

WEEK 27, 2023

THE EPOCH TIMES

# CHINA INSIDER



**CHINA–RUSSIA  
COALITION ‘HAS CRACKED’  
AFTER WAGNER MUTINY**

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## ANALYSIS

# US Takes First Step to Counter China's Drug Warfare Against America

JENNY LI &amp; OLIVIA LI

The massive export of fentanyl from China has already caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and billions of dollars in economic losses in the United States. Experts say that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) deliberately allows the drugs to flow into the United States. The recent prosecution of related Chinese companies can be seen as the United States firing the first shot in the counterattack.

On June 23, the U.S. Department of Justice announced two arrests in the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York and released three indictments charging four Chinese companies and eight Chinese nationals with crimes related to the production and sale of fentanyl precursors. This is the first time that Chinese companies and Chinese nationals have been prosecuted in the United States for the sale of fentanyl precursors. During the operation, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) seized more than 200 kilograms (440 lbs.) of fentanyl precursors, an amount large enough to kill 25 million Americans.

Fentanyl is a highly addictive synthetic opioid that is 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine. Fentanyl and its analogs have wreaked hav-

The [fentanyl] deaths should be considered a direct attack on the United States.

Anders Corr, founder, Corr Analytics

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) (C) and Rep. Karen Bass (D-Calif.) at a hearing on China accountability for fentanyl production in Washington on Sept. 6, 2018.

oc in communities across the United States and exacerbated the overdose problem. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that fentanyl killed about 110,000 Americans by 2022. Fentanyl is now the leading cause of death among Americans aged 18-49.

Amarvel Biotech, based in Wuhan, Hubei, was one of four companies indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice on June 23.

The company claimed online that it was shipping fentanyl precursor chemicals to the United States and Mexico.

Drug cartels operate clandestine laboratories in Mexico that synthesize these precursors into finished fentanyl on a large scale and sell them throughout the United States.

In order to successfully transport the drugs to the United States and Mexico, these Chinese companies go to great lengths. They claim to guarantee a "100 percent invisible shipment," which means using deceptive packaging, for example, claiming the contents are dog food, nuts, or motor oil.

DEA chief Anne Milgram said these companies also chemically camouflage their products in the lab.

"They even disguised the chemicals at a molecular level, adding a molecule to mask the precursors so they would not be detected as banned substances during transport," she said. "They taught their customers how to remove that molecule after they received the chemicals."

## Small Fraction of Illicit Cases

The Chinese drug manufacturers charged by the United States on June 23 are just a small fraction of companies involved in such illegal activity. According to National Public Radio, there are more than 100 suppliers of fentanyl or related chemicals in China. They use online networks to blatantly sell fentanyl analogs and fentanyl precursors, and ship them directly to customers in the United States and Europe, as well as to Mexican cartels.

The production and export of fentanyl is growing rapidly inside some unnoticed labs in China.

A U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement official in China told NPR that inside a laboratory in Hebei Province housed in a sprawling industrial warehouse complex, drug investigators found a high-volume fentanyl manufacturing plant, all located in two small rooms, with "production drying on tape in sheet cake pans."

In November 2018, Chinese police, acting on information from the U.S. side, seized more than 26 pounds of fentanyl and 42 pounds of other drugs from the lab, according to the NPR report.

C4ADS, the Center for Advanced Defense Studies, identified the detailed locations of 92 fentanyl-selling entities in China, 41 percent of which were located in Shijiazhuang, the capital of Hebei Province, just 154 miles away from Beijing.

The United States has been trying to urge the CCP to strengthen the supervision of fentanyl-like drugs through diplomatic channels. After years of U.S. diplomatic pressure, Chinese leader Xi Jinping reached an agreement with President Donald Trump at the G20 summit in December 2018 to include all synthetic opioids in the regulatory program.

However, since then, China has remained a major source of fentanyl in the United States, as Chinese-made fentanyl products now enter the United States through Mexico instead. Mexican criminal groups purchase fentanyl precursors from China and then traffic fin-

ished fentanyl to the United States.

A new investigation by the Voice of America found that Chinese sellers shipped fentanyl precursors from Shanghai to Mexico by air, paying a shipping cost of \$230 per kilogram. The United States has accused China of ineffective law enforcement and poor action against drug smugglers and money launderers.

## New Opium War

James Lewis, senior vice president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington think tank, told The Epoch Times on June 26 that he believes the Chinese communist regime does not really care about fentanyl precursors going to the United States, and would not provide any actual help to resolve the U.S. fentanyl crisis.

"They may even see it as payback from the Opium Wars," he said.

Between 1840 and 1842, China's Qing Dynasty pursued a closed-door policy and tribute system, which led to diplomatic conflicts and trade imbalances between China and the United Kingdom. The Qing government's strong measures to ban the opium trade, which violated the diplomatic bottom line of the British envoy and the fundamental interests of British merchants, eventually led to a military conflict between the Qing Empire and the British Empire. This was known as the First Opium War.

This war resulted in the widespread proliferation of opium in China. The National Army Museum of the United Kingdom documented that China had an estimated 10 million opium addicts by the year 1840.

Today's America bears similarities to the phenomenon seen in China 180 years ago. According to the testimony of Vanda Felbab-Brown, the Director of the Brookings Institution's project, during a congressional hearing in March 2023, drug overdose has resulted in over one million deaths in the United States since 1999. Since the significant influx of synthetic opioid drugs from China starting in 2012, the mortality rate has dramatically increased. In 2021, the death toll was 106,699; and by 2022, the estimated death toll was 107,477. The majority of these deaths are attributed to fentanyl.

In their article "China Wages a Drug War," Retired U.S. Navy Captain Jim Fanell and William C. Triplett II, a recognized specialist in national security matters, said that the CCP is waging a "hot war" against the United States by importing fentanyl into the country.

"Americans are dying at an annual rate that is higher than during the entirety of the Vietnam War," the article stated.

According to a report by the Council on Foreign Relations, the opioid death toll in the United States soared to 80,411 in 2021, more than ten times the number of U.S. military deaths in the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Anne Arundel County, Maryland, reported that nearly 200 people died from drug overdoses in the county in 2017. Despite government resources to combat the opioid influx, the county had more opioid overdose deaths than traffic accidents, homicides, and suicides in 2016. And Anne Arundel County is not an ordinary county; it is home to the U.S. Naval Academy, the National Security Agency (NSA), and many high-paying government contracting programs. However, the county has been inundated by a wave of fentanyl from China.

Anders Corr, the founder of Corr Analytics Inc. and Epoch Times contributor, told The Epoch Times on June 24: "The deaths should be considered a direct attack on the United States and genocidal by the U.N. definition. Arrests and sanctions on individuals are insufficient—the sanctions should be against the CCP's top leadership and against the Chinese economy as a whole."

In addition to causing a large number of deaths of U.S. citizens, the influx of fentanyl has also devastated the U.S. economy. In 2022, the Joint Economic Committee (JEC) of Congress found that the opioid epidemic cost the country nearly \$1.5 trillion in 2020, or 7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), an increase of about one-third from 2017. The JEC predicted that this growth will continue due to the rising number of drug overdose cases.

The opioid epidemic is also taking a toll on the U.S. workforce. Researchers estimated in 2022 that of the about 6.3 million people missing from the U.S. workforce compared to pre-pandemic numbers, roughly 20 percent of that number was caused by opioids.

Corr believes that the CCP's lack of cooperation on drug control is intentional, like the retaliation for Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan.

Following U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan last August, the CCP imposed a series of retaliations on the United States, including suspending cooperation with Washington to curb drug trafficking and suspending an agreement reached between Xi and Trump in 2018.

Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) told CBS that based on briefings she has received, she believes that "the Chinese are intentionally poisoning America. ... And of course, the Chinese don't want to assist us with this."

## OPINION

# TikTok Lawfare Against America

Hypocrisy as TikTok secretly uses US courts against free speech

ANDERS CORR



As is well known, TikTok is a national security threat because communist China has laws that give it access to the data of its almost 1.7 billion global users.

Yet naive teenagers around the world download the app on their smartphones, thirsty for the latest kid craze trend. TikTok's algorithm then channels these users more deeply into their random and sometimes destructive whims.

The most recent TikTok trend, for example, is playing dead from drinking a McDonald's "Grimace" purple milkshake. Yet with almost 1.4 billion joint views on TikTok, #grimaceshake and #grimace underline the adage "all publicity is good publicity" (so soon after Bud Light proved it wrong).

McDonald's is happy with the attention, though. On June 27, it tweeted a pic of puffy Grimace with his milkshake, saying, "meee pretending i don't see the grimace shake trendd," with the misspelling apparently integral to the muppet's 1970s character.

If even a fraction of TikTok viewers buy a \$4 Grimace milkshake, McDonald's will have made a tidy fortune. That could lift McDonald's stock price. Since June 12, the milkshake's release date and Grimace's "birthday," the company's market capitalization is more than \$4 billion.

Sounds fun and profitable for not only McDonald's but also other U.S. corporations, TikTok, and influencers that manage to ride the TikTok party wave, purple milkshakes flying.

But the owner of TikTok, Beijing-based ByteDance, calls the shots. Above ByteDance stands TikTok's ultimate controller—the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP is not only totalitarian but genocidal. It's arguably the gravest threat to American democracy, and democracy globally, that the world has known.

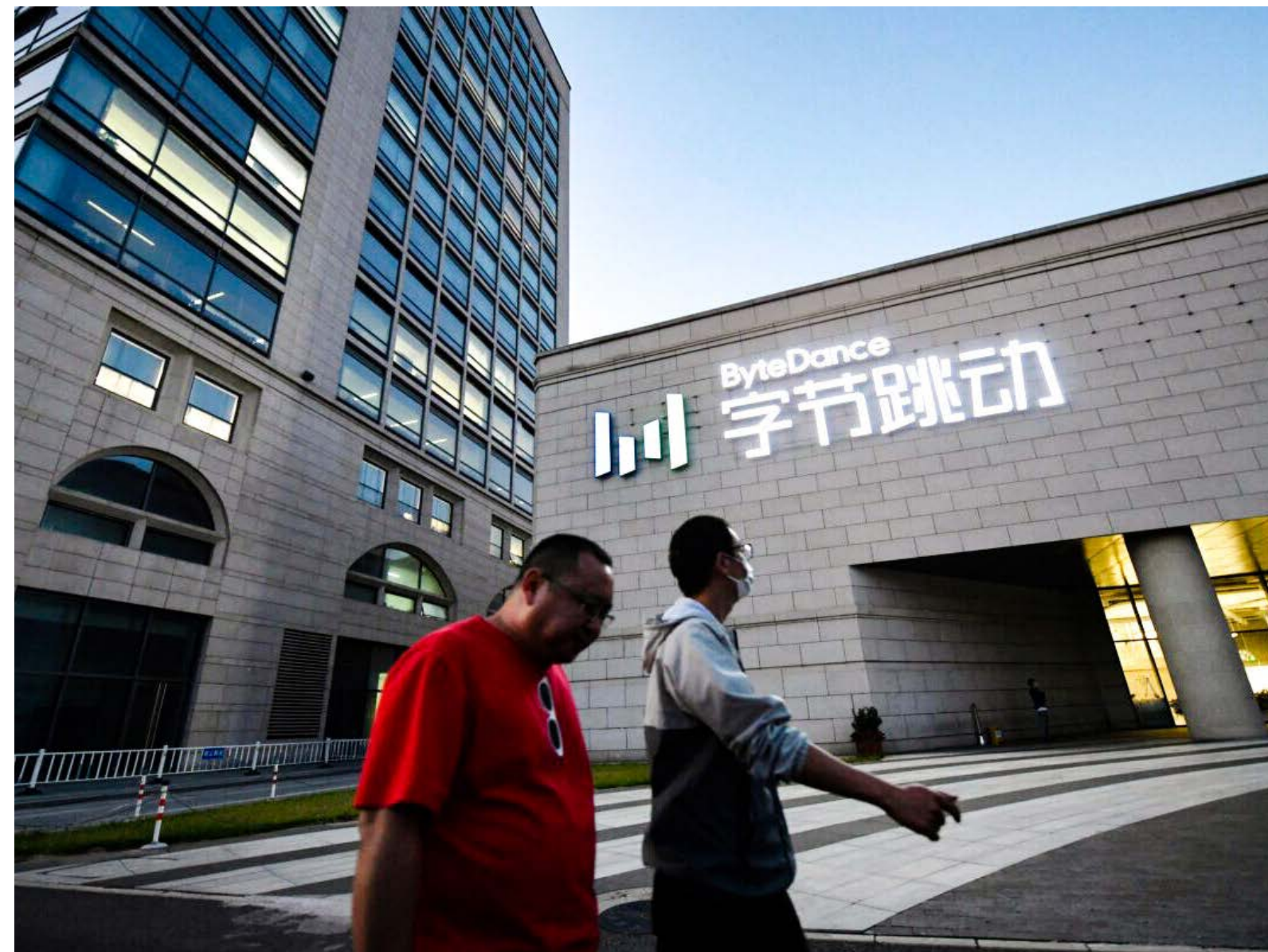
This had the Trump administration pioneering a TikTok ban. The state of Montana followed.

But according to The New York Times, TikTok responded against the bans by secretly finding and funding anti-ban TikTokers to launch legal campaigns based on free speech claims.

As a result, former President Donald Trump's ban was struck down, and Jameel Jaffer, executive director of Columbia University's Knight First Amendment Institute, predicted that the courts would also strike down Montana's ban.

Some appear to fall for the free speech argument; national security be damned—the Times article ended by quoting Mr. Jaffer.

"TikTok is an American company and has First Amendment rights, but there has been rhetoric in Montana and the federal government suggesting that TikTok's connections to China mean it's not an ordinary First Amendment actor," Mr. Jaffer told the Times. "[The suit] emphasizes that this isn't just about the rights of



GREG BAKER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Democracy depends on an educated electorate. By allowing TikTok to shape our future voters, we relegate democracy to be shaped by the CCP.

TikTok, let alone the rights of ByteDance. It's about the rights of TikTok's users, including its American users, and I think that's a really important point to make."

The point not aired by the Times is that we are what we read. By allowing Beijing to control the TikTok algorithm and thus the content it serves to U.S. users, we enable the CCP to influence our thinking to a dangerously great extent. This is most concerning for the young and impressionable—TikTok's strong suit.

Among 18- to 19-year-old Americans, 67 percent use TikTok; 41 percent of all Americans are users.

ByteDance serves the United States the junk food equivalent of its products. Its algorithm more carefully curates educational content for Chinese citizens on China's version of TikTok, called Douyin. TikTok is banned in China.

Democracy depends on an educated electorate. By allowing TikTok to shape our future voters, we relegate democracy to be shaped by the CCP. This consigns our history to the dustbin and is a huge mistake for not only American democracy but for democracy globally.

What about free speech? The free speech of ByteDance shouldn't be protected, as the CCP uses ByteDance to censor and channel the free speech of its users for its own authoritarian benefit. America should never allow our adversaries to use our Constitution against its broader free speech protections. Free speech protections shouldn't be used against free speech.

The free speech of TikTok users is far more important. But contrary to the lawyers' arguments, it will not be impeded by a ban on TikTok. Existing TikTok users may use other social media or start their own. A plethora of such platforms now exist that have nothing to do with the CCP.

TikTok influencers who amassed millions of followers naturally don't want to lose them. But they don't have to—they can transfer their followers to new platforms. A U.S. law could mandate that TikTok facilitate the transfer of followers to any new platform where a user wishes to go. This should be easier than transferring medical records from an old to a new doctor. Like medical records, social media should belong to the user, not the company.

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

Anders Corr has a bachelor's/master's in political science from Yale University (2001) and a doctorate in government from Harvard University (2008). He is a principal at Corr Analytics Inc., publisher of the Journal of Political Risk, and has conducted extensive research in North America, Europe, and Asia. His latest books are "The Concentration of Power: Institutionalization, Hierarchy, and Hegemony" (2021) and "Great Powers, Grand Strategies: the New Game in the South China Sea" (2018).

People walk past the headquarters of ByteDance, the parent company of video sharing app TikTok, in Beijing on Sept. 16, 2020.



SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES



Matt Capelouto, the father of fentanyl poisoning victim Alexandra—the namesake of California's Senate Bill 44—speaks at a press conference where California Assemblymembers, law enforcement officials, and local representatives propose to put stricter fentanyl enforcement on the upcoming 2024 ballot, in front of the Capitol in Sacramento, Calif., on June 6, 2023.

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## ANALYSIS

## China–Russia Coalition ‘Has Cracked’ After Wagner Mutiny

EVA FU

Short-lived as the Wagner rebellion was, its impact is rippling far beyond Russia's borders. It could even be the beginning of the end for the coalition that Beijing led with Moscow against the free world, some analysts have said.

In a dramatic 24 hours, the paramilitary group captured world attention as it took over the city of Rostov, a key tactical hub for Russia's war effort in Ukraine. Leading the revolt was Yevgeny Prigozhin, a once-trusted ally of Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who described the action as a “stab in the back.”

Prigozhin is now in exile in Belarus as a condition of a deal that assures that Russia won't press criminal charges against him. But his flight—after leading a rebellion that posed the most serious test to Putin in the Russian president's more than two decades in power—has far from closed the matter in the eyes of outside observers.

“We see cracks emerging,” U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told CBS. “Where they go, if anywhere, when they get there, very hard to say, but I don't think we've seen the final act.”

Cracks have appeared in more than just the Russian regime, according to geopolitical analyst Gordon Chang.

“China is trying to overturn the entire international system. Although China's powerful, it's not that powerful. It needs allies like Putin, and if Putin isn't going to survive, then China's in trouble,” Chang, author of “The Coming Collapse of China,” told The Epoch Times.

**Beijing ‘Shaken’**

Beijing had maintained silence as Prigozhin's forces marched on Moscow, addressing it for the first time only the day after a truce halted the movement of Prigozhin's armed forces. “This is Russia's internal affair,” a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said in a statement. “As Russia's friendly neighbor and comprehensive strategic partner of coordination for the new era, China supports Russia in maintaining national stability and achieving development and prosperity.”

The delayed reaction from Beijing was because “it didn't know what to say,” Chang said.

“The problem here for Xi Jinping is because he's declared a ‘no limits’ partnership with Russia. And this ‘no limits’ partner was almost deposed in those stunning developments,” he said. “So I think China is a little bit shaken by this.”

Xi and Putin put forward the “no limits” partnership on the opening day of the Beijing Winter Olympics, as the two held their first in-person meeting in two years while scoffing at what they called the “interference in the internal affairs” from the West.

That was less than three weeks before Russia began its attack on Ukraine. About a year later, in March, Xi became a guest of honor in Moscow. In parting with Putin at the time, the smiling Chinese communist leader said that the two were driving forward a “change which hasn't happened in 100 years.”

But the Wagner uprising took Beijing by surprise.



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping leave after a reception following their talks at the Kremlin in Moscow on March 21, 2023.

The Chinese are always worried about color revolutions, as they say, and revolutions are contagious—they do spread.

Gordon Chang, China expert

In 1991, in a similarly fleeting coup attempt, hardliners from the Soviet Union's Communist Party locked up Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in his Crimea vacation villa. The plot fell apart in three days, but it was the trigger that brought the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union four months later.

Chang sees Putin in a similar position. “He was able to prevent the insurrection from toppling him, but Russia has been destabilized, so I don't think we've heard the last word,” he said.

For the Chinese regime, which counts on Russia as an effective ally to subvert the U.S.-led world order, this doesn't bode well.

“China tries to portray itself as invincible, as dominating the world,” Chang said. “Well, it doesn't look so intimidating right now. It looked a lot more intimidating last week than it does at this moment.”

“China believes that Russia is in such a mess because there is no communist party control of the government, so Xi Jinping is going to absolutely heighten that position,” Miles Yu, director of the China Center at Hudson Institute and a senior China policy adviser to the Trump administration, told The Epoch Times. Yu noted that Xi has purged many high-ranking military officials to consolidate power during his 11-year rule.

“He knows there's a lot of resentment within the military rank and file. So that's why this issue has been very, very unsettling for him.”

Domestic issues will also keep Beijing on the alert, Chang said.

“The Chinese are always worried about color revolutions, as they say, and revolutions are contagious; they do spread,” he said.

Last November, a deadly blaze in a high-rise building in Xinjiang set off mass protests around the country. Demonstrators raised blank sheets of paper to push back against the regime's harsh COVID lockdowns in what has been dubbed the white paper protests.

The movement subsided with Beijing lifting the pandemic restrictions while quietly rounding up participants. But behind those protests, Chang sees a broader spirit of discontent that isn't going away.

“Some people actually were demanding the Communist Party and Xi Jinping step down,” he said, citing some of the slogans that protesters have chanted.

Economists had hoped that the end of the zero-COVID policy would spur China's domestic spending and revitalize the country's sagging economy. On many levels, though, the situation in China doesn't look much brighter than it did half a year ago.

**Troubles Back Home**

A weakened political standing for Putin isn't the only concern in Beijing's calculus.

Days after the Wagner rebellion, Xi promoted two political commissars to the rank of general, a move some interpreted as his attempt to consolidate power. A Chinese military officer, writing for PLA Daily, the official newspaper of China's highest military operational body, opined that Chinese armed forces must “enhance national security awareness” and be ready to “face major tests in a stormy sea.”

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Protesters hold up a white piece of paper against censorship as they march during a protest against China's strict zero-COVID measures in Beijing on Nov. 27, 2022.

KEVINFRAYER/GETTY IMAGES

STRAFF VIA GETTY IMAGES



Migrant workers standing near signs advertising their skills as they wait by a street to be hired in Shenyang, in northeastern China's Liaoning Province on Feb. 6, 2023.

## OPINION

## China's Reach for More Economic Stimulus Amounts to a Confession of Failure

Beijing now must scramble just to make its already reduced growth target for this year

MILTON EZRATI



six months.

The first one came earlier this year when Beijing rescinded the lockdowns and quarantines that were the signal parts of its “zero-COVID” campaign. Party leadership had hoped that freeing people up to travel and spend would jumpstart China's moribund economy. Even amid such hopes, the country's leadership set itself a low 5 percent growth target for 2023, far below pre-COVID-19 averages.

For a brief while, consumer spending took off. Even though signs of weakness lurked behind the headlines, some, especially Beijing, contended that the new policies would work out for the economy. Now that those once-hidden economic weaknesses have become more evident, Beijing has had to roll out a new stimulus package and, in doing so, admit, at least implicitly, that the original policy had failed.

In this latest effort at getting the economy going, the authorities have instructed the People's Bank of China (PBOC) to cut its benchmark interest rates yet again, presumably to increase borrowing and lending among consumers and to encourage investment by private businesses. Beijing had already begun to channel funds to the failed property development sector but still faces little response in either building or buying from a sector that once amounted to fully 30 percent of the economy. Beijing has also turned to its tried-and-true stimulus of launching massive infrastructure projects.

These steps must be hard for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its leader, Xi Jinping—all contradict many statements made over the last few years. Early in 2022, Xi decried private businesses for failing to follow Party dictates as avidly as he would like. Now he refers to such business owners as “one of us” and incentivizes them to invest. He and the Party had previously criticized the speculative nature of the property sector. They implemented policies to stop such activity, which undoubtedly contributed to the failure of many development firms; Evergrande is prominent among them. Now this latest stimulus package includes loosening rules to allow people to buy more than one residence, in other words, to speculate.

If going back on all these past positions was not difficult enough for the CCP, the planners in Beijing have even had to admit the failures of past infrastructure spending, though, as always, not in so many words. In the past, local and provincial governments have had to finance most of Beijing's grand projects. But so many of these failed to pay adequate returns that now many of these provincial and local governments face difficulty ser-

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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Local governments are facing defaults under a \$23 trillion debt. Young people ages 16 to 24 have a record jobless rate of above 20 percent. And property sales have continued to plunge. The country is set to face what could be the world's largest millionaire exodus this year, while a growing number of disillusioned individuals are also fleeing the country.

“There are no answers for Xi Jinping other than to clamp down even tighter, and that ultimately is not going to be a solution because the economy is falling away,” Chang said.

June Teufel Dreyer, a political science professor at the University of Miami, similarly sees the economic problems as a major hurdle.

“Putin may even be more dependent on China after the uprising, so China's desire to lead the world order will be strengthened,” Dreyer told The Epoch Times. The economic slowdown will be the No. 1 issue

that will get in the way of Xi realizing his ambition, she said.

For now, China and Russia will continue to be “huddling together for warmth” as they face off against the West, with each taking what it needs from the relationship, said Su Tze-yun, director of the Institute for National Defense and Security Research of Taiwan.

With the war in Ukraine dragging on, Russia will likely find itself growing more reliant on China, now a main buyer of Russian oil that once went to Europe.

It's a juncture that requires more decisive action from the free world, Chang said.

“The world is at a critical moment, and right now the coalition that opposes us has cracked and could very well fall apart. It's important for the Biden administration and free states to make sure that that coalition cannot be put back together,” he said.

Luo Ya contributed to this report.

ROMAN ROMOKHOV/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Members of the Wagner group stand on the balcony of the circus building in the city of Rostov-on-Don, Russia, on June 24, 2023.



## ENERGY | IN-DEPTH

# Biden's Green Energy Plan Draws Fire as China's Mineral Dominance Looms

SAM DORMAN

The Biden administration has defended its alternative energy push as a way to counter the Chinese regime's dominance in critical minerals but critics say the president's own policies are undermining the U.S. pursuit of energy independence.

Recent weeks have shown President Biden attempting to galvanize international cooperation and protect domestic energy producers as part of a strategy that will purportedly "de-risk" the U.S. relationship with China. As his advisor John Podesta noted, the United States is "in a vulnerable position" given China's wealth of resources. According to a June report from Nikkei Asia, the International Energy Agency (IEA) is looking to address that vulnerability by issuing guidelines that would purportedly help nations avoid reliance on China for renewables.

At home, the Biden administration has attempted to compete with China through dramatic investments in energy

An aerial view of the coal fired power plant in Hanchuan, Hubei Province, China, on Nov. 11, 2021.



infrastructure and goals like aiming for half of new vehicle sales to be electric by 2030. It's unclear, however, whether those strategies will be enough to challenge the Chinese regime's overwhelming dominance in the processing, mining, and utilization of critical minerals that play a vital role in, for example, supplying the clean energy agenda with key technology.

"We're not doing anything to help ourselves," former Trump White House advisor Steve Milloy told The Epoch Times. "Everything we're doing is making the situation worse." He said that the current wave of green regulations was "making ourselves crippling dependent on China," and that Biden's "crazy" electric vehicle (EV) goals were impossible without Chinese resources.

The New York Times recently asked whether the world can "make an electric car battery without China" while outlining the disproportionate share of the necessary resources and processing capabilities for many minerals listed as "critical" by the U.S. Geological Survey in 2022. It isn't just the ingredients either: China dominates the final products as well with 54 percent

of electric cars made in the country and 66 percent of the batteries.

It's already rapidly outpacing the United States in a "clean energy" arms race with a booming EV market set to see 6 million in vehicle sales. The China Passenger Car Association reported 486,000 units of new-EV deliveries in July. That's 26.7 percent of the new auto market, according to Bloomberg. Meanwhile, the United States is expected to see 1 million new EV sales, accounting for just 8.4 percent of the market.

The Biden administration nevertheless appears confident in its push for clean energy. His energy department recently asserted that the administration's investments would spur job growth, power 10 million EVs, and fuel "[o]ver 160 new or expanded minerals, materials processing and manufacturing facilities." Biden has also pushed subsidies and tax credits to address EV affordability. But it's unclear how much the public will cooperate as an Associated Press poll from April showed that just 4 in 10 adults said they were somewhat likely to purchase an EV for their next car.

Milloy and Diana Furchtgott-Roth, director of conservative think tank Heritage Foundation's Center for Energy, Climate, and Environment also warned about potential political difficulty in getting mining projects approved.

"We do not have the authoritarian regime that China does to force states and local governments to have mines in places they do not want to have it," Furchtgott-Roth told The Epoch Times. She also argued that "China doesn't have the environmental concerns that we have. That's another reason why we're making China stronger by transferring our energy-intensive manufacturing over to China."

Legislators similarly worried about Chinese industrial power while pushing a bipartisan attempt to reinstate tariffs on the solar industry. Biden, however, vetoed the bill, saying U.S. producers couldn't afford more uncertainty. "When it comes to solar, since I took office, 51 new and expanded solar equipment manufacturing plants have been announced, and America is now on track to increase domestic solar panel manufacturing capacity eight-fold," he said.

The Epoch Times has reached out to the Biden administration for comment.

## The Cost of Going Green

The Chinese regime's pledge to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060 has placed it among other international powers declaring bold climate ambitions. Its own behavior, though, has raised doubts about its interest and ability to implement a climate-conscious agenda.

The IEA recently posted projections showing China leading clean energy development with 55 percent of the world's capacity by 2024. And yet, it was expected to also see a record high in coal production last year. At a global level, nations are similarly expected to see alternative energy investments outpace those in fossil fuels, although the world's consumption was expected to hit a record high in 2022.

It's possible one could feed the other as China's dramatic transition to EVs will require additional coal-generated power, according to an ANZ Group analysis reported by Bloomberg. It's unclear how successful the EV transition will be but it's expected to cut emissions substantially

by replacing conventional gas guzzlers. What is clear is that even amid ambitious climate reforms like Biden's, the United Nations (U.N.) doesn't think the world is acting quickly enough. In the years since the Paris Agreement in 2015, the U.N. has issued report after report warning that the world was behind in achieving emissions reductions.

## This whole effort at central planning for energy and transportation [and] the power grid is doomed to failure.

Benjamin Zycher, senior fellow, American Enterprise Institute

According to critics, Paris and other efforts are doomed to fail while inflicting serious financial harm. Their comments come as the United States has once again been forced into raising the ceiling for debt that's substantially in the hands of the Chinese regime. The most recent debt ceiling deal narrowed environmental reviews for the permitting process. It's unclear, however, whether it's enough to build the type of infrastructure needed for freeing the nation strategically and financially from the regime's dominance.

Members of Congress have weighed options like renewables and nuclear. But scholars like Benjamin Zycher, an economist and senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute think tank, argue that the United States should pursue its oil and natural gas resources, which Democrats have resisted over environmental concerns.

While the administration has touted purported economic benefits of "green" transitions, it's also suggested economic impacts are secondary by framing climate as an "existential" issue that should

be addressed through tools like Paris.

More recently, the administration has been selling leases in the Gulf reportedly as part of stipulations in his Inflation Reduction Act. It's difficult to calculate just how oil and gas exploration would play out in the current economy, but studies have indicated different outcomes on this issue. The American Petroleum Institute, an interest group for oil and natural gas, commissioned a study that projected \$149.2 billion in GDP growth over 20 years from allowing access to the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

The Heritage Foundation has attempted to gauge the environmental and economic impacts of ambitious energy reforms and found a trade-off of dismal emissions changes for financial devastation. More specifically, it plugged a carbon tax into a model based on the Energy Information Administration's own and found it would shed millions of jobs alongside \$7.7 trillion in lost GDP over 18 years. It also found that even if the United States were to eliminate all its emissions, it would only mitigate global temperatures by less than 0.2 degrees by 2100. Only a mitigation of 0.5 degrees Celsius would result if all OECD economies eliminated their greenhouse gas emissions as well.

Published last year, that study based its scenarios on whether the United States would re-enter the Paris Agreement, which has added to a broader international environment pressuring world economies to drastically reform for the climate's sake.

"This whole effort at central planning for energy and transportation [and] the power grid is doomed to failure," Zycher told The Epoch Times. "The only question is how economically destructive it will be and the answer is it won't be trivial."

Sam Dorman is a freelance reporter covering China-related issues. He previously worked as a reporter for Fox News Digital.



President Joe Biden speaks during a virtual Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington on June 17, 2022.

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

## OPINION

## China's PLA Needs Time, Money to Surpass US Military

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

The United States is the world's No. 1 military power, while China is No. 3. To catch up with the United States, China will need to maintain a certain level of economic growth. However, given the slowing economy and the demographic challenge, the Carnegie Foundation expects China's long-term GDP growth not to exceed 2-3 percent.

"The world is entering a new age of warfare, one in which the integration of technology, concepts, partners and

China is prioritizing increasing the size of its navy to rival the United States.

systems—more than fleet size alone—will determine victory in conflict," according to the Chief of Naval Operations Navigation Plan Update, published on July 26, 2022.

While the rest of the world is raising its interest rates to rein in inflation, the People's Bank of China cut the interest rate for five-year business loans as well as mortgage rates in a desperate attempt to stimulate a stagnating economy. China faces 20.8 percent youth unemployment, declining exports, growing debt, and slower economic growth. Meanwhile, the population is aging. Last year, deaths outnumbered births. The slowing economy and graying population may derail the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) military ambitions.

CCP leader Xi Jinping's vision is to modernize the People's Liberation Army (PLA) by 2035. Ironically, by that year, 30 percent of the population is expected to be over the age of 60. The second part of Xi's vision is for the PLA to be a world-class military by 2049, capable of "fighting and winning wars." By 2050, China's population is expected to have shrunk by 100 million, and 52 percent is predicted to be over 65.

Military power is closely linked to economic power, as a richer country has more money for its military. A richer country is also better positioned to fund the research and development that leads to next-generation

weapons and technology.

Currently, the United States holds significant advantages over China across a number of domains. The United States accounts for 24 percent of global GDP, while China only accounts for about 15 percent. In 2022, the United States spent \$877 billion on its military, while China only spent \$292 billion. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has spent \$19 trillion on its military, compared to \$3 trillion spent by China. This spending has afforded the United States command and control, as well as overall technical superiority, including advantages in communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The United States is also ahead in air, surface, and undersea weapon systems.

China is prioritizing increasing the size of its navy to rival the United States. Currently, the United States maintains 11 aircraft carriers, whereas China only has two. China is building ships at a faster rate than the United States and is expected to grow the PLA Navy to 400 ships over the next two years. This would give the PLA Navy more ships than the United States, but there would still be questions of quality and firepower, as most of the PLA Navy ships are inferior to the U.S. ships.

China has 200 nuclear warheads and expects to double this number over the next 10 years. But the United States al-

ready has nearly 4,000 superior nuclear warheads with 1,600 strategic weapons. Each nuclear warhead costs between \$4.9 million and \$8.4 million, while warships can cost as much as \$3.4 billion. Modernizing and expanding its military will cost Beijing time and money.

Meanwhile, the United States has several advantages that China cannot buy. Washington is a member of the largest and most powerful military alli-

ances on the planet, NATO and AUKUS, while Beijing has defense agreements only with North Korea. The U.S. military operates and maintains a network of 516 installations across 41 countries, establishing a significant global presence. Furthermore, it maintains military bases in over 80 countries, underscoring its extensive reach and international footprint.

The U.S. military also has an advantage

in terms of combat experience. Since the Korean War, in which both the United States and China participated, the United States has fought wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, while also fighting coordinated large-scale, although shorter duration, military operations in Panama, Grenada, the First Gulf War, and Kosovo. The United States has also fought countless smaller operations in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Eu-

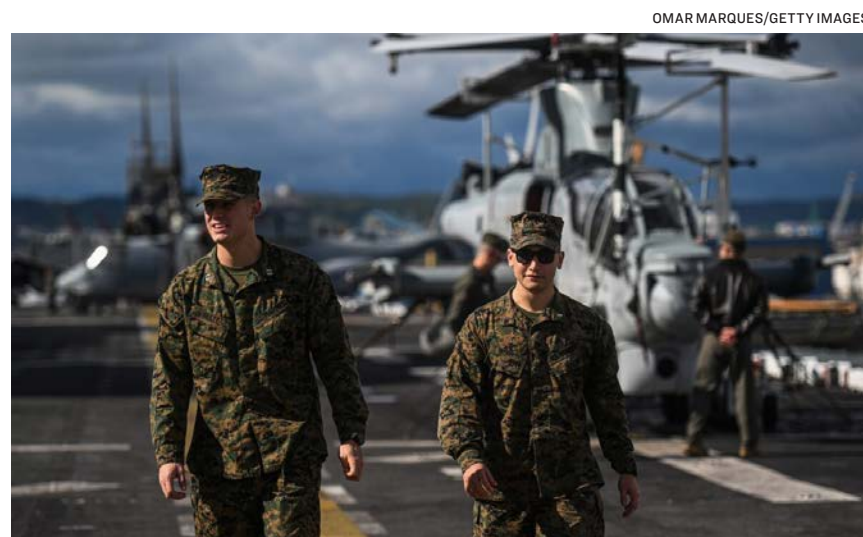
rope. Apart from minor skirmishes with Vietnam and India and some anti-piracy and U.N. policing operations, the PLA has minimal combat experience.

With an aging population and a flagging economy, it is questionable if China will achieve its goal of complete military dominance over the United States. Some experts believe the CCP is holding off on a Taiwan invasion until the PLA reaches a level of firepower on par with the United States and its allies. But during the time it takes to improve the military, the Chinese economy is predicted to slow continually while the population shrinks. Meanwhile, the United States continues to outspend China year after year, making it harder and harder for Beijing to close the gap.

Xi is most likely aware of these facts, so the question remains: Will the CCP make a move on Taiwan prematurely, or will it attempt to wait until the PLA is in optimal condition? A further question is whether or not that optimal condition is even achievable.

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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U.S. Marines walk on the flight deck of the USS Kearsarge in Gdynia, Poland, on Sept. 17, 2022.

OMAR MARQUES/GETTY IMAGES



One of three Chinese warships is seen docked at Garden Island naval base in Sydney on June 3, 2019.

PETER PARKS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES





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