

CHINA INSIDER



Help End

Organ Harvesting in China

HOUSE PASSES

ORGAN HARVESTING BILL

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HUMAN RIGHTS

House Overwhelmingly Passes 1st Ever US Bill to Punish CCP's Forced Organ Harvesting

EVA FU

The House of Representatives on March 27 overwhelmingly passed a bill to punish communist China for its forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience, marking the first nonsymbolic legislative measure in the United States to counter the atrocity.

H.R. 1154, dubbed the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act of 2023, passed by a vote of 413-2. It would sanction anyone involved in the act and require annual government reporting on such activities taking place in foreign countries. Sens. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.) were among more than a dozen lawmakers leading the measure's companion version in the Senate.

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), the principal sponsor of the bill, called attention to the penalties in the bill for those found to be involved in forced organ harvesting: a civil penalty of up to \$250,000 and a criminal penalty of up to \$1 million and 20 years in prison.

"It's got real teeth. We're not kidding," Smith told The Epoch Times ahead of the floor vote. "This is an atrocity, this is a crime against humanity, and it's a war crime, because this is a war on innocent people in China, and [Chinese leader] Xi Jinping is directly responsible. Those who willingly engage in this will be held responsible."

On the House floor, Rep. Susan Wild (D-Pa.) highlighted the annual reporting requirement in the bill, which she said would ensure that the United States makes "an informed assessment regarding the magnitude and prevalence of this problem."

"Given the ongoing genocide, we cannot take Beijing at its word about what it is and is not doing," she said. "We need to investigate and we need to verify."

"We should never look away from injustice and repression wherever it takes place."

Haunting Memories

The news of the bill's passage was heartening for many survivors of the regime's persecution who have escaped to the United States for refuge, as in the case of Han Yu, an adherent of Falun Gong. Practitioners of the spiritual discipline have been named as the primary victims of the regime's illicit organ trade.

The spiritual practice, which includes moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, along with five meditative exercises, enjoyed significant popularity for its health and moral benefits in China in the 1990s, eventually attracting an estimated 70 million to 100 million practitioners by the end of the decade.

Perceiving this popularity to be a threat to its control, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) started an elimination campaign in 1999, resulting in millions of adherents being detained and an unknown number of deaths from slave labor, torture, and other abuses over the past 23 years.

In 2019, an independent tribunal in London concluded, after a year-long investigation, that forced organ harvesting had taken place in China for years "on a significant scale," with detained Falun Gong practitioners being the principal source of organs. Its final judgment, released in March 2020 and including 300 pages of witness testimony and submissions, found "no evidence of the practice having been stopped."

A native of Beijing, Han was 19 when she lost her father to persecution in 2004, two years before the first reports of the regime's secretive organ trade industry.

Falun Gong practitioners walk in a parade highlighting the Chinese regime's persecution of their faith, in New York on Feb. 26, 2023.



Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) at the Policy Forum on Organ Procurement and Extrajudicial Execution in China in Washington on March 10, 2020.

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Rep. Chris Smith

Jiang Li holds a photo of her father, who was killed by the Chinese Communist Party for practicing Falun Gong, in New York on Nov. 1, 2015.



More than a decade would pass before the issue became more widely recognized.

The last image she has of her father, Han Junqing—who died just a little more than two months after his arrest for practicing Falun Gong—still haunts her to this day.

Han Yu's breathing grew heavier as she recounted those memories from nearly two decades ago.

Extremely thin, with a face bruised green and purple, her father's body lay cold in a forensic center room surrounded by dozens of uniformed officers.

There was tissue missing from under the man's left eye. A long knife incision, sewn together with black thread, extended down from his throat. The police forced her out when she tried to unbutton his shirt to see where the stitches ended.

Later, Han's aunt and uncle tore open his shirt before the police could stop them. They found that the incision reached all the way to his abdomen. There were no organs inside, only ice.



'A Crime Never Seen Before'

Han for a long time struggled to accept the loss of her father. She dreamed of him often and would wake up in tears, she told The Epoch Times.

In 2006, multiple whistleblowers came to The Epoch Times to shed light on the dark scheme. In 2007, while surfing social media, she came across an article describing forced organ harvesting, and what happened to her father fit the description.

That night, Han cried for hours.

The story of Jiang Li, the daughter of a persecution victim in southwest China's Xishanping Labor Camp, is similar.

Her father, Jiang Xiqing, a retired official at a local tax bureau in the megacity Chongqing, was arrested after a house raid in May 2008—three months before Beijing hosted its first Olympics—and was given a one-year sentence to a labor camp without trial.

He died in late January the following

THE EPOCH TIMES

year, less than 24 hours after a family visit during which he appeared healthy.

After seven hours in the freezer, the man's face and chest were still warm, but when Jiang Li and other family members tried to call attention to the matter, police pushed them out of the morgue. Police cremated the body days later and threatened and harassed the family when they sought to get to the bottom of the matter, at one point telling Jiang Li to "name any price" to settle the case. A Chongqing procuratorate official, Zhou Bailin, told them that all of Jiang Xiqing's organs had been "removed and turned into medical specimens."

"They never sought the Jiang family's approval, nor was there any explanation."

"Harvesting organs from living people is

a crime never seen before on this planet, and it's still happening," Jiang Li, who now lives in New York, told The Epoch Times. Her hope, she said, is to see the U.S. government help "immediately stop such crime against humanity, hold the Chinese Communist Party and all perpetrators accountable, and purge the state-run machinery that's still committing the crime."

'Major Step Forward'

Torsten Trey, executive director of the medical ethics group Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting, welcomed the bill as a "major step forward" in helping to "raise critical awareness" about forced organ harvesting but believes that more measures are necessary to curb medical tourism to China.

"The bill takes advantage of our legal system and applies existing mechanisms to demonize or ban those who participate in these crimes against humanity," he told The Epoch Times in an email.

What is missing, he wrote, is a requirement for all who enter the United States—whether immigrants or U.S. citizens—to answer whether they have "imported" a newly transplanted organ from countries that are known to procure organs through forced organ harvesting and the amount of money paid for the organs.

"Organ harvesting is a crime," he wrote. Although patients have the right to privacy, that privacy "should end at the crimes of forced organ harvesting: If Falun Gong practitioners or other prisoners of conscience have been killed for their organs

in China, we should not cover up these crimes under the umbrella of health care privacy."

Smith, the New Jersey congressman, said the bill could cover anyone who participates in forced organ harvesting, including patients who receive the organs.

"If there's willful knowledge that is being stolen from a Falun Gong practitioner, or anyone else, then they could be held criminally and civilly liable," he said.

"How do you know on a certain date, you're going to have a liver all ready to go? That's because they kill the individual in order to get that. They murdered them," he added, referring to instances of Chinese hospitals promising to deliver vital organs on a specified date—something impossible in voluntary organ donor systems.

Smith emphasized that there's also a moral onus on Americans going to China for organ transplants to find out more about the source of the organs.

Israel, Taiwan, Italy, and Spain have already banned organ transplant tourism.

The European Parliament, U.S. Congress, and various local bodies have also publicly censured the regime's forced organ harvesting but have yet to adopt legislative means.

But if the Stop Forced Organ Harvesting Act becomes law, that would be one step toward that change, according to Levi Browde, executive director of the Falun Dafa Information Center.

"With this bill, our Congress is joining lawmakers from several other countries who have passed laws aimed at stopping the horrific practice of murdering innocent people for their organs, and punishing those who continue to do so," Browde said in a statement to The Epoch Times.

He urged the Senate to pass the companion legislation.

"Despite all the economic and political pressure exerted by the CCP over the years, through this act, the U.S. government is officially, on the world stage, calling out the CCP for murdering people for organs," he said.



The U.S. Capitol in Washington on Feb. 28, 2023.

US in 'Competition of Coalitions' Against China and Russia, Seeks to Counter Threats in Africa, Middle East

DARREN TAYLOR

Delays to the funding of U.S. aid and military activities in Africa and the Middle East could significantly boost the threat of attacks on American interests, a senior Defense Department official and two regional commanders told a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee on March 23.

Celeste Wallander, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) commander Gen. Michael Kurilla, and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) commander Gen. Michael Langley all agreed that China's and Russia's increasing influence in those areas, as well as Iran's nuclear ambitions, require a more comprehensive, more focused response from Washington.

Kurilla also said terrorist organizations, primarily ISIS and al-Qaeda, have the capabilities to launch an "enabled attack against U.S. or Western interests abroad" within six months.

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.), the committee's chairman, set the tone for the hearing when he referred to China's recent "peace-maker" role that resulted in a normalizing of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

International relations experts say the agreement between Riyadh and Tehran could transform the Middle East by ending the current Arab-Iranian divide while aligning the region with the regime in Beijing.

China's brokerage "provided a lifeline to Iran at a very dangerous time," Rogers said. "The Ayatollah continues to fund and equip terrorists targeting American troops; he's providing [Russian President Vladimir] Putin with advanced weapons to perpetrate the brutal invasion of Ukraine, and his regime is aggressively pursuing nuclear weapons. We absolutely cannot allow that to happen."

He said President Joe Biden's decision to "unilaterally and unconditionally withdraw" U.S. forces from Afghanistan undermined national security.

"It has left a security vacuum with the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and ISIS filling that vacuum. The assessment is that some of these terrorists could attack the U.S. within as little as six months," Rogers said.

"I remain very concerned that we are no longer in a position to detect an imminent attack and stop it. That's because the president's so-called Over the Horizon counterterrorism strategy is a farce.

"Without reliable partners on the ground and nearby facilities to launch assets, our ability to strike these terrorists is severely limited. We cannot allow for blind spots, especially in [Africa and the Middle East]."

Rogers said the lack of adequate resources for U.S. troops in Africa has led to a worsening security situation, "especially in the west, where terrorist havens are expanding."

He and other committee members expressed concern about the presence of Russia's Wagner Group mercenaries in Africa, where it was propping up illegitimate regimes such as the one in Mali.

"We've seen the coups and the violence and the chaos that has followed," said Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), the panel's ranking Democrat member.

"Certainly, we continue to have the challenge of the violent extremist organizations operating there, but Russia and China's presence is making that worse."

He called for a greater American understanding of the reasons why more countries in Africa and the Middle East are working more closely with Beijing and Moscow.

"There are things they see to their individual country's advantage. It's not enough for the U.S. to show up and say, 'We're better than them; you have to be with us.' We have to understand in great detail why these countries are working with China and Russia," Smith said.

"What is being offered by China and Russia that we aren't offering? How can we effectively counter that ... to make sure China and Russia don't begin to have dominant control in those parts of the world?"

He said he was particularly concerned about al-Shabaab in Somalia, which continues to be the "most well-organized and effective arm of al-Qaeda. President Trump's unilateral decision in the dying days of his administration to simply pull out of Somalia without any sort of plan to follow up also had consequences."

Wallander said her department would continue to work with partners in Africa and the Middle East to "disrupt" terrorist activities.

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Rep. Mike Rogers

Without reliable partners on the ground and nearby facilities to launch assets, our ability to strike these terrorists is severely limited. We cannot allow for blind spots.

Rep. Mike Rogers

U.S. Army troops during training at the Justified Accord multinational military exercise in Isiolo county, Kenya, on Feb. 13, 2023.



Newly recruited Taliban fighters parade in armored vehicles after their graduation ceremony in Herat, Afghanistan, on Sept. 13, 2022.

"We will continue to stand with our partners and allies to win what we view as the competition of coalitions that is becoming increasingly critical to our common security," she said.

The U.S. advantage in achieving objectives such as denying Iran a nuclear weapon is in its ability to work alongside "capable partners" in coalitions, Wallander noted.

"While others seek to strategically compete, there is no combat-credible, willing alternative prepared to share cutting-edge capabilities and invest vital national resources in support of regional security and defense of others within the rules-based international order," she said.

Washington can't afford to overlook Africa's geopolitical importance to U.S. national security, according to Wallander.

"Many of the world's most pressing challenges and global solutions will emanate from this continent as it continues to grow in political and economic power," she said.

But Wallander said Africa's "extraordinary potential" remained threatened by political instability, democratic backsliding, transnational threats, and the "entrenched and growing presence" of extremist groups.

"In East Africa, we remain steadfast in our support of regional initiatives to combat the threat from al-Shabaab in Somalia," she told the committee.

"In West Africa, we remain focused on countering ISIS and JNIM [militant Islamist coalition Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen] by investing in and supporting our security partners."

"The security situation continues to deteriorate in the Sahel and coastal West Af-

rica. Growing threats presented by VEOs [Violent Extremist Organizations], governance challenges, and lack of development opportunities have exacerbated conflicts in the region."

Wallander said recent changes of government in "key" African nations "challenge U.S. military assistance, as well as access and influence to help counter advances by malign actors, namely Russia and China."

"The PRC [People's Republic of China] is the only country with the intent and, increasingly, the capability to fundamentally reshape the rules-based international order," she said. "Africa is key to U.S. strategy to prevent the PRC from achieving its objectives."

China has built an extensive military base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, barely six miles from a U.S. base. The regime also has announced that it wants to build a "spaceport" there, as well as a naval base off the coast of West Africa, to give its warships access to the Atlantic.

Langley expressed concerns about the strategic implications of those developments and noted that if they were to come to fruition, China could "establish a platform for power projection."

"That changes America's strategic calculus going forward," he said.

To prevent that scenario, Langley argued that Washington had to use all means at its disposal to ensure the U.S. was African nations' "partner of choice."

"In my travels across the continent, I know that our partners don't want to be militarized in a strategic sense," he said.

Langley warned that threats that had once been contained on the African continent are transforming into global dangers.



A Shahab-3 missile is displayed during a rally in Tehran, Iran, on April 29, 2022.

"Terrorism, poverty, food insecurity, climate change, and mass migration shatter African lives. They sow the seeds of violent extremism and Russian exploitation," he said.

"Russia's Wagner mercenaries turn chaos into cash and destabilize entire regions across the African continent. It cuts at American interests worldwide."

Langley said terrorist organizations, including ISIS and al-Qaeda, are growing in strength in Africa and pose a direct and immediate threat to U.S. lives.

"Solutions to these colossal problems must be a shared burden," he said.

"African nations need to be at the helm of concerted international efforts to produce sustainable outcomes. Assisting African nations in achieving their goals while advancing American interests can only be accomplished through a synchronized whole-of-government strategy."

Langley's message was that Africa needed military aid and training, as well as development aid.

"We call it the 3D approach: The toolkit of diplomacy, development, and defense," he said. "But one tool does not succeed without the whole kit. So I will advocate for State Department and USAID partners to receive the resources they need to succeed."

Kurilla told the committee that Iran remains the "primary destabilizing element" in the Middle East, fueled by its strengthening alliances with China and Russia.

"We've seen rapid advances in Iranian military capability over time. The Iran of 2023 is not the Iran of 1983 [when CENTCOM was formed], Iran today is exponentially more militarily capable than it was even five years ago," he said.

"Today, Iran possesses the largest and

most diverse missile arsenal in the Middle East, with thousands of ballistic and cruise missiles. Iran also maintains the largest and most capable UAV [Unmanned Aerial Vehicle] force.

"Iran's vast and deeply resourced proxy forces spread instability throughout the region and threaten our regional partners."

Kurilla noted that Tehran continues to enrich uranium "far above" what was needed for commercial use.

"Iran can enrich uranium faster than it could even two years ago. An Iran with a nuclear weapon would change the Middle East overnight and forever," he said.

Kurilla says his troops will continue to fight ISIS in the region, although he's particularly concerned about the situation in Afghanistan.

"In Afghanistan, ISIS (in Khorasan province) seeks to expand its ranks and develop the capability to inspire, enable or direct attacks in the region and beyond, with the group's ultimate goal to attack the U.S. homeland," he said.

Amid these challenges, the strategic competition is "deeply manifest" in the Middle East, according to Kurilla.

"The PRC aggressively expands its informational, military, and economic instruments of national power across the region, and now Beijing seeks to establish its diplomatic influence," he said.

He pointed out that China is dependent on the Middle East for more than half of its imported crude oil and more than a third of its natural gas. However, it's moving far beyond energy investments "to encompass physical and telecommunications infrastructure that advances its Belt and Road [BRI] initiatives."

"Nineteen of 21 CENTCOM countries have signed a BRI agreement with China," he said. "We are in a race to integrate with our partners before China can penetrate the region."

Kurilla also warned that Russia is attempting to expand its influence in Syria, "seeking a permanent basing there and undermining our efforts towards stability and security."

"Putin seeks a foothold of influence in the central states, leveraging ... a perceived decline in U.S. engagement to challenge our influence in this area of the world," he said.

Kurilla said the Middle East "holds the greatest risk of derailing the national defense strategy with a flashpoint international incident that may demand a response using unplanned resources or attention."

CENTCOM is cultivating "deep, abiding partnerships that can serve as a hedge against threats in the region while deterring Iran from its most destructive behavior," he said.

"China views our partners as merely customers and clients," Kurilla said.

To prevent future attacks on U.S. targets, he told the committee that CENTCOM requires additional resources to increase intelligence collection efforts in Afghanistan.

However, there's a concern that the House won't approve defense authorization measures in a timely manner, Rogers said.

Langley and Kurilla responded that funding delays would affect their forces' readiness to respond to threats.

"The violent extremist organizations, and the layered threat of the PRC, also Wagner's actions, increase risk," Langley said. "A delayed budget will hamper our efforts to address these challenges."

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OPINION

TikTok in the Crosshairs of Congress

Lawmakers debate whether to ban app or force its sale

ANDERS CORR

Ask the average youth what he watches on TikTok, and he will most likely mention funny videos of animals, pranks, dancing, experiments, and food. The top posts on TikTok get hundreds of millions of views. But ask an average member of the U.S. House of Representatives, though none is really average, and one is likely to get an entirely different view.

"TikTok is the spy in Americans' pockets," Rep. John Joyce (R-Pa.) said on March 23 to the video-sharing app's CEO, who was testifying before Congress.

Rep. Kim Schrier (D-Wash.) said that "well over 20 percent" of the information on TikTok is, in fact, misinformation.

TikTok is the most popular social media in the United States, and not just for messaging and videos. It's growing into a global "super-app," which users will be able to use for e-commerce, peer-to-peer networking, gaming, finance, and anything else developers dream up that users can be convinced that they need.

TikTok's powerful algorithm extracts personal data from what users reveal, including what they watch and anything the app's AI algorithm can glean, such as from third-party websites.

The main objection to TikTok is that it could be used by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) against democracy. Given Beijing's demonstrated opposition to the United States and all we stand for, allowing its influence to grow through TikTok is arguably an existential threat to U.S. national security.

The CEO of TikTok, Shou Zi Chew of Singapore, demonstrated his lack of American values on March 23 by answering evasively throughout questioning from representatives when asked, for example, whether he supports the U.S. First Amendment or opposes genocide.

The representatives, some of whom have access to classified reports, depicted TikTok as spreading addictive misinformation that can lead to eating disorders, drug overdose, and suicide. The app allegedly allows the CCP to spy on users, including through GPS, key-



TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew (L) talks with his company's Vice President for Public Policy Michael Beckerman (C) during a break in Chew's testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee in the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington, on March 23, 2023.

Rep. Kim Schrier (D-Wash.) said that "well over 20 percent" of the information on TikTok is, in fact, misinformation.

stroke, facial, and website data.

With 150 million users, banning the app would be politically difficult. Indeed, TikTok paid for travel for dozens of influencers, with a total of 60 million followers, to give a news conference in Washington on March 22, according to Wired. That's in addition to the \$10 million the company paid for lobbyists in the past two years. Three Democratic lawmakers and a PR firm joined them.

"My question is, why the hysteria and the panic and the targeting of TikTok?" Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-N.Y.) asked the group. "As we know, Republicans, in particular, have been sounding the alarm creating a red scare around China."

But the low-key protest, replete with matching placards, is direct evidence of the ability of a foreign power to use TikTok to parry Americans who are finally waking up to the threat.

The Biden administration is looking for a solution and is threatening to ban the app unless China sells it.

On March 23, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), chair of the House Committee for Energy and Commerce, which held the hearing, called for the ban straightaway.

China's Commerce Ministry responded that it "firmly opposes" a forced sale, which puzzled lawmakers.

Rep. Diana Harshbarger (R-Tenn.) noted that the more emerging legislation tied the hands of TikTok, the lower its sale value. "Why not take the money and run, like any other company would do?" she asked.

The most likely answer, not given by Chew of course, is that Beijing seeks to use TikTok not for profit, primarily, but for influencing U.S. and global public opinion.

Beijing already bans the app in China but can control it in the United States through TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, headquartered in Beijing.

Beijing also bans Google and Facebook

in China. Still, it allows ByteDance to operate a social media company called Douyin that serves Chinese youth educational material, in contrast to the junky entertainment it serves up in the United States.

The testimony of Chew on March 23 included more than five hours of brutal questioning by representatives from both parties on the committee, which clearly didn't trust Chew. Neither did Chew inspire much trust with his repeatedly evasive and disingenuous answers.

However, his facade did show some cracks.

To a question posed by Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Mich.), Chew admitted that ByteDance employees in China could access U.S. user data.

TikTok's privacy policy states that it may share user data with its corporate group, and Chew admitted under questioning that ByteDance is part of TikTok's corporate group.

So our children's data have been flowing to Beijing for years. If a forced sale or ban doesn't fix this invasion of U.S. privacy, perhaps a stronger approach is needed.

Offensive cyber operations by the National Security Agency, anyone?

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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ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

U.S. Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-N.Y.) speaks as Rep. Robert Garcia (D-Calif.) and supporters of TikTok listen during a news conference in front of the U.S. Capitol on March 22, 2023.

STEPHEN SHAYER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



People's Liberation Army soldiers march past an old Chinese medium-range ballistic missile on display in front of Beijing's military museum on July 26

OPINION

What's Up With China's Nuclear Buildup?

RICHARD A. BITZINGER



In recent years, Beijing has spent billions of dollars adding to its nuclear arsenal—not just more nuclear bombs and warheads, submarines, and bombers. But what is behind this buildup of China's nuclear forces in terms of nuclear strategy and geopolitics?

For decades, the Chinese were more or less satisfied with possessing a relatively small nuclear force. Beijing tested its first atomic (uranium-fission) bomb in 1964 and its first hydrogen (fusion) bomb in 1969. It also test-launched a nuclear-tipped missile in 1966.

And yet, for decades, China's nuclear force remained small and on low alert, based on a "no first use" (NFU) strategy. From the 1980s to the early 2000s, various Western estimates put China's atomic arsenal at no more than 160 nuclear warheads, which placed it last among the declared "nuclear club," which included the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France.

Moreover, China did not really possess a strategic nuclear force: it still lacked long-range bombers or ballistic-missile-carrying submarines (save for one clunky Xia-class submarine, which was so unusable it reportedly made only one deterrent patrol before being permanently docked).

The bulk of China's strategic deterrent consisted of just 20 or so DF-5A intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)—liquid-fueled behemoths that took hours (if not days) to prep for launch, thus reducing the likelihood that Beijing would initiate a surprise nuclear attack.

In fact, for most of the 20th century, communist China was simply too poor and too technologically backward to ever hope to match the nuclear might of the United States or the Soviet Union. A small nuclear force had to suffice, yet there had to be a strong strategic rationale for possessing and possibly using nuclear weapons.

The answer was "minimum deterrence." According to the doctrine of minimum deterrence, China need only possess a nuclear force capable of surviving and retaliating to an enemy's first strike. This meant a limited but durable second-strike nuclear force that would deter nuclear blackmail and also be compatible with the defensive-oriented doctrine of People's War.

This policy worked for decades, even in the 1980s and 1990s, when China opened up and began to modernize its economy and become wealthier. Nuclear modernization generally took a back seat to building up the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) conventional forces.

Instead, Beijing simply updated its nuclear policy to "dynamic minimum deterrence." This meant a greater stress on survivability, sufficiency, and reliability. Nuclear forces were still limited in size, but they would be better able to withstand a first strike so that China would still be able to inflict a damaging retaliatory second strike.

Dynamic minimum deterrence led to a

modest increase in the number of nuclear weapons, to perhaps 400 warheads. It also entailed an expansion in the types of new delivery systems. In particular, the number of ICBMs grew to around 55 to 65 missiles, most of them advanced, road-mobile, and solid-fueled systems capable of hiding from enemy attacks as well as firing on short notice.

Over the past decade or so, however, China has engaged in a truly substantial buildup of its nuclear arsenal—one that is much too large to meet the definition of "minimum deterrence," dynamic or not.

According to a report in The Wall Street Journal, for example, the U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) has stated China now has more ICBM launchers than the United States. STRATCOM argues that the number of Chinese ICBM silos has grown from 100 in 2020 to 450 in late 2022. Even if some of these launchers are currently empty, they imply that Beijing could significantly increase the size of its land-based nuclear force in the near future.

In comparison, the U.S. Air Force has 400 silos loaded with missiles, along with another 50 empty silos. Each U.S. missile carries only a single warhead.

In addition, about a decade ago, there were reports that China may have built thousands of miles of tunnels in which to store and move nuclear weapons. This was estimated at the time to imply a nuclear force of up to 3,000 warheads.

Of course, the bulk of the U.S. nuclear arsenal is sea-based. The U.S. Navy operates 14 Ohio-class missile-carrying submarines (SSBNs). Each SSBN is armed with 24 Trident II sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and each

SLBM carries up to 12 warheads.

Even here, however, the Chinese are catching up, currently operating six Type-094 SSBNs. Each boat is outfitted with a dozen 4,600-mile-range JL-2 SLBMs, each containing a single warhead, although they could eventually carry three to eight warheads each. A new class of SSBN is in the works.

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Throw in a new bomber (the stealth H-20) and a large number of road-mobile missiles, and the Chinese nuclear buildup looks very impressive (or very bleak, depending on your perspective). According to the U.S. Department of Defense, China will likely possess 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030 and as many as 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035. This would be roughly equal to the number of total active warheads possessed by both the United States and Russia (admittedly, both countries have thousands more nuclear weapons in reserve or storage).

This massive buildup of China's nuclear forces begs the question: to what pur-

pose? The numbers are way beyond the need for minimum deterrence. Moreover, the increased accuracy of Chinese nuclear delivery systems is more indicative of a first-strike capability. Is Beijing shifting to a first-use nuclear strategy?

Perhaps, but even more worrisome than any purposeful, first-use/first-strike Chinese nuclear strategy is the possibility that even Beijing doesn't know what it wants to do with its burgeoning nuclear arsenal. It could be building up its nuclear forces simply because it now has the money and technology to do so, and it sees nuclear weapons as just one more tool in its strategic competition with the United States.

Chinese national strategy—that is, the "grand rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by the middle of the century—is so simply and sadly aggressive that it could conceivably lead to the impetuous use of nuclear weapons. Beijing may not even know what it's letting itself in for.

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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GREG BAKER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Military vehicles carrying DF-21D intermediate-range anti-ship ballistic missiles participate in a military parade at Tiananmen Square in Beijing on Sept. 3, 2015, to mark the 70th anniversary of victory over Japan and the end of World War II. China kicked off a huge military ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II on September 3, as major Western leaders stayed away.

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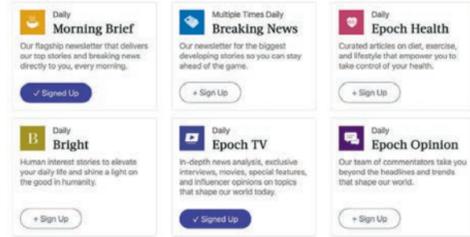
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