

WEEK 39, 2023

THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER

Crew members of Chinese Cosco Shipping Rose container ship wave Chinese and Panamenian flag before Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Panama's Juan Carlso Varela arrive at the Cocoli locks in the expanded Panama Canal, in Panama City, Panama, on Dec. 3, 2018. Chinese leader Xi Jinping is on an official visit to Panama after attending the G20 Summit in Argentina.



THE IMPACT OF

CHINA'S ECONOMIC DOWNFALL

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A Chinese container ship sails near the new Cocoli Locks in the Panama Canal on Dec. 3, 2018.

NEWS ANALYSIS

China’s Economic Downfall Spells Trouble for Latin America, Opportunity for US

By Autumn Sprede mann



Deepening economic woes in China are something the communist regime can no longer dismiss and dependent countries can’t afford to ignore. Since China’s decision to end its “zero-COVID” policy was announced last December, the subsequent economic downturn has hit multiple sectors. Import and export markets have slumped this year, coupled with the country’s soaring debt, underperforming industrial output, and a tanking real estate market.

July data showed a significant year-on-year drop in foreign trade, with exports shrinking by 14.5 percent and imports falling by 12.4 percent. This is complicated by a shrinking labor force and high youth unemployment. The number of young people unable to find jobs hit a record high of 20.4 percent in April among the 16- to 24-year-old age group—spiking to 21.3 percent in June. China’s National Bureau of Statistics originally released the data, but the state-run agency has since blocked additional unemployment statistics after widespread media reports. A spokesperson for the bureau, Fu Linghui, told reporters during an August news conference that the “age-specific urban unemployment rate for young people” would be suspended for that month. Given the increased pressure that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) faces over the faltering economy, state-level attempts to control the narrative aren’t surprising. Some say China’s economic slowdown was “inevitable.” “Moving hundreds of millions of people from inefficient rural agricul-

Commodities represent 72 percent of total exports in countries such as Brazil, Chile, and Peru, according to the Institute of International Finance.

ture to higher-productivity factory work in cities can only be carried out once,” an August report by the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations noted. But the ripples of Beijing’s economic downturn will reach far beyond its borders. Many experts are predicting that China’s partners in the developing world, particularly Latin America, will bear the brunt of its domestic troubles. Beijing’s interests in Latin America are sizeable. From 2000 to 2020, Chinese companies invested roughly \$160 billion in the region. The past 20 years of Latin America’s engagement with China have been based on “perceptions and hopes”

rather than practicalities, said Evan Ellis, a regional analyst and professor at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute. That’s evident in Latin America’s dubious infrastructure projects and grandiose loans given to local governments with a history of defaulting on their debts. In a recent example, Argentina’s embattled leftist regime used a \$7.5 billion line of credit from the International Monetary Fund to partly repay a Chinese loan in August. Argentina has a decades-long history of foreign debt defaults and, as of 2019, owed Beijing nearly \$17 billion from loans issued as far back as 2007, according to the think tank Inter-American Dialogue.



▲ A worker stands near the entrance of a tunnel near where Chinese company Cosco Shipping is building a port in Chancay, Peru, on Aug. 22, 2023

Abdrn. He said that would lead to a cooling trend in global prices and create “knock-on effects impacting investment, tax revenues, and broader business sentiment.” Other analysts say cooling commodity prices are just the beginning. “One of the main reasons these [Latin American] regimes gravitated toward China is because of the immediate practical benefits of that relationship ... appealing loans, investments, military and security opportunities, and assorted forms of support,” Irina Tsukerman, regional security analyst and president of Scarab Rising, told The Epoch Times. “Should [Latin American governments] come to see China as an unreliable ally ... without delivering on its promises, they will immediately turn away in search of another suitor.” Ms. Tsukerman believes that image factors heavily into China’s approach to engagement with Latin America, and isn’t convinced that the CCP will scale back its regional investments, even at the cost of its own economic crisis. She believes that the regime cares more about “projecting power” than having what she called a “prudent and sober balance of expenditures.” “In reality, there’s a perception in the ruling class that, so long as Beijing’s long arm reaches far and wide around the world, rumors of its economic collapse will not be fully believed by Western countries,” she said. However, Beijing’s continued investment in Latin America will likely come with what Mr. Ellis called a “hardening of China’s diplomatic line.” He expects this to materialize with China’s loan terms, noting that the CCP is “very adept” at getting paid. “Like in Africa, the Chinese are not letting anyone walk away from their debts,” he said. He said that the CCP will probably sharpen its approach as a trade and investment partner while setting stricter terms and deepening its “politicization” in Latin America. He also said that China will likely become a more difficult international partner and bring less cash to the table.

China’s infrastructure projects in Latin America are famously riddled with problems, some of which significantly affect local populations. They include the \$2.7 billion Coca Codo Sinclair hydroelectric dam in Ecuador, which opened in 2016 and has local engineers voicing concerns over cracks and structural issues. Latin American governments hungry for investment and trade deals have historically turned a blind eye to these realities because of the size of China’s checkbook. However, given Beijing’s current domestic troubles, those checks could start getting smaller and come with more conditions, Mr. Ellis told The Epoch Times.

Commodities Impact One of the near-term effects the region faces is cooling commodity prices due to falling demand from China, the region’s biggest trade partner, aside from Mexico. In countries such as Brazil, Chile, and Peru, commodities represent 72 percent of total exports, according to the Institute of International Finance. By comparison, Africa’s commodities exports total 62 percent, the Middle East’s total 51 percent, and Asia’s total 25 percent. This is especially problematic for countries with strong mineral and agricultural sectors, which rely heavily on Chinese demand. The Inter-American Development Bank has reported price drops from January to April on key Latin American commodities, including oil, coffee, iron ore, copper, and soybeans. Mr. Ellis predicts a “protracted period of lower commodity prices” that will hit Latin American countries hard since China will likely be buying less and trying to sell more. He said the CCP likely won’t have “quite as much money to throw into the region as it once did.” Consequently, that could dim some of the reputational luster that China has spent years building. “Across the board, China is not going to look quite as glamorous to Latin America as it used to,” Mr. Ellis said. “Commodity exporters, such as Chile, Peru, South Africa, and Australia, could see less demand from China,” said Robert Gilhooly, senior emerging markets economist at

Abdrn. He said that would lead to a cooling trend in global prices and create “knock-on effects impacting investment, tax revenues, and broader business sentiment.” Other analysts say cooling commodity prices are just the beginning. “One of the main reasons these [Latin American] regimes gravitated toward China is because of the immediate practical benefits of that relationship ... appealing loans, investments, military and security opportunities, and assorted forms of support,” Irina Tsukerman, regional security analyst and president of Scarab Rising, told The Epoch Times. “Should [Latin American governments] come to see China as an unreliable ally ... without delivering on its promises, they will immediately turn away in search of another suitor.” Ms. Tsukerman believes that image factors heavily into China’s approach to engagement with Latin America, and isn’t convinced that the CCP will scale back its regional investments, even at the cost of its own economic crisis. She believes that the regime cares more about “projecting power” than having what she called a “prudent and sober balance of expenditures.” “In reality, there’s a perception in the ruling class that, so long as Beijing’s long arm reaches far and wide around the world, rumors of its economic collapse will not be fully believed by Western countries,” she said. However, Beijing’s continued investment in Latin America will likely come with what Mr. Ellis called a “hardening of China’s diplomatic line.” He expects this to materialize with China’s loan terms, noting that the CCP is “very adept” at getting paid. “Like in Africa, the Chinese are not letting anyone walk away from their debts,” he said. He said that the CCP will probably sharpen its approach as a trade and investment partner while setting stricter terms and deepening its “politicization” in Latin America. He also said that China will likely become a more difficult international partner and bring less cash to the table.

Opportunity Knocks If more stringent trade and investment deals between China and Latin America come to pass, it may also hamper CCP efforts to expand the RMB yuan as a reserve currency in the region. Earlier this year, the governments of Brazil and Argentina announced that they would begin using the yuan as a trade currency. On June 29, Argentina’s government took it a step further when its central bank announced that residents and businesses would be able to open accounts in yuan. China hasn’t been coy in its desire to push the yuan as an alternative to the U.S. dollar for reserves and trade, which many have called a “de-dollarization” campaign. Yet with Beijing’s economic retraction and more complicated or less access to funding, it may be an opportune time for the United States to step into the limelight in its own backyard. Ms. Tsukerman says that the reality of China’s changing economic status could ignite a change in attitude. “Despite leftist ideologies of Latin American regimes such as Argentina and Brazil, their leaders are pragmatic and self-interested. They may use populist rhetoric and extreme ideologies to get to power and control, but when it comes to guarding foreign policy and their own pockets, their eyes are wide open,” she said. Meanwhile, the United States may have lost ground to China as a top trading partner in recent years, but U.S. foreign direct investment in the region is still massive, last year representing 38 percent of the nearly \$225 billion economic infusion in Latin America and the Caribbean. Mr. Ellis says it’s up to Washington to differentiate itself as a trade partner in Latin America and capitalize on any economic stumbling on China’s part. If not, he remarked, it wouldn’t be the first time that U.S. officials missed a golden opportunity. “I’ve never been disappointed in our government’s ability to shoot itself in the foot.”

Autumn Sprede mann is a South America-based reporter covering primarily Latin American issues for The Epoch Times.

OPINION

China’s Hidden Defense Budget

By Antonio Graceffo



China’s military spending is larger than believed; Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) recently called for increasing the U.S. defense budget. Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s objective for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is to achieve military superiority over the United States by 2050. Achieving this goal is directly predicated on the amount of money the two nations spend on defense. Previously, it was believed that China was spending \$224.79 billion, a fraction of the U.S. military’s budget of \$857.9 billion. However, the U.S. intelligence community recently discovered that China may be spending as much as \$700 billion, allowing China to challenge the United States for military supremacy much sooner than originally believed. This new revelation has lawmakers concerned.

One of the ways Beijing disguised its spending was by directing money into the military-civil fusion, whereby the central government provides money to private companies to develop dual-use technology. Some of the most critical areas of military development, such as shipbuilding, information technology, and aerospace, are funded in this way. These three domains are expected to play the largest role in any war between the United States and China. A special danger regarding information technology and aerospace is that the ability to dominate cyberspace or damage or disable satellites will be crucial in 21st-century warfare. It could leave ships and planes unable to navigate or communicate, or prevent the United States from guiding its missiles to targets.

China’s Coast Guard and People’s Armed Forces Maritime Militia are not covered by the defense budget. These two forces have been aggressively pushing the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) territorial claims in the South China Sea, as well as conducting spying in the Bay of Bengal. They carry weapons and enforce Beijing’s foreign policy objectives but are not considered part of the PLA Navy. China is one of the five largest arms importers in the world. During the past five years, China’s arms imports have been rising, with 83 percent coming from Russia. China primarily imports weapons and technology that cannot be produced domestically, such as long-range strike capabilities, combat aircraft, and missiles. These imports *do not count* in Beijing’s official defense spending figures. Research and development are other large expenditures not charged to the country’s defense budget. Purchasing power parity is another reason why China’s spending may be amplified. Because labor and many basic products and services are much cheaper in China than in the United States, Beijing can buy more of them with a smaller budget.



▲ Chinese leader Xi Jinping inspects People’s Liberation Army soldiers at a military base in Hong Kong on June 30, 2017.

Purchasing power parity is another reason why China’s spending may be amplified.

Soldiers’ salaries are much higher in the United States than in China. A private in the PLA has a starting salary of \$108 per month. In the U.S. Army, it is \$1,918. On a similar note, the United States has been plagued by inflation, with prices increasing by an average of nearly 18 percent since the Biden administration began. China, by contrast, is facing deflation. While prices are going up in the United States, they are going down in China, making it possible for the CCP to buy more goods and services for the PLA. China ranks among the world’s five largest arms exporters. Although China’s defense budget has increased steadily, year after year, China’s arms exports have been in decline. Last year, China’s weapons exports dropped by 23 percent. Russia surpassed China as the primary arms dealer in Africa. Europe, the part of the world that has seen the greatest increase in arms purchases, buys most of its overseas weapons imports from the United States. One reason for this may be that China is stockpiling weapons in preparation for war. The PLA Navy and PLA Air Force have increasingly threatened the sea and air space around Taiwan. In response, the United States is strengthening its defense ties with Taiwan, India, Australia, and other nations. The U.S. Department of Defense has stated that it is trying to prevent a war in the Indo-Pacific region but wants to be ready if war breaks out. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said that the increase in the U.S. defense budget this year was “driven by the seriousness of our strategic competition with the People’s Republic of China.” Now, it appears that China is spending more than originally believed; the stakes have been raised. Mr. McConnell, in a Sept. 19 statement, recognized the grave importance of stepping up U.S. preparations for a possible war with China. He called for more military spending, saying that “closing the gap with China—and outcompeting our biggest strategic adversary—will require more than innovation theater or speeches about revolutions in military affairs. Real progress will require real investments in long-range strike capabilities. Real expansion of our defense production capacity. Real defense technology cooperation with our closest allies who increasingly share our concerns about the PLA.”

Views expressed in this article are opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times. Antonio Graceffo, Ph.D., is a China economic analyst who has spent more than 20 years in Asia. Mr. Graceffo is a graduate of the Shanghai University of Sport, holds a China-MBA from Shanghai Jiaotong University, and currently studies national defense at American Military University. He is the author of “Beyond the Belt and Road: China’s Global Economic Expansion” (2019).

ANALYSIS

US Defense Report Identifies Communist China as Primary Bioweapon Threat

By Nathan Su

A U.S. Department of Defense report has outlined the nation's strategy to meet the challenges posed by biological threats.

Last week, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a notice barring the Wuhan Institute of Virology from federal funding for 10 years over its gain-of-function experiments.

That notice came as House Republicans pushed HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra to comply with a congressional investigation into COVID-19 origins. Meanwhile, the UK confirmed Monday that its upcoming global summit on artificial intelligence would focus on the potential for AI to create bioweapons, as Prime Minister Rishi Sunk warned of a "small window" to address the threat.

Defense analysts continue to discuss the 2023 Biodefense Posture Review, published last month by the U.S. Department of Defense. The report is a comprehensive document that outlines the nation's strategic preparedness against potential biosecurity threats.

The report's release comes on the heels of over two decades of threats from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regarding the potential use of biotechnology as a form of "unrestricted warfare" against Western nations. It addresses the aftermath of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in millions of fatalities globally. Just a few weeks prior to the report's Aug. 17 release, the Defense Department announced it would invest an additional \$300 million per year over the next five years to guard against known and emerging biological threats. That investment comes on top of approximately \$1.4 billion appropriated in 2022 for chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defenses, according to an article in National Defense magazine.

Deb Rosenblum, assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical, and biological programs, made the announcement on July 28, warning about "bio-convergence"—the joining of biological sciences with emerging technologies.

Medical personnel move a deceased patient to a refrigerated truck serving as make shift morgues at Brooklyn Hospital Center in New York on April 9, 2020.



ANGELA WEISS/ AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

In the 1990s, the Chinese military introduced the concept of unrestricted warfare, a form of total war that transcends military boundaries and is ready to employ all available technologies.

China: a 'Pacing Challenge'

The Biodefense Posture Review calls China the "pacing challenge" for the Department of Defense, followed by Russia, North Korea, Iran, and unnamed "violent extremist organizations."

It notes that the National Defense Strategy, released in 2022, "provides a vision for focusing the DoD on our pacing challenge"—namely, a competitor making significant progress toward challenging U.S. defense—"even as we manage the other threats of a rapidly changing world."

The Biodefense Posture Review specified four goals that the Defense Department must prioritize before 2035 to defend against biological threats:

1. Defend the homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC);
2. Deter strategic attacks against the United States and its allies and partners;
3. Deter aggression, while being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary—prioritizing the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific region, then the Russia challenge in Europe;
4. Build a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem.

Of these four priority targets, threats come mainly from two regimes: the CCP and Russia, with the CCP being named twice and Russia once.

Fervor for Unrestricted Warfare

The report notes that Chinese publications "have called biology a new domain of war."

In the 1990s, the Chinese military introduced the concept of unrestricted warfare, a form of total war that transcends military boundaries and is ready to employ all available technologies.

Two People's Liberation Army (PLA) colonels, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, set out the framework and tactics of this approach in their 1999 book "Unrestricted Warfare." They included biochemical weapons as part of their strategy for a "revolution in war."

Biological warfare, in essence, embodies all the features of unrestricted warfare, in which the first rule is that "there are no rules, with nothing forbidden."

More than a decade after the book's publication, a 2010 book titled "War for Biological Dominance" stressed the impact of biology on future warfare. The book was authored by Guo Jiwei, a professor and chief physician at the PLA's Third Military Medical University, and author of a 2006 article in the PLA Journal of Military Medicine entitled "The Command of Biotechnology and Merciful Conquest in Military Opposition."

China's state-run media continued to fervently advocate unrestricted warfare over the next decade.

On Jan. 23, 2014, China National Defense News published an article titled "Genetic Warfare Will Fundamentally Transform Human Warfare."

"Genetic weapons can be used in a variety of ways," the article said. "Through humans, aircraft, missiles, or artillery, one can put genetically engineered bacteria, bacterial insects, and microorganisms with disease-causing genes into the major rivers, cities, or major transportation arteries of other countries, so that the microorganisms such as viruses can spread and multiply naturally, thus causing people and animals to suffer from an untreatable disease in a short period of time."

For the author of this article, the mass killing or injuring of innocent civilians was not an apparent matter of concern. "Moreover, genetic weapons can use gene editing techniques according to specific needs. For example, we can insert genes that cause human mental damage into some organisms. If people of a certain ethnic group are infected with these intelligence-impairing genes, they will lose their normal intellectual ability," he wrote.

The Invisible Battlefield

On Nov. 10, 2017, the PLA Daily published an op-ed titled "How Genetic Weapons Will Affect Future Warfare," describing the "invisible battlefield" of the future:

"One side may use genetic weapons before the war, causing the destruction of the other party's personnel and living environment, leading to the destruction of a nation, as the whole nation loses its combat effectiveness and is conquered without bloodshed ... The future battlefield will become an invisible battlefield."

The following year, the authors of an article published online on China Military—the English language news website of the PLA—explained that by taking advantage of the genetic differences between various races, genetic weapons can kill or incapacitate a targeted group of people, while sparing the unspecified group of people from harm. "Studies have shown that 99.7 percent to 99.9 percent of human DNA is the same, and the small differences are the key to distinguishing various races. Therefore, each nation and race has a unique genetic profile, based on which, theoretically, genetic weapons can be developed to selectively target specific racial genes, thereby killing or injuring a specific race," the article said.

The article pointed out the practical aspect of "using \$50 million to build a genetic weapons arsenal" that "will have far more lethality than a nuclear weapons arsenal costing \$100 billion to build."

Chinese leader Xi Jinping famously said in 2020, "The East is rising and the West is declining." This narrative became the backdrop for a new kind of assertive and confrontational "wolf warrior diplomacy." Echoing this were hawkish discussions of biological warfare in Chinese state media and military publications, raising concerns in the U.S. government.

WIV's Ties to Chinese Military

The Biodefense Posture Review repeatedly cites the dual-use nature of biotechnology—its potential for both licit and illicit purposes—both in the military and civilian sectors.

Notably, the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), a possible origin of the novel coronavirus, is a typical military-civilian fusion research institute.

A Jan. 15, 2021 factsheet released by the U.S. State Department stated, "Despite the WIV presenting itself as a civilian institution, the United States has determined that the WIV has collaborated on publications and secret projects with China's military. The WIV has engaged in classified research, including laboratory animal experiments, on behalf of the Chinese military since at least 2017."

In May 2021, former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reiterated in an interview with Fox News that the institute was engaged in military activity alongside its civilian research.

"What I can say for sure is this: we know that they were engaged in efforts that were connected to the People's Liberation Army inside of that laboratory, so military activity being performed alongside what they claimed was just good old civilian research," he said.

A look back at the very beginnings of the pandemic is significant. On Jan. 25, 2020, less than two days after Wuhan was locked down, a PLA biological warfare expert, Major Gen. Chen Wei, led a team to Wuhan to take charge of the institute. Officially, Gen. Chen was dispatched to Wuhan to create a vaccine to counter the COVID-19 virus, which her team did—with remarkable speed.

However, experts say that Gen. Chen's presence at the Wuhan Institute confirms the link between the Wuhan lab and the Chinese military.

A joint investigative report by Pro-Publica and Vanity Fair magazine, published in October 2022, cited experts who said the speed with which Gen. Chen's team developed a vaccine was "unrealistic, if not impossible."

The lab "must have had access to the genomic sequence of the virus no later than in November 2019, weeks before China's official recognition that the virus was circulating," the unnamed experts said.

An anonymous insider told The Epoch Times in May 2023 that the biowarfare specialist's presence at the WIV was definite evidence for a lab leak. The general was most likely sent to Wuhan to "clean up the mess," he said.

OPINION

China's Shipbuilding Capacity More Than 200 Times Greater Than US: Navy Intelligence Slide

By J.M. Phelps

A leaked U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) slide is garnering concern about the Chinese regime's continued capability to produce naval vessels at an alarmingly faster rate than the United States.

The leaked graphic depicts shipyards in China as being able to build new naval vessels at a rate that's 232 times greater than that of the United States. The ONI confirmed its authenticity to The Drive, which first published the slide.

This outsized capacity to support China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy has caused some analysts to raise the alarm that the United States won't be able to close the gap for many years to come.

Retired Capt. James Fanell, a former director of intelligence and information operations for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, doesn't share the same level of pessimism, although he does acknowledge the challenges involved in rebuilding the United States' shipbuilding capacity.

He says closing the gap with the Chinese regime will require "a dramatic shift in the policy of unaccountable engagement that now characterizes the Biden administration."

"The challenges are also greater than just political will," Mr. Fanell told The Epoch Times. "There is an issue of America's shipbuilding industry that has gone into disrepair since WWII."

Despite a few political hurdles, "America is a nation of optimism and the can-do attitude that will be essential to any effort to close that gap," he said.

According to the ONI, the Chinese regime's navy consisted of 355 vessels in 2020, while the United States had 296 vessels. By 2035, China is expected to reach an estimated 475 ships, while the United States would reach 305 to 317.

"While U.S. Navy leadership is concerned about the growth and capabilities of the PLA Navy, what has not happened is that any single U.S. Navy Admiral resigns their commission over the lack of response to this threat to America's national security," Mr. Fanell said.

"The recent ONI slide is a stark reminder of the cataclysmic decline in the U.S. shipbuilding industry, one that the United States dominated just 80 years ago during World War II. America became a great power because it was a seafaring nation, and we will suffer defeat the more we deny this history."

"In 1949, more than a dozen U.S. Navy admirals were willing to put their careers on the line to speak out about what they felt was a dangerous approach to defeating the USSR with just strategic bomber aircraft."

"Their willingness to put national security before their careers paid off as

the U.S. Navy laid the foundations for creating a nuclear aircraft carrier fleet that ruled the waves of the globe for the next 60 years and ensured the safety and prosperity of America, our allies, and even our enemies."

How to Close the Gap

Mr. Fanell says Congress must pass and fund similar legislation to the Two-Ocean Navy Act that was passed in 1940 and allowed the country to increase its naval presence and capabilities in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

"The similarities between the strategic environment today and 1940 are too great to ignore," he said.

For example, Russia has invaded Ukraine—threatening Europe—while the Chinese regime continues to conduct large-scale operations with warships and aircraft around Taiwan and into the Philippine Sea, Mr. Fanell said.

"America's ingenuity should be unleashed to build up our fleet of warships," he said.

"For instance, we should be able to build a fleet of unmanned warships, along with equipping our existing

mothball fleet with supersonic/hypersonic anti-

ship cruise missiles that could turn these retired combatants into arsenal ships that could be used to sink the People's Liberation Army Navy invasion fleet."

"It's disturbing how ill-informed and naive the average American is on

China," U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Michael Studeman said during a presentation at a naval conference in February.

Americans are "ignorant of the threat from the [People's Republic of China] and their Navy," Mr. Fanell said.

But he doesn't blame the American people.

"It is primarily the fault of our national security community who have failed for 20 years to inform the people of America of the threat from communist China," Mr. Fanell said. "That education needs to go into overdrive."

"The threat from the PLA Navy isn't just confined to the Western Pacific, but it is now approaching Hawaii, and if left unchecked, will be off the U.S. West Coast in less than a decade. This isn't a theoretical threat; it is a very real threat—a nuclear threat."

"America is in a dire situation, but the will and determination to save our nation from Chinese Communism can reverse this situation."

The Department of the Navy and Office of Naval Intelligence didn't respond by press time to requests for comment.

J.M. Phelps is a writer and researcher of both Islamist and Chinese threats. He's on Twitter at @JMPhelpsLC

STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



▲ Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning is participating in a military drills in the South China Sea on Jan. 2, 2017.

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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Uyghur Activist Rushan Abbas on the CCP’s War Against Freedom

By Efthymis Oraipoulos & Jan Jekielek

Everything the Uyghur people are facing today in China will be the reality for the entire world if the Chinese Communist Party is not stopped, an American Uyghur activist has said.

Rushan Abbas, who has lived in the United States since 1989 and is an American citizen, is advocating against the genocidal policies targeting her people for decades, the Muslim minority of Uyghurs in China’s western Xinjiang province.

Formerly a business development director, Ms. Abbas quit her job to advocate around the world for her people back home, exposing the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) genocide against the Uyghur community.

By 2017 it was known that 1 million Uyghur and other Turkic people were detained in concentration camps in Xinjiang, Ms. Abbas said. Ms. Abbas’ family members were also missing; her parents-in-law and their four children with their spouses, along with 14 of their nieces and nephews.

After Ms. Abbas spoke about these abductions by the CCP on YouTube, her sister, Gulshan Abbas, and her aunt went missing the same day.

“I realized [the] Chinese government did this to intimidate me,” Ms. Abbas said.

“I do feel guilty when I think about my sister being in jail, but at the same time, if I only think about myself or about my family only—there is something that is extremely important for all of us. That is the freedom and democracy in the world.”

It was because of that freedom that Ms. Abbas left her home and emigrated to the United States.

“The future of the free world that we know, and that most of us take for granted, that’s being endangered,” Ms. Abbas said, regarding her motive for exposing the CCP’s crimes.

Uyghur women are also facing forced sterilization and forced abortions, Ms. Abbas said, and about 1 million children are taken away from their families. Other women are pushed by the CCP to marry Chinese men. In these cases, “Where are the feminists?” she asked. “Where are the people who are supposed to defend children’s rights?”

“When the perpetrator of these crimes has the money and the power, they all decide to be silent,” she said.

Regarding these politicians or celebrities who choose to look away, Ms. Abbas said that they are not only losing their freedom of speech, they are giving up the future of the free world, and the politicians are giving up their countries’ sovereignty.

If the CCP is not stopped now, she said, it is these people’s children and grandchildren who will face a tyrannical world.

A Policy of Appeasement

“I was extremely frustrated when I saw the ‘most favored nation’ status was granted for China,” she said, referring to the time when the United States let China into the World Trade Organization in 2001.

With that move, the CCP got the money and leverage to become one of the world’s biggest dictatorships.



▲ Rushan Abbas holds a photo of her sister, Gulshan Abbas, who is currently imprisoned in a Chinese camp, during a rally in New York on March 22, 2021.

How do you trust a country like China ... if they are doing something like this to their own citizens?

Rushan Abbas, Uyghur advocate

All kinds of privileges were given to the CCP at that time, Ms. Abbas said, and she tried to approach military officials through her contacts in the government and told them not to trust the CCP.

At that time she tried to warn that by giving the CCP what it wanted, it would not let its society become more open and have more freedom, or be better toward different faiths. This is because the CCP wants people in its society to completely submit themselves to the Communist Party, according to Ms. Abbas.

The CCP does not consider the Uyghurs as normal people, Ms. Abbas said, because this is the mentality of the Communist Party. People who have a religious background, different languages, and different cultures and ways of living outside the party’s culture are not considered normal.

With this twisted party ideology implanted in its henchmen, the former CCP ambassador to the United States, Cui Tiankai, openly said about the Uyghurs in 2018 that “we are trying to reeducate most of them, trying to turn them into normal persons (who) can go back to normal life.”

Ms. Abbas said that the appeasement, the rewards, not holding the CCP accountable from the United States’ side when evidence of mass internments surfaced after the persecution of Falun Gong in China, was what led to the same tactics being used against the Uyghur population.

“Even today, with this much information, leaked document after leaked document from the Chinese government confirming the genocidal policies, and the victims’ testimonies, former camp victims testifying what’s happening inside of those camps—crematoriums are built next to the concentration camps, for a culture that doesn’t practice cremation,” Ms. Abbas said.

“Organ harvesting. It started with the Falun Gong practitioners but now it’s very common for the Uyghurs. There were video clips advertising ‘halal’ organs in the Muslim-majority countries, in Arabic speaking countries. All these are happening, yet we still continue to appease the CCP, the genocidal regime.”

No One Can Claim Ignorance

In today’s information era, no one can claim they do not know about what’s happening, Ms. Abbas said, comparing the current situation to what some were saying after the Jewish genocide during the Second World War.

Even the United Nations published a watered-down version of all the things Ms. Abbas was talking about, she said. The U.N.’s report confirmed the mass detentions, forced labor, forced sterilization, child abductions, torture, and abuse at the hands of the CCP.

When all these crimes are going to be listed in the history books, “they cannot claim ignorance any more,” Ms. Abbas said.

What the CCP does to Uyghurs, Falun Gong practitioners, South Mongolians, and Hong Kongers does not stay inside

China’s borders, according to Ms. Abbas.

The CCP is expanding the persecution in Canada, the United States, and Europe, and harassing American and Canadian citizens. They are also expanding an all-encompassing police state in other parts of the world.

“How do you trust a country like China ... if they are doing something like this to their own citizens?”

She talked about the diplomacy trap the CCP is conducting all over the world, and the power of the Belt and Road Initiative, with which the CCP has gained leverage to many countries’ governments.

In that sense, the CCP’s invasion and infiltration of the world with “smiling faces” and “suitcases of money” is not as clear as Russia’s armed invasion into Ukraine, she said.

She said China is becoming powerful enough to strong-arm the world.

Holding Uyghurs of the Diaspora Hostage

The CCP can pressure Uyghurs who live abroad by threatening their family members back home, as all of the Uyghurs abroad have family still in Xinjiang, according to Ms. Abbas.

The result is that people in China tell their relatives abroad not to speak up about the genocide, to not say anything.

In some cases, CCP consulate members directly call Uyghurs living abroad and tell them not to speak out if they want to see their parents well when they return.

“People are afraid, they are worried,” said Ms. Abbas, even if their family members are already detained or are very elderly.

She gave the example of her father-in-law.

Ms. Abbas was recently informed by distant family members that he passed away in January this year. The last time her husband communicated with his family was in 2017, Ms. Abbas said, saying that not letting people speak with their family abroad is an example of another form of persecution the CCP carries out against the Uyghurs, and it is how Uyghur families live in America, in today’s information age.

Ms. Abbas gave the example of a young woman named Mihray Erkin who was studying in Japan for her master’s degree in 2019 when the CCP pressured her parents to convince her to return home. She returned, only to be captured by the CCP and detained.

A few months later, it was reported that she died in detention.

The Future of the West

“Genocide is not an event,” Ms. Abbas said. It is a series of events that progress through 10 stages, from classification all the way to discrimination and finally extermination and denial of the crime, she said.

The CCP first labels a group and then demonizes it, stigmatizing their culture, their ethnicity, or their beliefs. It then uses disinformation and propaganda

to create hatred in society against that group. The Uyghurs, for example, were labeled as backward, uncivilized, and criminal, “because all the normal aspects of religion are being criminalized,” Ms. Abbas said.

The disinformation is not limited within the CCP’s borders, though.

Ms. Abbas is herself being attacked daily in the CCP society’s social and traditional media. When she increased her efforts, carrying her sister’s photograph and protesting opposite the Chinese embassy, the U.N., and the European Parliament, a CCP newspaper published an article saying that she stole the photograph of someone else, claiming falsely that she was her sister. A few days later the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson spelled out her sister’s name, saying she was charged.

“It’s the same playbook against all the marginalized groups,” Ms. Abbas said, giving the examples of the persecution of Falun Gong, Tibetans, and those in Hong Kong.

“The entire region ... lost freedom and democracy,” she said about Hong Kong. “All of a sudden, Hong Kong became a part of this dictatorship.”

If people don’t speak up and try to hold China accountable and bring an end these atrocities, the crimes will continue and will spread to the entire world, Ms. Abbas said.

“Just look at the Uyghur peoples today and imagine how the future of the world is going to be, because our today, everything that Uyghur people are facing today, will be the reality for the entire world,” she said. “If we don’t speak out now, then the only voice left to speak will be one of regret.”

Oppression Spreading Abroad

Ms. Abbas said she sometimes wonders whether she is in the United States or China.

She told a story about a time when she was invited to Columbia University to participate in a panel with a Hong Konger and a Tiananmen activist, but when she arrived, she found that the panel was canceled. The reason was



▲ A young ethnic Uyghur boy looks out from his home in the Uyghur area in the city of Urumqi in China’s Xinjiang region on July 12, 2009.

The future of the free world that we know, and that most of us take for granted, that’s being endangered.

Rushan Abbas, Uyghur advocate

probably that a Chinese student association protested, she said.

“I felt like I was at Beijing University,” she said.

The universities are not alone in this. Media companies routinely choose not to cover important stories about atrocities in China.

In one of those stories, Ms. Abbas said, 13 tons of human hair were imported from Xinjiang to America and seized at the border.

“How many people does that represent? When something like this happens, it should be the breaking news all over the major media. Every reporter should cover this,” she said.

But the story wasn’t covered anywhere, Ms. Abbas said.

She said the CCP has five-year, 10-year, and even 100-year plans to reach its goals, while the United States doesn’t even have a clear policy for engaging with the country.

She said China is already waging war against the United States and the West, and that the United States can’t avoid it by appeasing the regime.

Ms. Abbas mentioned a saying in the CCP about how the last century was the century of humiliation for China, and this century will be China’s century of retaliation.

“It’s not retaliation against the Uyghurs or Tibetans or Hong Kongers or Falun Gong practitioners or South Mongolians,” she said. “It’s the retaliation against the West, retaliation against democracy. When are we going to wake up and see the reality?”

On a positive note, Ms. Abbas said that “we are making a difference,” because now everyone has heard something about the CCP being a dictatorship or about its genocidal policies, she said.

“The Uyghur activists, the former camp victims, journalists like myself, we are making a difference,” she said.

“I left my homeland in 1989. Left my parents, left my friends, left my home,” she said. “I came to United States because I was looking for something, which was the freedom and democracy. ... I will not stop fighting [to] protect that freedom and democracy and the fight against the CCP.”

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

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Rushan Abbas in an interview with EpochTV’s American Thought Leaders on Sept. 12, 2023. ▼





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