brutal Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule of then-leader Jiang Zemin—that our heroes will (mostly) not survive.

Directed by Jason Loftus and animated by the absolutely extraordinary Daxiong, who figures himself in the story, the film has you on the proverbial edge of your seat throughout.

Artist Daxiong in a still of the “Eternal Spring” documentary, which tells the story of a group of Chinese citizens who brought uncensored news to China and its aftermath.

Yes, there's violence in the film (mostly animated, thankfully), as you would expect given what we know of the treatment of religious minorities and political dissidents in today's China. And yet the overall feeling of the film is curiously optimistic, earning the title “Eternal Spring.”

The film harkens back to a different China of other eras—Daxiong's animations here are outstanding, as are his representations of the actual participants—in a manner that makes you want to believe those days will come again.

That respect for much older and spiritually deeper Chinese traditions can be found in the book “Zhuan Falun” by Hongzhi Li, Falun Gong's founder, which I also recently read.

I find Western similarities to these beliefs—truth, compassion, and tolerance—in aspects of evangelical Christi-

anity and the rapidly-growing Chabad movement in Judaism.

All three advocate for what amounts to a peaceful revolution through the improvement of one's own character by living a virtuous life that others may seek to emulate.

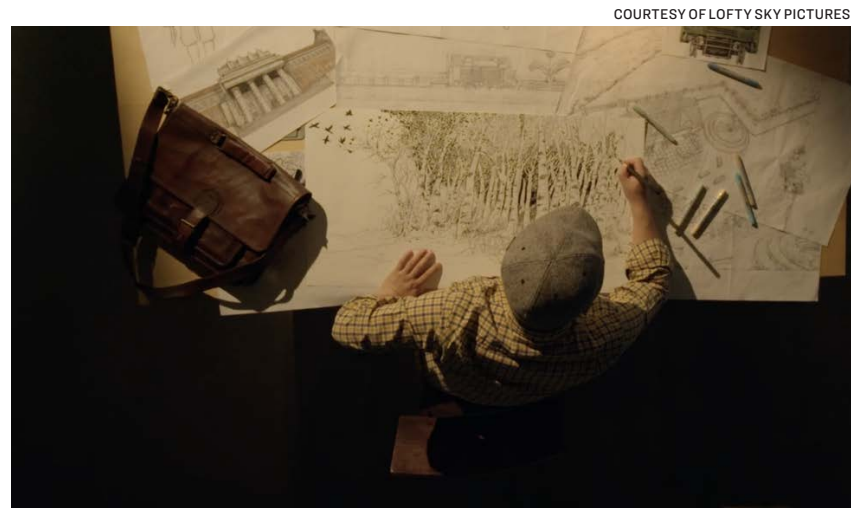
There may be no better advice in these perilous times.

To see “Eternal Spring,” check their website, EternalSpringFilm.com. Screenings are coming up shortly in Toronto; Los Angeles, San Rafael, and Palm Springs, California; Middletown and Rochester, New York; and Tel Aviv, Israel. Hopefully, more will be added soon.

And if you feel as I do about the film, please pass it on. I've already contacted some like-minded friends of mine in the Motion Picture Academy who also vote on the Oscars as I do. It's an uphill battle there against the overwhelming “woke” majority, but as they say in the Zen tradition, “You can't get there by trying, but you won't get there if you don't try.”

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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OPINION

China's Interference in US Politics

ANDERS CORR



America's most powerful China supporters include our top politicians, businesses, and academic institutions. Their interests are reflected by political groups, committees, centers, and think tanks supported by big money donations, investors, tuition, and media with financial links to the regime in Beijing.

Their relative silence about the dangers of an expansionist and totalitarian state that engages in genocide safeguards over \$650 billion in annual U.S.-China trade, and the \$2.3 trillion worth of U.S. institutional investment there.

America's China elites seek the continuance of free trade with the country, and to that end, a minimization of conflict that requires backing down from American values. The principle of prioritizing China profits over the defense of democracies, the international rule of law, freedom, and human rights is also apparent in Europe, Africa, Latin America, and the rest of Asia. Countries and businesses thirst for short-term revenues and compromise their values as necessary.

Xi Jinping, China's dictator, understands the dynamic, as did those who preceded him. Even though as a communist Xi tries to destroy capitalist free markets and what he sees as the capitalist imperialism of the United States and Europe, he will cooperate with individual business and political leaders in the short term if they, wittingly or not, serve the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) long-term goals. These include the replacement of U.S. "hegemony" with that of Beijing.

American elites help when they look the other way as Beijing captures territory and markets in Asia and forces technology transfers to China's corporations, including through cybertheft and industrial espionage. These elites prove they are a "friend of China" by not supporting the independence of Taiwan, or mentioning the CCP's human rights abuse, up to and including genocide. Extraordinary profits are reserved for companies that lobby for China in Washington.

A notable and criminal silence on the CCP ensues, which spreads from the president of the United States, who pulls his punches against Beijing, throughout the entire Congress and down to local levels. Politicians who complain about China's abuses are portrayed as awkward rubes, thus threatening their campaign funding, political party support, and future political career.

President Joe Biden is the best example. He climbed the political hierarchy, including through his "expertise" in foreign policy, by ticking all the right boxes. While Biden denied that China would "eat our lunch" on the campaign trail as late as 2019, he reversed himself in 2021. But his 2021 focus was on beating China in domestic infrastructure and green technologies, neither of which Beijing sees as key battlefields for its goal of global hegemony.

Beijing wants the United States to spend taxpayer dollars on rail, roads, and electric vehicles that could help China if we buy from Chinese companies, or if trillions of dollars in government spending increases U.S. inflation, interest rates, and the risk of recession. It did all of that, which must have made Xi cheer, along with his allies in Moscow, Tehran, and Pyongyang.

The CCP uses influence operations, election interference, and political warfare, to channel the United States into self-destructive economic and military backwaters. To this end, the CCP has a massive bureaucracy, called the United Front Work Department (UFWD), that controls organizations and individuals globally, and within China, to engage with any individual or group not a member of the CCP. That includes attempts to influence U.S. leadership. Even those not formally part of the UFWD can be used, as all Chinese nationals and companies are required to report intelligence back to Beijing whenever asked.

The CCP, including through the UFWD, has funded political candidates and paid millions in advertising to the world's top newspapers. It threatens prominent dissenters globally, and pays or cooperates with internet trolls, criminals, terror-



President Joe Biden meets with Chinese leader Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the G-20 leaders' summit in Bali, Indonesia, on Nov. 14, 2022.

The bottom line requirement to defeat China's political influence in the United States should be tougher laws against foreign influence from adversary nations.

ists, and thugs. It organizes fake protests with paid protesters, and bribes heads of state with millions of dollars, both directly and indirectly through family and friendship networks.

"China is engaged in a highly sophisticated malign foreign influence campaign, and its methods include bribery, blackmail, and covert deals," according to FBI director Christopher Wray in a 2020 speech. "Chinese diplomats also use both open, naked economic pressure and seemingly independent middlemen to push China's preferences on American officials."

The Joe Biden Case

Chinese operatives do their best to hide, but the evidence sometimes leaks through. It links the president and his family members to billions of dollars worth of business with Chinese companies, including its biggest military contractor, a facial recognition company, and a defunct oil company caught in bribery scandals.

As vice president in 2013, Joe took his son Hunter on Air Force Two to China, helping boost his profile for Chinese business deals. Twelve days after the trip, a company called BHR Partners was reportedly registered. BHR is controlled and mostly funded by large Chinese companies. Hunter became one of the company's nine directors. BHR did approximately \$2.5 billion worth of business by 2019. That year, Hunter owned 10 percent of the company.

One of Hunter's business associates claims that Joe participated with Hunter and James Biden, Joe's younger brother, in one of the China-linked businesses called SinoHawk. The associate, Anthony Bobulinski, has text messages that he says show plans for 10 percent of that venture to be held by Hunter for Joe "the big guy" Biden.

In one of the deals, involving China's oil company CEFC, Hunter admitted that its chairman sent a 2.8 carat diamond to Hunter's hotel room. The 2017 gift was a "thank you" for a single dinner conversa-

tion. Hunter, a lawyer, agreed during that conversation to represent a CEFC affiliate, Patrick Ho, who the FBI ultimately investigated for bribery of heads of state in Africa.

Hunter negotiated almost \$5 million in retainers and consulting fees. CEFC agreed to pay Hunter \$100,000 a month, and to pay James \$65,000 a month. Hunter reportedly requested keys to a shared office with CEFC in Washington for Joe, James, and a Chinese executive.

It is hard to imagine that Hunter and James would have these highly lucrative opportunities without Joe's support and political prominence.

The FBI arrested Ho at JFK airport a few months after Hunter agreed to represent him. Ho's first call seeking help was to James, who referred him to Hunter. In 2019, Ho was convicted of paying bribes amounting to millions of dollars to African leaders.

There has been next to no accountability of the Biden family's questionable China relations. Republicans, who won control of the House of Representatives in November, plan a major investigation.

The Trump, Bush, and Clinton families have also had links to China business. The failure of Congress to thoroughly investigate these cross-party sources of malign foreign influence is an indicator of the power of Beijing's enduring influence in Washington.

The Eric Swalwell Case

Congress should dig as deep as they can because China's influence affects not only the top rungs of presidential politics but all the way down to the local level.

The most prominent example is Congressman Eric Swalwell (D-Calif.), allegedly identified as a rising star by China's civilian intelligence agency, the Ministry of State Security (MSS), when he was just a city council member in a small Bay Area town. He and other U.S. politicians were caught in a money-honey trap that a suspected Chinese spy, Christine Fang,



Christine Fang with then-Dublin, Calif., Councilmember Eric Swalwell at an October 2012 student event.

conducted from 2011 to 2015. Axios broke the story.

Fang first approached Swalwell when he was Dublin City council member in 2012. At the time, Fang was a student at a nearby university. She was also president of its Chinese Student Association and headed its chapter of the Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs (APAPA) group, which promotes Asian-American and Islander political involvement. She used the latter title in most of her politicking.

Of course, all U.S. citizens regardless of race should be encouraged to vote and get involved in politics. American democracy is strong because of its diversity, including the involvement of its Asian and Pacific Islander communities. But APAPA allowed a non-U.S. citizen of an adversary nation into a leadership position. If its website is any indication, it is biased towards communist China just as are many mainstream politicians.

China is mentioned on over 60 of its website pages. Only two mention Taiwan. None of its pages mention Uyghurs or the genocide against them. None mention the sensitive topics of Tibet or the Falun Gong. The bias is clear and the civil society conduit for China's intelligence services to use identity politics for its malign purposes should be addressed by Congress.

China consulates around the world often have a decisive influence on who leads Chinese student associations abroad, so Fang's leadership position in her two student organizations may not have been entirely coincidental. Her real reason for being in the United States, according to U.S. officials quoted by Axios, was to influence U.S. politicians on China-related issues, and to gather sensitive political intelligence, including highly personal data about politicians that is otherwise unavailable to the public.

Fang's method for breaking into political circles was to invite politicians and business people to speak at her student events and there mingle with Chinese consulate officials. She exuded a sense of wealth, driving a white Mercedes and traveling to regional and national conferences, rallies, and at least one event held by the Chinese embassy in Washington.

She volunteered at political offices, and used her links to politicians to place possibly unwitting subagents with them as interns or staff, according to Axios. She helped with fundraising events and introduced donors to candidates.

Fang's strategy paralleled Chinese and Russian operations before and after. A successful MSS operation in the 2000s placed a staff member in House Speaker Dianne Feinstein's office. Another in the Bay Area sent local politicians to China on all-expenses-paid junkets. Russia uses a similar strategy, for example, Maria Butina's attempted infiltration of conservative groups, including the National Rifle Association, to influence the 2016 elections.

Fang reportedly volunteered her election fundraising for the politicians she sought to influence over the long term, hoping their careers would later take off. On at least two occasions, with Midwest politicians, she allegedly engaged in romance, including "a sexual encounter with an Ohio mayor in a car that was under electronic FBI surveillance ... the mayor asked why Fang was interested in him, [and] Fang told him she wanted to improve her English," according to a U.S. official quoted by Axios.

Swalwell was ultimately Fang's most successful mark. Elected to the House of Representatives in 2012, by 2015 he was appointed to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Fang acted as a fundraising "bundler" for Swalwell's 2014 re-election. She introduced donors to him and placed an intern in his Washington office. While Swalwell refuses to answer questions from the media about whether he had a sexual relationship with Fang, she was close enough to him to become Facebook friends with his father and brother.

In 2015, the FBI warned Swalwell about Fang, and he cut ties. She abruptly left the country, but there are reportedly many more like her.

Bottom Line: Remove Political Access for Adversaries

The bottom line requirement to defeat China's political influence in the United States should be tougher laws against foreign influence from adversary nations. That means no more Chinese state media ads in our newspapers. No more of Beijing's troll armies allowed on our social media. No more campaign donations, bundlers, or political family business with adversary-linked individuals and companies. Businesses and universities that rely on China-linked revenues should admit their conflict of interest and recuse themselves from lobbying for soft-on-China policies.

Loopholes in existing laws, around the world, must be closed. China finds it too easy, especially because of its economic heft, to influence global politics in a manner that will eventually lead to its own hegemony.

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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ANNA MONEYMAKER/GETTY IMAGES



Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-Calif.) listens during a news conference at the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington on April 6, 2022.



Hunter Biden walks to Marine One on the Ellipse outside the White House in Washington on May 22, 2021.

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