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CHINA INSIDER

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TRADITIONAL VALUES

Chinese Community Finds Hope and Meaning in Lunar New Year Message

DOROTHY LI

In the past, when Chinese people wondered about the meaning of life, they looked to the Confucian classics or brought their questions to monasteries and temples.

But this tradition has been decimated, a result of the Communist Party's decades-long campaign to eradicate traditional beliefs and replace them with Marxist-Leninist ideologies of materialism and atheism. Nowadays, many in China have rejected traditional values and turned their focus on seeking personal gain, grounded in an absolute belief in materialism and science.

"But for the real truth we are seeking, it's hard to find it from science," said Li Mianying, a Chinese philosopher and entrepreneur who recently moved to the United States.

"The pursuit of science and technology has pushed human beings to the brink of destruction," he said. Modern science has resulted in the rejection of traditional beliefs and moral values, Li added. "As science and technology develop, we may destroy ourselves before the destruction of the earth."

So where can people find the purpose of life? The Chinese immigrant found insight from a recent article, "How Humankind Came To Be" by Mr. Li Hongzhi, the founder of the traditional spiritual discipline Falun Gong. The article was released as a message for the Lunar New Year last month.

"[The article] is not only meaningful to Chinese culture, but also to the entire humanity," said Li Mianying, who has no relation to the article author.

"Why did Marx insist on the essence of the world being material and deny the spiritual world? It's not an issue of science or philosophy. Marx wanted to use [materialism] to deny compassion, spirituality, and God," Li explained.

Decades of communist campaigns left many with little respect for the divine. People now go to temples to pray for money, rather than contemplate their mistakes with a sincere and respectful heart toward Buddha. "The inner meaning of religion has been changed," Li said.

Because of this, the introduction of Falun Gong in China in 1992 represented "a very important turning point" for the country, according to Li, and helped bring about a renaissance of Chinese culture and civilization.

After reading the article by Falun Gong's founder, Tammy, who is not an adherent of the practice, said Mr. Li's essay solved many puzzles she has sought to answer. 'Why are there hardships in human life? It's because people are made to temper themselves through the experience and thus they can elevate,' Tammy said, explaining her understanding of the essay.

At age 13, Huang Yong-he started to help his father, an accomplished traditional Chinese medicine practitioner, to take care of the clinic.

Huang Yong-he makes a plaster with herbs.



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Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is rooted in traditional Chinese belief systems that involve moral improvement leading to spiritual enlightenment. Composed of gentle, meditative exercises along with moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance, the practice quickly attracted people from all backgrounds, from rural villagers to college professors.

Falun Gong adherents demonstrate their exercises during a parade in Hong Kong on April 27, 2019.

A parade led by Falun Gong's Tianguo marching band in Hong Kong on May 10, 2015.



DALE DE LA RE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



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was first spread, there were an estimated 70 to 100 million people practicing across the country.

While Li Mianying didn't take up the practice, the Chinese expatriate said he is now reading Falun Gong's books, as was amazed by Mr. Li's insight into the universe.

The Meaning of Life's Hardships

Tammy, a Hongkonger and mother now living in Toronto, often saw hundreds of Falun Gong practitioners marching through the streets of the thriving East Asian metropolis.

Tammy knew they were calling for an end to the ongoing persecution happening in the mainland. In 1999, then-Chinese leader Jiang Zemin, who deemed Falun Gong's booming popularity as a threat to the Party's control, ordered a severe campaign to eradicate the discipline, resulting in millions of adherents being thrown into detention, where they are brainwashed, tortured, or even killed for their organs.

But the persecution didn't reach Hong Kong—a former British colony that once enjoyed freedoms and autonomy unseen in the mainland—where people are free to practice Falun Gong.

While Tammy often saw adherents peacefully protesting the persecution in Hong Kong, said she didn't understand what the practice was about until last year when she settled in Canada and was personally introduced to a Falun Gong practitioner, who was the parent of her son's classmate.

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"Why are there hardships in human life? It's because people are made to temper themselves through the experience and thus they can elevate," Tammy said, explaining her understanding of the essay.

The mother of a 6-year-old boy spoke to The Epoch Times using only her first

After reading Mr. Li's article, I really believe that no matter how great the wealth and influence we have in this world, what's the use if we can't re-ascend to Heaven?

Huang Yong-he, owner, traditional Chinese medicine clinic in Taiwan's Tainan city

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name, for fear of retribution from the communist regime.

In the article, Mr. Li said that the universe goes through the process of "formation, stasis, degeneration, and destruction," just as human beings experience "birth, aging, illness, and death," and that the human world is currently at the last period of the destruction phase.

Mr. Li's illustration of the universe strongly resonated with Tammy who experienced how the Chinese Communist Party in recent years turned Hong Kong into just another mainland city. In 2019, during months of massive pro-democracy protests, Tammy observed police officers beat, and fire rubber bullets and tear gas at unarmed demonstrators under Beijing's directives.

Such bloody scenes saddened her. "[I thought] police were supposed to uphold justice," Tammy said. "That's why I was so disappointed. I even felt that righteousness seemed to be destroyed."

But Tammy was able to find hope in Mr. Li's essay, saying she felt relieved after learning the deeper reasons behind human suffering.

"Everything is arranged by the divine beings. By going through hardships, we can accumulate virtue and elevate ourselves through spiritual practice, thus leaving the lowly human level," she said.

Humankind's 'Only Yearning'

Mr. Li's explanation of the reasons behind winning or losing in life also left an impression on Huang Yong-he, the owner of a traditional Chinese medicine clinic in Taiwan's Tainan city.

In the past, Huang often wondered where his wisdom came from. At the age of 13,

when he graduated from primary school, Huang started to help his father, an accomplished traditional Chinese medicine practitioner, to take care of the clinic.

The first step was to learn hundreds of medicinal plants and herbs, an extremely difficult task. But Huang took to it like a duck to water. He felt as though the names and effects of the many different herbs gelled with his brain, as so was able to memorize the information much faster than others.

"Talents are also a kind of 'blessings and virtues' that were built up in previous lives," Huang said, referring to Mr. Li's explanation in the essay of the cause of a person's wealth and fortune.

Looking back on his life, Huang realized that divine beings have taken care of him for a very long time. The patients of his clinic, Huang said, may also have been arranged by Heaven.

Huang was glad that he kept doing good deeds and helped others during the past decades. While he didn't expect rewards, Huang said he enjoyed the sense of accomplishment. "I used to think life's meaning was about working hard, enjoying fulfillment, making money, and preparing for retirement," Huang said.

"After reading Mr. Li's article, I really believe that no matter how great the wealth and influence we have in this world, what's the use if we can't re-ascend to Heaven?"

"In this secular world, humankind suffers, atones for their sins while helping others and accumulating blessings and virtue. But building these up is not our purpose. Returning to heaven is our only yearning!"

Luo Ya, Yang Xinwen, and Yu Yuan contributed to this report.



Riot police charge as they fire tear gas on a street to disperse protesters in Hong Kong on Nov. 11, 2019.

TRADITIONAL VALUES

'How Humankind Came to Be' Carries a Good Message for the Test of Life, Teachers Say

TERRI WU

Mary Rose Martin, an elementary school teacher, sees life as a test and agrees that the purpose of life is to pave the way to heaven. Upon reading "How Humankind Came to Be," an article Falun Gong founder Li Hongzhi published in The Epoch Times last month, she wrote to the newspaper: "Living in the way he [Li] suggests would eventually bring about a very different worldly experience."

In her view, life is like "a stream that extends forever." "Right now, this is a very short, little piece of the stream. So what we do here will matter only insofar as what we're going to go from here, down the rest of that stream," she told The Epoch Times.

"This is a test, and how we live our lives in this test will determine what happens

to us next," she told The Epoch Times, adding that Mr. Li mentioned in his article different degrees of realms or glory for a being, which is in line with her belief, in different semantics or theories.

"I don't think I would want to live in a world where there was no moral anchor," she said. To her, a moral anchor is what religions provide. "In believing in any higher power, you are becoming a better person." Therefore, she said she is grateful to anyone with a spiritual goal.

Mr. Li introduced the spiritual belief of Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, to the public in China in 1992. Before the persecution started in China in July 1999, the number of followers reached over 70 million, and the Chinese communist regime praised the practice for its healing and fitness benefits.

'Frame of Mind' Drives Outcome

At 73 and currently living near Sacramento in California, she said she had gone through various difficulties all her life, starting from losing her father at the age of 11. The family was poor, and life in the 1950s for a widow—her mother—was very different from today.

Martin had to make peace with and sense of her father's death and the difficult upbringing. "They had to mean something." And she finally achieved that when she joined the Mormon church at the age of 17. "One of the factors was the fact that I truly believed and felt in my heart that it's true that we have another life after this," she said, adding that she knew she would see her father again.

"I've found that when I'm happy and try to see the good in anything and everything, then those things [sufferings] are not so important." She spoke of how different thoughts would bring about different outcomes. "Because it's a frame of mind; it's an attitude. It's how you think because you become what you think."

Martin also knows of the persecution. "He [Li Hongzhi] is promoting goodness and kindness; how come that is a threat?" "How is he surviving in China when they're trying to kill what he's trying to do?" she asked, relieved that Li is still alive and lives in the United States.

Seifert said she thought that Mr. Li was right in pointing out that the world was heading toward destruction. She was concerned that today's people became very "ungodly." "They are evil. They are doing terrible things to other people. That's not the world I thought I was living in."

Martin shares Seifert's concerns about the rise of atheism and points to China as an example of a society intolerant of freedom of belief. "To try to navigate this life without a moral anchor leads exactly to what they are having in China."

Seifert, a retired piano teacher currently living in Florida, told The Epoch Times, adding that she studied anatomy in college. "Once you see what's inside the human body, that couldn't have just happened. There has to be a Creator."

She said she had thought of the Creator shortly before she came across Mr. Li's article "How Humankind Came to Be." She went to a nursing school but eventually went into music after having an opportunity to play the organ to accompany the nurses' choir.

In addition to teaching piano, she worked as choir director and organist in a Quaker Christian church.

To her, other messengers of God might be sent to earth for other people. Therefore, other religions might have different names for God. "I think about Buddha, who taught all these wonderful, good things and taught people

how to be good in life," she added.

As a member of the Mormon church, Martin said she looked at "similarities rather than differences" between Mr. Li's teachings and her beliefs. "There are others who also believe, and it may not be exactly the same as my belief, but it is a belief system that, if practiced by all, would make a better world."

Seifert has noticed some criticisms of the article: "Some of them were like from 'Christians' who have these walls built around their religion. So when Mr. Li's saying doesn't fit their idea of what Jesus says, they criticized the article."

"That's too bad," she added. "But maybe some eyes were opened from reading [it]. That's my hope; some people will give it a second thought."

Society Needs a Moral Anchor

Seifert came across Falun Gong over a year ago and attended two webinars about spiritual belief. "This [the article] was beautiful.

Thank you so much for publishing it. I am very interested in the practice of Falun Gong; I just haven't found the time to do all the reading and try to find a group near where I live. I have a lot

of respect for Mr. Li Hongzhi," she wrote to The Epoch Times after reading the article.

Asked how she sifted through mixed information online and formed such a favorable opinion of Falun Gong, she said, "I think he's [Li Hongzhi] right." "I believe what he [Li] says about being good and living a good life. That's so important." She recalled the three tenets of the practice—truth, compassion, tolerance—and quipped, "Tolerance: that's the one I have had to work on a lot."

"I think what's happened to the people in China has just been atrocious. It's still happening, from what I gather," Seifert added, referring to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

Martin also knows of the persecution. "He [Li Hongzhi] is promoting goodness and kindness; how come that is a threat?" "How is he surviving in China when they're trying to kill what he's trying to do?" she asked, relieved that Li is still alive and lives in the United States.

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Mary Rose Martin in October 2020.

COURTESY OF MARY ROSE MARTIN



Laura Seifert, a retired piano teacher in Florida.

COURTESY OF LAURA SEIFERT



An F-22 Raptor fighter jet during an airshow at Joint Base Andrews, Md., on Sept. 16, 2017.

NATIONAL SECURITY

US Military Readiness Under Scrutiny After Aerial Incursions

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

Over eight days and using five missiles, U.S. forces shot down four objects flying above U.S. and Canadian airspace.

Those objects include a Chinese spy balloon and three unidentified objects, one roughly the size of a Volkswagen Beetle and another an octagonal black-metallic object.

It's a historic time for the North American Aerospace Defense Command, the joint American-Canadian organization responsible for overseeing North American airspace and its defense, which in its 65-year history had never before shot down an aerial object over North America.

Our 9/11 intelligence failure was a lack of imagination.

Paul Crespo, president, Center for American Defense Studies

The United States' encounters with unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) over the past two weeks, as well as pilots' hardships in identifying and engaging with them, highlight glaring weaknesses in U.S. military readiness, according to several defense and security experts.

Such shortcomings included an apparent inability to detect one of the objects until it had already entered U.S. airspace, as well as a failure to track and engage another object that lingered near sensitive U.S. nuclear silos in Montana before evading further detection by fighter jets.

Paul Crespo, a former Marine officer at the Defense Intelligence Agency and now president of the Center for American Defense Studies, believes that the problem is largely due to the size, heat, and speed of the UAPs encountered in recent weeks, all of which factor into the ease with which they could be seen on radar.

"The recent flurry of unidentifiable aerial phenomena over the United States and Canada underscores our weakness in detecting and identifying nontraditional aerial threats," Crespo told The Epoch Times in an email.

"If it isn't made of metal, super hot, and traveling hundreds if not thousands of miles an hour, our air surveillance and defense systems appear stymied."

Crespo's comments highlight a problem addressed by the White House, which has acknowledged that the three

UAPs had very small radar cross sections and were difficult to spot. It's a small problem with big consequences.

US in 'New Strategic Era'

The problem has been years in the making, according to Sam Kessler, a national security and geopolitical analyst with risk management firm North Star Support Group.

Because U.S. forces are trained to use radar primarily to detect other fighter craft, much-related technology and intelligence gathering hasn't been honed to find objects that otherwise look either benign on radar or don't appear at all.

"The detection issues are complicated since the sensing and radar technologies typically used for surveillance and detection purposes are usually set up under a different system of threats, such as the use of objects and vehicles that are typically fast-moving and carry a significant heat signature," Kessler said.

"The objects that evaded detection last week were slow-moving and carried little to no heat or energy signature that could have been detected more easily."

Kessler said balloons, drones, and other small air vehicles were increas-

ingly being used in both peace and war to gain an asymmetrical advantage. This leads to unpredictable results at times, he said.

"We are in a new strategic era where aerial threats that are commonly used in theaters of war can also be utilized on the home front as well," Kessler said.

"In many ways, the objects that have been detected last week are also a great opportunity to assess what has happened, what's needed going forward, and what solutions can be necessary and helpful."

It should be noted that the United States doesn't know what the three UAPs are, whether they're commercial or military in nature, or where they came from. To that end, officials have said that while the objects posed a risk to civil aviation, they didn't present a kinetic security risk to Americans on the ground.

Official depictions of the objects don't necessarily mesh with the government's response to them, however, or with fighter pilots' firsthand observations.

While the Pentagon has acknowledged, for example, that the object shot down over Alaska was able to penetrate U.S. airspace before being detected,

some of the pilots who approached the object said that it appeared to interfere with their onboard sensors.

Likewise, the UAP that appeared over Montana near fields of U.S. nuclear silos was apparently lost after fighters scrambled to intercept it. The object was later rediscovered the following day over Lake Huron, where it was shot down.

The objects have been described by Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley as "balloons" that appeared to be carrying small payloads of an indeterminate nature.

In audio recordings from the pilots' cockpits taken during the interception over Lake Huron, one pilot observes that the object appears to have strings attached, but no payload.

"In the targeting pod, I can't tell if it's metallic or what, but I can see, like, lines coming down below it, but I can't see anything below it," the pilot says.

"You can definitely see strings below but don't see anything hanging below."

Perhaps relatedly, Milley has acknowledged that the first missile fired over Lake Huron missed its intended target.

"The first shot missed, the second shot

ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

CCP INFLUENCE

Beijing Expanding Influence Over Chinese Companies Through Managerial Incentives, Research Shows

AUTUMN SPREDEMAN

The Chinese regime has expanded its influence over the nation's companies to be more deeply involved in their businesses, according to research presented recently by strategic and economic analysts at a top U.S. think tank.

The methodical increase in control by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been achieved primarily through managerial incentives such as Party building, social credit, and special management shares, which was discussed by a panel led by Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) researchers Curtis Milhaupt and Lauren Yu-Hsin Lin.

"One of the both fascinating... frustrating, and perhaps even threatening aspects of Chinese corporate governance is there are actually two systems," Milhaupt said on Feb. 7 during the CSIS live web conference.

He stated that beyond the standard corporate managerial structure, there's a "shadow" system of corporate governance linked directly to the CCP, which has been gaining influence since 2015.

"Corporate executives in China typically wear two hats: a corporate hat and a [CCP] Party hat," Milhaupt said.

A subtle but noticeable CCP influence over China's companies—both domestic and international—began to emerge in 2015. And like many big changes, it began with policy building.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party and State Council circulated a set of 10 charter model provisions that Milhaupt says was meant to "formalize the role of the party in Chinese corporate governance."

Some of the decision-making provisions included giving CCP committee members a higher rank than the board of directors or management within companies. It's something Milhaupt noted runs "completely counter" to standard Chinese corporate practices.

It appears many Chinese companies have jumped on the bandwagon. Between 2015 and 2018, 58 percent of state-owned businesses were willing to adopt the CCP decision-making provisions into their business char-

ters. Of China's privately owned companies, 25 percent also were willing to comply.

Significant Perks for Businesses

As of 2022, 90 percent of state and private businesses adopted the CCP "symbolic measures" outlined in the new corporate charter.

"It's the decision-making provisions that are the most essential [for control]," CSIS panel commentator Barry Naughton said, calling the Party directives "kind of shocking."

Milhaupt added, "We see a big spike in the adoption of party-building amendments by private firms."

That's because compliance and Party affiliation come with significant perks for businesses.

The growing politicization may have 'significant implications' for those who choose to invest in Chinese financial assets, a 2022 Atlantic Council report stated.

The social credit system has proved an effective tool for influencing businesses as well as individuals.

In 2014, the CCP developed a system meant to rank what Lin called the "trustworthiness" of every market participant in China. It's an ambitious program that's scored based on five categories. Scores range from zero to a maximum of 1,000 points and can easily make or break a business in China.

"The consequence would be, if you receive a bad rating, you'll be at a disadvantage in accessing finance, receiving government approvals, or subject to more inspections," Lin said.

In their research, Lin and Milhaupt noted that politically connected Chinese companies usually scored higher in the social credit ranking.

The concept of social credit has been sold to China's population as a means to deter fraud and crime through the use of surveillance and big data, amid international criticism and concerns over human rights violations.

Lin made a point of saying the state's use of big data to exert greater control over China's businesses is "something to watch in the future."

There's also the use of special management shares. It's an investment that takes stakes in media or other internet platform businesses—usually around 1 percent—and through that vehicle, certain management rights are gained.

It's a method through which the CCP can expand control and censorship in private companies, Lin said. The CCP will usually hold a board seat and then appoint a chief editor in charge of content review and approval.

Companies that are feeling CCP management pressure include Alibaba, Tencent, Youku, and ByteDance.

In a bid for preferential treatment, some Chinese firms are directly asking the regime to take special management shares of their company. It can also ensure a clear path through obstacles such as licensing.

It also creates a solid political connection between the Communist Party and private businesses.

Economic Implications

A 2022 Atlantic Council report also expressed concern about the rise of Party influence in Chinese companies. It concluded the growing politicization may have "significant implications" for those who choose to invest in Chinese financial assets.

The analysis further noted that, as Western investors become more exposed to Chinese capital markets, "the global economy is increasingly vulnerable to economic instability in China."

So far, China's state-owned enterprises are responsible for most of the country's nonfinancial corporate debt. The tally even exceeded the nation's gross domestic product in 2019.

In 2020, companies owned by the regime began defaulting on their debts amid global economic fears ignited by the pandemic. That year, state-run businesses defaulted on more than \$6 billion worth of bonds from January to October, according to Fitch Ratings.

The CSIS press office didn't respond to a request for comment by press time.

KENZO TRIBOUILLARD/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley during a press conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Feb. 14, 2023.

hit," Milley said during a Feb. 14 press briefing.

"In this case, the missile landed harmlessly in the water of Lake Huron. We tracked it all the way down."

Milley didn't indicate if the miss was in any way caused by interference with the aircraft's sensors.

'A Failure of Imagination'

Nic Chaillan, former chief software officer of the U.S. Air Force, said that the United States would need to do better to defend its airspace and that the United States' apparent struggles to track and engage with these UAPs presented an operation shortcoming.

"Clearly this demonstrates we need to do better when it comes to protecting our airspace," Chaillan told The Epoch Times in an email.

Chaillan said that while the United States' own stealth technology was advanced, the military seemed to be struggling with keeping up with new types of threats that are apparently now penetrating U.S. airspace. To that end, he said that the United States ought to attempt to capture future unidentified aerial objects to study them.

"We're doing very well with our own stealth technology, but we seem ill-prepared when it comes to our own defensive capabilities," Chaillan wrote. "Particularly when it comes to balloons and higher altitude objects, and particularly when they fly over large cities."

"It seems we need capture options that would allow us to take them away without destroying them. I'm also concerned that it is taking so long to recover the objects."

For Crespo, the failure to more adequately prepare for such an eventuality, when the White House claims to have known about a spy balloon program for some time, is a failure of imagination.

"Yes, the Pentagon appears to have tweaked its techniques, processes, and algorithms to better detect slow-moving, high-altitude balloons, but what is the next threat we won't see coming?" Crespo asked.

"Our 9/11 intelligence failure was a lack of imagination. Seems we haven't learned much since then."

RYAN SEELBACH/U.S. NAVY VIA GETTY IMAGES



U.S. sailors prepare material recovered in the Atlantic Ocean from a Chinese high-altitude spy balloon that was shot down for transport to Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek, in Virginia Beach, Va., on Feb. 10, 2023.

STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

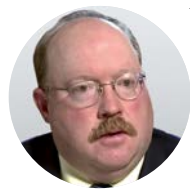


Employees walk past a logo of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibab at its headquarters in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, on May 27, 2022.

OPINION

China Builds for South Polar Nuclear Strikes

RICK FISHER



When China tested its fractional orbital bombardment system (FOBS) nuclear delivery weapon in July 2021 and August 2021, it said nothing about its plans for developing this weapon.

First produced by the former Soviet Union in the late 1960s to better evade the U.S. early warning radar, China's FOBS can do that but could also evolve into a potent space weapon.

Two recent Chinese revelations may indicate that China intends to build a robust FOBS capability that could include various liquid- and solid-fueled launchers, large and small warhead dispensing "buses," and exploitation of launch opportunities from multiple axes on the globe.

Early in the U.S.-Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) competition, the Soviets decided that they needed to evade early U.S. and Canadian ballistic missile early warning (BMEW) radar that, despite the curvature of the Earth over the Arctic, could provide useful warning of Soviet ICBMs that could fly at altitudes of more than 1,000 miles over their ballistic arcs.

But in the mid to late 1960s, Soviet designers such as Sergei Korolev and Mikhail Yangel had developed ICBMs that would place a warhead bus into low Earth orbit (125 to 300 miles), but go the opposite direction and strike U.S. targets with southern approaches not defended by BMEW radar. The bus would then use thrusters to decelerate to allow strikes with nuclear warheads.

For its July 2021 and August 2021 test flights, China used a 1980s vintage workhorse satellite-lifting China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC) Long March-2C space launch vehicle but equipped with a new final stage "bus" that also circled the Earth on a South Polar trajectory over Antarctica.

It's very likely that the Chinese FOBS bus decelerated before launching a hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) warhead at a target in China. HGVs are maneuverable and can exploit long and low trajectories to "sneak up on" a target.

Older, reliable liquid-fuel launchers such as the Long March-2C can loft warhead-dispensing FOBS buses that can circle the Earth for months before a conflict. This gives the Chinese regime the option of multi-axis, devastating nuclear first strikes or surprise non-nuclear attacks against targets on land or at sea.

But Chinese rocket companies such as CASC and the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (CASIC), in addition to new "private" space launch vehicle (SLV) companies, offer great potential for developing more mobile solid-fuel FOBS platforms.

These range from the massive CASIC solid fuel Kuaizhou-31, which can loft 70-ton payloads into orbit, to the smaller CASC Jielong-3—based on the DF-41 ICBM—which can loft 1.5 tons to a 300-mile orbit.

The Jielong-3 has been used to launch surveillance satellites of the new Hong Kong Aerospace Technology Group (HKATG), which on Jan. 9 announced, with Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh, their initialing of a \$1 billion deal to build a space launch facility with up to seven space launch platforms by 2028. This would be China's first foreign-deployed space launch base.

But just to be sure the world didn't conclude that Djibouti would be allowing China to launch nuclear weapons, on the very same day, the authoritarian Guelleh government signed the U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Now China doesn't adhere to this treaty, and even as a "private" company, HKATG would have to obey Chinese "civil-military fusion" regulations that would oblige it to follow Chinese government and military orders.

As it has never before conducted space launches, perhaps HKATG will

rely heavily on help from the People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force, which controls China's five other space launch bases and the People's Liberation Army's (PLA's) manned and unmanned space assets and is likely the lead PLA service for space warfare—perhaps to include bombing the Earth from space.

Since 2017, China has maintained naval and air facilities in Djibouti, stationing about 2,000 troops there, armed with the potent ZTL-11 wheeled tank; the United States maintains more than 4,000 troops nearby in Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti.

It's unlikely that increasingly China-dependent Guelleh will raise a real fuss if Beijing wants to launch "civilian" Jielong-3 SLVs that are covertly armed with a FOBS bus that could carry at least one hypersonic glide vehicle weapon.

From Djibouti, a South Polar trajectory over Antarctica sets up a FOBS bus for strikes against U.S. bases in Alaska or U.S. ICBM bases in North Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

From Djibouti, a South Polar trajectory over Antarctica sets up a fractional orbital bombardment system bus for strikes against U.S. bases in Alaska or U.S. ICBM bases in North Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

That China's FOBS buses have the most accurate guidance information will now be better ensured by Beijing's second revelation, made in a Feb. 2 article in the Chinese publication China Space News, that CASIC will build a space tracking and control (STC) facility at China's Zhongshan Research Station in Antarctica.

The United States, Norway, and Germany also maintain STC facilities in Antarctica. Still, they don't have FOBS weapons as China does, and the CASIC STC in Antarctica is also likely to be directly controlled by the Strategic Support Force (SSF).

China's Zhongshan STC likely won't just be helping guide FOBS strikes against the United States; it's also ideally placed to support SSF-controlled expansion of China's manned presence on the moon.

The Zhongshan STC will also help the SSF to conduct space warfare. In a Feb. 19, 2021, article, Chinese state-run media outlet Xinhua reported that Chinese researchers had installed a "fluorescence doppler lidar system" at Zhongshan for atmospheric research; lidar is laser radar.

Many of the low Earth orbit surveillance satellites of the United States, the UK, France, Japan, and Taiwan are polar orbiters that pass over Antarctica multiple times per day.

There's a good chance that since 2021, China's research lidar at Zhongshan has grown larger—into the kind of laser weapon that the regime began using about 20 years ago to harass and damage U.S. satellites.

As the ozone is much thinner over Antarctica, a laser weapon based there will be able to do much more damage to overhead satellites, which also tend to fly closer to the Earth over the poles.

All of this points to the necessity for the United States to consider the rapid development of its own FOBS weapons to deter the Chinese regime, which, for decades, has rejected all arms control approaches that would limit its nuclear weapons.

It also points to the need for the United States to engage Australia and New Zealand to consider how the ANZUS (Australia-New Zealand-United States) allies can better ensure that they can stop Chinese military usage of Antarctica, either by non-kinetic or kinetic means.

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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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.

OPINION

Russia Empowers China by Dumping Euros for Yuan

L. BINYU/XINHUA VIA AP



Moscow on Feb. 9 announced plans to exclude Europe's currency from Russia's sovereign wealth fund. Starting this year, China's yuan and gold will apparently take the euro's place. According to Russia's TASS state media, the yuan may now compose up to 60 percent of the country's currency funds and gold up to 40 percent.

Moscow's National Wealth Fund (NWF) holds \$148 billion in assets, originally meant to service its pension obligations. However, the fund is now being used to make up for the Russian deficit, down \$38 billion in just a single month, between December and January.

Europe banned Russian oil, and much of the rest of the world is abiding by a \$60 per barrel price cap, or buying at even lower market rates. Increasing war expenses and the drop in oil revenues are thus eating away at the future of Russia's elderly.

The shift of the NWF from euros to yuan and gold is part of more generalized efforts on the part of Russia, China, and their partners to decouple from the powerful currencies of democracies, including most predominantly the U.S. dollar, but also the euro, Japanese yen, and British pound.

Countries that transgress international law can be penalized by having their foreign reserves in these currencies frozen, as happened to Russia after it most recently invaded Ukraine.

Rogue regimes see gold and China's yuan, on the other hand, as sanction-proof, though these alternatives are relatively illiquid on global markets, putting downward pressure on their value.

That the yuan is not freely traded raises additional questions about whether it is fit for purpose as an international reserve currency. Yuan dependency, if it develops over time, will give Beijing even more economic influence globally, especially with the world's poorest countries.

The dollar, on the other hand, has reigned supreme since World War II, from which the U.S. economy emerged as the world's economic powerhouse. The United States used its economic power to promote democracy, market economies, and human rights around the world, with more or less success in different countries.

In 2022, the world's central banks still had 59.8 percent of their foreign exchange reserves in dollars, 19.7 percent in euros, 5.3 percent in yen, 4.6 percent in pound sterling, and just 2.8 percent in yuan.

However, over the last year, the quantity of dollars held as international reserves fell from \$7.1 trillion in 2021 to \$6.4 trillion in 2022. That puts upward pressure on U.S. inflation, which Beijing cites as one of many economic problems in the United States, shaking confidence in the dollar.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) clearly hopes for the U.S. economy and the dollar to spiral downward together in a self-defeating cycle.

Beijing sees a weakening U.S. dollar as an opening, but its own currency



Aircraft of the eastern theater command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army conduct joint combat training exercises around Taiwan on Aug. 7, 2022.

weakness is even more pronounced, and a sore point for its self-image as an up-and-coming global hegemon.

The regime's dollar reserves are self-defeating for the CCP, as they are part of the global stability of the dollar, though Beijing has wound them down from \$4 trillion in 2014 to \$3 trillion today.

That \$3 trillion still entails liabilities, given the increasing animosity between the two nations and the U.S. government's ability to freeze the dollar assets of its adversaries. Yet it is hard for China and Russia to escape the gravitational pull of the U.S. and European economies when they account for approximately 32 percent and 25 percent of global wealth, respectively. China accounts for just 18 percent.

If China's military invaded Taiwan, for example, the U.S. government would likely freeze Beijing's dollar reserves as one of many economic sanctions imposed on the country. This freeze would parallel that imposed on Russia.

If Moscow and Beijing could succeed at de-dollarizing the global economy—perhaps with the help of Saudi Arabia, which prices oil exclusively in dollars—

they would help protect themselves from sanctions. They would also seek to increase global demand for yuan and rubles, allowing the two countries to print substantial amounts of currency without inflating the yuan and ruble. Meanwhile, de-dollarization would decrease international demand for dollars, putting them onto the market and increasing U.S. inflation yet further.

A similar logic applies to Moscow's divestment from the euro, and move toward yuan and gold reserves. However, Moscow's increasing reliance on the yuan ultimately puts Russia's economy in jeopardy just as much, as Beijing will ultimately attempt to use that reliance as leverage for its own purposes.

That Moscow is moving quickly toward the yuan as a foreign exchange reserve, without a similar move by Beijing toward the ruble, is yet more evidence that Beijing is now the dominant partner in the relationship.

The Chinese regime is territorially expansionist, and if strong U.S. alliances block its expansion in Asia, it could eventually turn toward Russia's Far East. From a realist perspective, Mos-

cow's stalled invasion of Ukraine looks particularly foolhardy, as it is not only rapidly expending its military materiel, manpower, and reserves for few territorial gains, but creating an enemy of the West, dependency on the East, and leaving its eastern flank vulnerable.

In effect encouraging that dependency, China's state media, the Global Times, quoted several analysts who welcomed Russia's shift away from the euro and toward the yuan.

One analyst claimed that geopolitical competition has accelerated a global trend of de-dollarization.

"The role of the U.S. dollar in the international financial market is not as strong as it used to be, and the U.S. government has been increasing its control over the dollar, making many countries look for alternative currencies," he said.

If the United States does not do more to stop communist China's rise, he may be right.

Sanctions on regimes in Russia, Iran, Burma (Myanmar), North Korea, Cuba, and Venezuela, without equal or stronger sanctions on China, simply center the Middle Kingdom between the democracies and the rogues, and increase the world's trade dependency on Beijing as a go-between and source of foreign exchange. That puts all of us at Beijing's mercy, and gives yet more power to the CCP.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping during their meeting in Beijing on Feb. 4, 2022.

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