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OPINION

Will Biden Unwind Trump's China Policy?

JAMES GORRIE



With the Trump administration ending with Joe Biden's inauguration on Jan. 20, it's quite likely that much of President Donald Trump's comprehensive China policy will go with him. That includes Trump's executive order that mandates delisting Chinese companies from U.S. capital markets. In fact, it's almost a fait accompli.

Wall Street's Priorities

This can be said with confidence because even though U.S. investment and retirement accounts are heavily invested in fraudulent Chinese companies, American money managers have a strong financial motivation to ignore Trump's order. Big Chinese money and the lure of an open Chinese market to U.S. financial services and global investment firms are driving their behavior.

Both promise to deliver great financial windfalls to Wall Street investment banks. In fact, even though the executive order specifically identifies how U.S. capital markets are enabling China's military and industrial growth to pose growing threats to America both at home and abroad and undermine U.S. financial stability, Wall Street doesn't care.

Biden has the opportunity to prove his mettle up front by enforcing Trump's executive order and reining in the big investment banks. It would also send a message to both allies and China alike, Biden's political Achilles heel, that he has a clear understanding of the present challenges and is unencumbered by the past.

But if those things don't happen, it would free up the U.S. financial community's singular priority, which is making money, even at the expense of national security.

With a Biden administration now imminent, insiders predict, however, that the executive order will be short-lived. Others say that it may never be put into full effect.

Undercutting the Trump Legacy

But there are more aspects to Trump's China policy than blocking China's access to U.S. stock markets and indexes, as important as those things are. Will Biden's presidency undercut Trump's hard-line approach to trade with China? Or will he choose a middle way? In either case, Biden needs a strategy that encompasses protecting intellectual property rights, keeping

a closer eye on academic exchange programs, closer relations with Taiwan, and even such "minor" things as internet apps.

Let's look at recent news for China apps, for example. Trump's latest executive order adds bans on the popular apps WeChat and TikTok. Many experts have identified Chinese apps as vectors for data and identity theft, as well as for tracking anti-China activity. But in a Biden administration, it's not certain that this executive order—like the previous one—will be recognized or acted upon.

As far as Trump's steep 25 percent tariff on Chinese manufactured goods is concerned, it's thought that Biden won't reverse them and others—at least not initially. The rationale is that the new president will use them to cut a new trade deal with China, perhaps with the participation of European nations.

If past is prologue, multilateral agreements tend not to favor the United States. That may or may not be the case; it remains to be seen.

It also remains to be seen how Biden plans to stop the Chinese from stealing U.S. intellectual property, which is estimated to be between \$225 billion and \$600 billion per year. The Trump administration made IP protection a big part of its China trade policy.

But will Biden, with his deep financial ties to China and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), be willing or able to continue protecting the United States from the CCP's longstanding policy of IP theft?

Let's hope so.

Will Biden Curtail Academic, Research Exchanges?

A significant part of China's IP theft apparatus is its deep and pervasive academic relationship with U.S. universities and researchers. Through various initiatives such as the Confucius Institutes and the Thousand Talents program, the Chinese regime has been able to gather enormous amounts of IP and technological innovation.

Too often, key scientists became Chinese assets.

Under the Trump administration, universities began to kick Confucius Institutes, which are essentially CCP indoctrination and IP gathering centers, off of their campuses. The Thousand Talents program is literally a means by which the best and brightest scientists and researchers in the United States are paid handsomely to relocate to China to do their work.

Of course, the CCP has reaped enormous technological rewards from both of these programs.

China: 'A Competitor, Not an Adversary'

As vice president of the eight-year Obama administration under which these efforts flourished, why should we expect a President Biden to behave any differently?

Biden is perceived as the best president the CCP could wish for. Regardless of how much or how little money the incoming president has made in his dealings with China, the fact is that he views China as a competitor, not an adversary.

Will he change his view? If so, such a shift in perspective could make a world of difference when it comes to forming a new China policy.

Will Biden Abandon Taiwan?

This is particularly important regarding U.S.-Taiwan relations. On Jan. 9, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that restrictions limiting contacts between Taiwan and U.S. officials will be removed. This effectively means an official recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state, a key part of America's "One China" policy, which only recognized the Beijing government as the government of China and Taiwan.

Prior to this change in diplomatic policy, the Trump administration sold more defensive arms to Taiwan in one year than Obama did in eight years. The idea is to enable the island nation of 23.5 million people to deter an invasion from mainland communist China.

What's more, given that the CCP now has Hong Kong under its boot heel, it's not unreasonable to presume that Beijing plans a similar fate for Taiwan. Indeed, the CCP leadership has declared that as a main geopolitical objective.

Will the United States revert to the One China policy? What will the Biden administration say or do if China invades Taiwan? Will we see a return to the United States enabling the rise of China as the dominant global power, or will Biden challenge the CCP?

We don't know. Perhaps a simpler question will do: Will a Biden-Harris administration rise to the challenge that the CCP poses to the United States?

We'll soon find out.

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

PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Then-U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping toast during a state luncheon for China hosted by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry at the Department of State in Washington on Sept. 25, 2015.

AHMED GABER/REUTERS



Protesters storm the Capitol Building in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021.

OPINION

Chinese State Media Is Celebrating the United States' 'Downfall'

YANG WEI

Chinese state-run media is celebrating "the downfall of the United States" following news of the Jan. 6 breach of the U.S. Capitol building.

Xinhua published a Jan. 12 commentary titled "On the Collapse of America as a 'Beacon': Well Deserved!" Being a mouthpiece for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it can be assumed that the Xinhua article reflects the attitude of top CCP leaders toward the United States.

The article's author, Wu Liming, is deputy director of the international department at Xinhua. As with most articles that run in state media, his commentary likely isn't his personal opinion but a reflection of how the CCP's senior officials think.

The article starts out: "The 'beacon' that is the United States, which claims to be the benchmark of Western democracy, has fallen. ... In the live video broadcast, I saw that the symbol of the beacon—Capitol Hill—has fallen. ... Let American democracy fall from the altar."

In recent days, Xinhua's coverage of U.S. news has been mainly fanning the flames and gloating about the ensuing political turmoil. The commentary directly refers to the United States as a "failed country," saying "the United States can no longer lead the world," and that the Capitol incident was "well deserved."

This obviously reflects the sentiments of senior CCP officials. On Jan. 11, during a Party study session on the implementation of the Fifth Plenary Session, paramount leader Xi Jinping declared that they were entering the "new stage of a historical leap," of "strengthening," and "time and power is on our side," we "dare to struggle," and are "good at struggle."

The CCP leadership seems to think the United States is really losing it, and that this is another opportunity for the CCP to pursue hegemony. They can't even wait until Jan. 20, when a new U.S. administration will be inaugurated, and can't hold back their opinion. During the past year, these CCP officials have been really embarrassed, and now they feel they finally have an opportunity to vent.

It isn't difficult to imagine what attitude the CCP will adopt toward the

The unprecedented level of excitement expressed by Chinese state media actually stems from the excitement among top CCP leaders.

new U.S. administration and what bargaining chips it will offer once it has the opportunity. In fact, the CCP has acted up frequently. North Korea and Iran have restarted their nuclear testing, and the CCP will undoubtedly try to play the role of an intermediary. When U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently designated Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism, the CCP immediately expressed its opposition.

On Jan. 12, Xinhua posted another article, titled "Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Opposing U.S. Suppression and Sanctions Against Cuba in the Name of Anti-terrorism." The article cited the ministry's spokesperson Zhao Lijian at a press conference, who said the United States "is the biggest destabilizing factor threatening global peace and security."

Zhao also posted his statement on Twitter, most likely to show off his "wolf warrior" diplomacy skills.

After the virus pandemic unleashed by the CCP, Americans should be more aware of and on guard against the CCP's deception. It's also the time for those who still buy into the appeasement strategy in dealing with the CCP to think twice.

Early in 2020, the CCP tried to use the pandemic to seek hegemony, but was exposed and called out by the Trump administration. The CCP then fell into international isolation.

After the storming of the Capitol and the ensuing crisis for the United States, the CCP felt like it finally had an opportunity to attack U.S. democracy.

The CCP obviously believes that the United States is in a hopeless situation. Xinhua's "well deserved" comment was followed by another commentary that asked in its headline, "Why Is Trump in Another Impeachment Crisis?"

This article stated that "impeachment is also a manifestation of the intensifying struggle between the parties. Democrats want to leave a shameful record for Trump, making it difficult for him to run for office again in four years," and "in the time before the new president takes office, there may be armed protests throughout the United States."

Xinhua seemed to eagerly look forward to great chaos in the United States. On Jan. 12, it published a third

article on its homepage, "U.S. Presidential Inauguration Security Raises Concerns, Washington Enters State of Emergency."

The unprecedented level of excitement expressed by Chinese state media actually stems from the excitement among top CCP leaders. These attitudes are equivalent to openly challenging the United States.

On Jan. 10, a Xinhua article, titled "Ruan Zongze: China and the U.S. Are Now Facing a Window of Opportunity," had quite a different tone. It quoted parts of a Jan. 8 speech by Ruan Zongze, deputy director of the state-run Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy research center.

The article proposed that "after Joe Biden takes power, U.S. foreign relations will be amended, and so will Sino-U.S. relations." It also called for "mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, and collaboration toward the same goal." Ruan said he was looking forward to "the old times" of U.S.-China relations.

In just two days, Chinese senior officials' attitudes seemed to have changed drastically. They put aside the pretentious call for "mutual respect" and openly provoked the United States. It seems that the CCP leadership has returned to the old path of serious misjudgment.

While most Americans don't have a chance to read Xinhua's articles, the CCP's attitude will soon be reflected in various international events. The United States and Western countries will surely be watching. The game of confrontation between the United States and China will be the main theme in 2021.

The outcome depends entirely on how America responds.

At critical moments in history, everyone must make a choice. From the perspective of the general trends of history, how do people view all events that are unfolding?

Yang Wei has been following China affairs for many years. He has been contributing political commentary on China for the Chinese-language Epoch Times since 2019.

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

ANALYSIS

Ant Group's Scuttled IPO Leaves Foreign Investors in the Dark

Early Chinese investors less likely to lose money

FAN YU

Early investors in China's fintech giant Ant Group thought they were in line for a massive payday—that is, until Ant's highly anticipated initial public offering last year was suddenly scuttled by Chinese regulators.

Venture capital and private equity firms such as Silver Lake and Carlyle Group believed they had a winner in the bag. After all, they were early investors in a massively valuable startup, and the IPO process was a familiar playbook almost guaranteed to make money for early investors. The success of Ant's \$35 billion blockbuster IPO was a foregone conclusion.

Until suddenly, it wasn't. By now, Ant's failed IPO and founder Jack Ma's rhetoric leading up to it have all been well documented. Institutional and retail investors who were slated to purchase shares in the IPO were stuck with little more than disappointment or perhaps, in hindsight, relief. Their initial deposits have been refunded by underwriting banks.

In the weeks that have followed, Ant's prospects have grown increasingly dim. Initially, it was believed that Ant could return to public markets within months, after some superficial restructuring. But it's becoming more evident that the cuts demanded by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regulators are more than skin deep.

Ant has a sprawling business encompassing asset management, insurance, lending, and mobile payments. Its most famous product is Alipay, the popular online payments platform.

While regulators have stopped short of directly demanding a

breakup of Ant, deep overhauls are necessary. It may need to set up a separate holding company to house its lending and credit businesses, ensure it has sufficient capital, adhere to banking regulations, and build up its compliance and governance functions. Ant is reportedly coming up with a plan and timetable for its restructuring process, according to a recent Bloomberg report.

All of this could make Ant—whatever its final form—a far less valuable company. What valuation Ant will ultimately generate is too early to determine. But in the most severe scenarios, it could be a fraction of its pre-IPO valuation, purportedly eclipsing \$300 billion.

That staggering valuation hinged upon Ant's nimble fintech growth potential. And it had attracted billions of venture capital funding from some of the world's leading investors, including Warburg Pincus, Silver Lake, Sequoia Capital, Carlyle Group, and several sovereign wealth funds.

Today, these investors' investments in Ant look troubling. A number of foreign investors contributed more than \$10 billion into a Ma-controlled offshore subsidiary of Ant called Ant International, in a pre-IPO fundraising round in 2018, according to a recent Financial Times report.

The investors who contributed into the Ant International financing are high profile. They include U.S. private equity firms Carlyle Group and Warburg Pincus, venture capital firm Silver Lake, U.S. asset managers T. Rowe Price and BlackRock, Swiss investment bank Credit Suisse, as well as sovereign funds Temasek and GIC of Singapore, and Malaysia's state fund Khazanah Nasional Berhad.

Since the IPO was called off in

November 2020, those Ant International investors have received very little clarity on next steps, the report said, citing people close to the investors. No information regarding Ant's IPO likelihood, potential form of restructuring, or an estimated timing have been provided to these investors.

In addition, these investors appear to have very little recourse. The offshore entity the foreign investors invested in holds no voting rights nor any claim to Ant's commercial assets.

Ant Group has held three equity financing rounds, with the most recent one (Series C, raising \$14 billion) in 2018 headlined by major international investment firms including the above-mentioned Ant International financing, according to data from Crunchbase. The Series C round was raised with pre-money valuation of approximately \$136 billion.

The company's first two financing rounds (Series A and B) were seeded by domestic Chinese investment firms including Chinese Investment Corp. and the National Council for Social Security Fund. Those rounds were raised at much lower valuations. For example, the April 2016 Series B round led by China's Primavera Capital and China Investment Corp. was raised with pre-money valuation of \$55.5 billion, according to Crunchbase estimates. These earlier Chinese investors have a much smaller chance of losing money on their investments.

As for Ant, the company has provided no public update on how it plans to address Beijing's concerns. And if the Chinese Communist Party's ultimate goal is to cut Ma down to size, more government obstacles could appear in front of Ant, Alibaba, or Ma himself.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Inside China's Xinyang Prison: Abuse and Forced Labor

ALEX WU

While Chinese state media has touted Xinyang Prison as a place where inmates can take recreational classes and learn new skills, survivors describe it as the "worst" prison in Henan Province.

A former inmate who witnessed and experienced rampant abuses at the facility agrees.

The former inmate's son, a human rights activist named Xing Jian who lives in New Zealand but is originally from Henan, is sharing the story of his father Xing Wangli's incarceration.

"My father looked like an old man when he got out of prison. It was hell," Xing Jian told The Epoch Times.

Xing's father is a petitioner—a citizen who appeals to authorities to address their grievances. In February 2018, he was sentenced to two years and three months for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," a vague charge often used to detain dissidents in China. Petitioners who travel to Beijing are usually arrested and detained by authorities.

He spent more than a year in Xinyang Prison before being released on May 26. China's prison economy has been providing forced labor for the regime for decades, pressing inmates to work 13 hours a day, seven days a week, and without a day off.

Xing says inmates at Xinyang Prison must do heavy labor. Those who fail to meet their quota are beaten with a leather implement by the prison guards while being pinned down by other inmates. When the local legal agency arrives for an inspection, the prison puts on a show, lying to the inspectors that the prisoners only work for eight hours.

Inmates are pressured to keep silent about the abuses or suffer more punishment. Xing Jian learned that while his father was serving his sentence, he saw many prisoners beaten and severely injured. One inmate ended up losing his eyesight, and another suffered a broken arm.

One inmate named Sun Yiliang, a petitioner who was serving a long sentence,

often was beaten, and told Xing Wangli that he wanted to die because of the abuse. Xing Wangli wrote to the warden on Sun's behalf, pleading for help. The prison responded by threatening Sun.

Xing Jian said that his father also asked him to let the outside world know about Sun's situation.

Another petitioner, named Ding Jun, also was beaten and tortured frequently.

Xing Wangli suffered a serious injury after being beaten by police. In 2016, while serving time at the Xixian Detention Center in Xi county, Shanxi Province, he was beaten with a blunt instrument, which left him with a fractured skull—he was in a coma for more than 20 days, but was then forced to do labor despite his injury.

While Xing Wangli was in prison, he was blocked from contact with his family or the outside world. On one occasion,

Inmates are forced to work 13 hours a day, seven days a week, and without taking a day off.

he was allowed to send a message to his family via a fellow inmate, who was about to be released from prison and was from Xing's hometown. Before Xing was released in May, a guard nicknamed Wu slapped him, then told him to stand in the lobby for a long time, and allowed him only one steamed bun to eat for the whole day.

Henan police also broke into Xing Wangli's home and took more than 30,000 yuan (\$4,400) in cash, a desktop computer, a laptop, and two digital cameras; the items weren't returned after his release from prison.

Xing Jian believes that his father isn't guilty of any crimes despite being sentenced three times. They have filed complaints to fight the charges but haven't received a response from authorities.

Li Xi'an contributed to this report.

The Xinyang Prison in Henan Province, China.



COURTESY OF XING JIAN

SURVEILLANCE

Leaked Documents Show How Chinese Regime Monitors Dissidents With Facial Recognition Tech

FRANK YUE

In mainland China, facial recognition-enhanced surveillance cameras and other equipment are ubiquitous in cities and towns. The technology is installed inside stores, cafeterias, and banks for making payments or to access office buildings and airports.

Internal Chinese government documents has revealed more details about authorities' plans to monitor citizens on a large scale—including dissidents.

The Epoch Times obtained documents issued by the "work leadership group for public security video monitoring construction and networking" in Liuhe district, Nanjing city, Jiangsu Province.

In 2017, the government of Nanjing city implemented facial recognition technology to initiate three "defenses," meaning high-resolution surveillance cameras would be installed near province- and city-level highways; district-level roads; and core governmental zones, transportation hubs, hospitals, squares, and communities.

Pedestrians should be videotaped every 10, 20, and 30 minutes, according to the document.

In its implementation plan, the claim of "public security technology and protection management" is actually meant to slate out a nation-wide monitoring system for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

In July 2020, the police in Wuhai city, Inner Mongolia, released a summary report of "achievements" they made in the local Sharp Eyes project—a surveillance program targeted at rural areas covering

counties, towns, and villages.

The initiative was first conceived in 2008 in a Chinese Communist Party document on plans to "revive the countryside."

As with the 20 million "Skynet" cameras that are already in place throughout China's urban areas, the "Sharp Eyes Project" is pegged as a public safety measure to help fight crime more effectively.

According to the report, the project suc-

As with the 20 million 'Skynet' cameras that are already in place throughout China's urban areas, the 'Sharp Eyes Project' is pegged as a public safety measure to help fight crime more effectively.

cessfully recognized 1,158 photos of various local "key targets." The system identified more than 60 targets for its local "Domestic Security" and more than 10 people accused of crimes. China's Domestic Security Bureau offices make up a secret police force tasked with neutralizing individuals that the Communist Party deems to be political threats.

Such "key targets" are typically dissidents, such as petitioners who seek to address their complaints to authorities, religious minorities, and rights activists.

In a Jan. 14, 2019 report by Bitter Winter, a magazine on religious liberty and human rights in China, locals in Xi'an city, Shaanxi Province said: "The CCP is already monitoring us in our homes, what privacy do we have left? It's like we've all got ropes around our necks and are being led on leashes. We're all living under a microscope, and it's terrifying."



KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES

A display for facial recognition and artificial intelligence is seen on monitors at Huawei's Bantian campus in Shenzhen, China, on April 26, 2019.



The logo of Ant Group at its headquarters in Hangzhou city, Zhejiang Province, China, on Oct. 29, 2020.

ALY SONG/REUTERS

OPINION

Hongkongers' Battleground Under the Draconian National Security Law

Beijing is emboldened to arrest Hong Kong activists

NGAN SHUNKAU

Hong Kong authorities arrested 53 pro-democracy figures earlier this month, on the grounds that they responded to democracy activist Benny Tai Yiu-tung's call to challenge the government. The Chinese regime felt emboldened to enforce the national security law in making the arrests, and to use this incident as a warning to those who dare to challenge its authority.

Benny Tai, a former Hong Kong University law professor, is known for his role in initiating the Occupy Central with Love and Peace, a non-violent civil disobedience campaign that called on the Hong Kong government to implement full democracy in 2014, which turned into the massive pro-democracy protests. The goal of the campaign was to achieve universal suffrage in Hong Kong, according to an article that Tai wrote, titled "Civil Disobedience's Deadliest Weapon," published in the Hong Kong Economic Journal on Jan. 16, 2013. The article stated that Occupy Central is the most powerful weapon to push the government to negotiate with the protesters peacefully.

In July 2020, Chinese authorities accused Tai of helping to organize an unofficial primary vote for the opposition pro-democracy camp to select candidates for elections for the city's legislature. Beijing said at the time Tai's goal was "to seize the ruling power of Hong Kong and... carry out a Hong Kong version of 'color revolution.'" On Jan. 6 this year, the 53 activists were

Xi has to punish the Hong Kong protesters heavily in order to show that he rules with an iron fist. It would serve as a warning to Hongkongers and the mainland Chinese.

(Below) Pro-democracy activist Benny Tai (C) talks to reporters outside the High court, after being released on bail, in Hong Kong on Aug. 15, 2019.

(Bottom R) Hong Kong's Legislative Council convenes for a session with many empty seats (top) that are supposed to be occupied by pro-democracy lawmakers in Hong Kong on Nov. 12, 2020.

arrested on suspicion of committing crimes under the national security law, for their roles in the primary election held by the pan-democracy camp in July that Tai was accused of helping to organize.

The national security law, which went into effect on June 30 after ceremonial votes by China's rubber-stamp legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC), penalizes vaguely defined crimes such as subversion and secession with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Chinese officials claimed the law would target a small segment of society, but the offenses' broad and vague definitions—as well as a part that stipulates that non-Hong Kong residents could also be subject to prosecution—have stoked concern among legal experts and human rights observers, who say that residents and foreigners alike who draw the regime's ire could be at its mercy once they set foot on Hong Kong soil.

Such laws "should never be used to criminalize conduct and expression that is protected under international human rights law," the U.N. human rights office said in a July 3 statement, expressing alarm at the potential "discriminatory or arbitrary interpretation and enforcement."

Concerns have been raised that the law breaches Hong Kong's Basic Law, which guarantees that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights can remain in force in the territory.

Under the Sino-British Joint Declaration, which set the terms of Hong Kong's transfer to Chinese rule in 1997, the regime agreed

to grant the city autonomy and freedoms not enjoyed in the mainland, under the formula of "one country, two systems."

The "discriminatory or arbitrary interpretation and enforcement" of the security law was displayed when Steve Li Kwai-wah, the senior superintendent of the Hong Kong police's national security unit, compared the recent arrests (of the 53 activists) to driving (a vehicle) and committing a robbery. He said that driving, in and of itself, is fine; but if the purpose or the intent is to commit a robbery, then driving would be a crime. However, a problem arises with this line of reasoning—a person who is driving somewhere could be accused of planning to commit theft, even without concrete evidence. If the person was only thinking about committing the robbery but did not go through with it, then what crime did he commit? Li's logic just doesn't make sense.

Li was one of the four officials who were sanctioned by the United States on Nov. 9 for their roles in implementing Hong Kong's new national security law.

What crime did these pro-democracy activists commit? They didn't even get the chance to respond to Benny Tai's call in establishing democracy in the city, which would challenge Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam, the puppet of the Chinese regime.

The primary elections, organized by local political association Power for Democracy on July 11 and July 12, 2020, aimed to select the most promising pro-democracy candidates to run for legislative office. The pan-democracy camp was hoping to win a



majority or more than 35 seats in the Legislative Council (LegCo).

The pro-democracy figures were arrested based on accusations that they violated the national security law. Six of them were placed in custody under suspicion of organizing and planning criminal activities to subvert state power, while the other 47 were arrested for involvement in such activities, the Hong Kong police said. Both are punishable offenses under the security law which penalizes vaguely-defined crimes such as subversion and secession.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) implemented this large-scale arrest in Hong Kong at this time because it was emboldened by two events: the United States is in the process of a presidential transition, and the EU and China agreed in principle on a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment at the end of December.

Although U.S. President-elect Joe Biden's pick for Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, criticized the arrests, I think his remarks weren't strong enough in calling out Beijing's actions. Other U.S. lawmakers and Japanese politicians condemned the arrests, but I think their statements were quite weak. The EU member states also turned a blind eye to China's human rights abuses when they signed the new business investment deal. However, Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong who always cared about the city, urged the EU to reject the agreement.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping is under the spotlight as China's image is being tar-

Protesters chant slogans during a rally against Beijing's new national security law in Hong Kong on July 1, 2020.

nished. The diplomatic relations between China and the United States has deteriorated since the trade war began in 2018. Washington has imposed a series of sanctions against Beijing and Chinese officials. The international community wants to hold Beijing accountable for the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Hongkongers continue to fight against the CCP's encroachment of their city's autonomy and freedoms—the Chinese regime regards this as an act of defiance and won't tolerate it.

Chinese officials claimed the law would target a small segment of society, but the offenses' broad and vague definitions—as well as a part that stipulates that non-Hong Kong residents could also be subject to prosecution—have stoked concern among legal experts and human rights observers.

Xi has to punish the Hong Kong protesters heavily in order to show that he rules with an iron fist. It would serve as a warning to Hongkongers and the mainland Chinese. The recent arrests of the 53 pro-democracy activists served these goals.

Xi also realized that the United States and EU countries are limited in their capacity to punish Beijing because they have their

own domestic issues to deal with. He probably believes that they may not be willing to pay a greater price on the Hong Kong issue, and they most likely will just pay lip service—this wouldn't impact his authority.

I have to admit that Hong Kong does not have such an irreplaceable strategic position for the United States and Europe. Although the United States and EU have sufficient means to sanction the CCP, they will have to pay the price themselves. The question is whether or not the Western politicians are willing to do so in order to maintain universal values and to put a stop to the CCP's hegemonic ambitions.

The people of Hong Kong still have to be self-reliant and never give up. Xi's suppression of Hong Kong is to challenge the bottom line of U.S. and European politicians, and to see how much they can tolerate. But this move could provoke Western countries as they would see it as a violation of universal values.

The CCP has planted the seed of indignation in the Hong Kong people and the righteous people of the world. Sooner or later, the CCP will reap the consequences.

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



VIRUS ORIGINS

Wuhan Virology Lab Scientists Had CCP Virus-Like Illness in Autumn 2019, US Says

IVAN PENTCHOUKOV

Several researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology fell ill with symptoms similar to those caused by the CCP virus in the autumn of 2019, contradicting claims by a senior researcher from the facility who said there were no infections among the staff scientists.

The revelation is part of a fact sheet released by the U.S. State Department on Jan. 15, which slams the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for excessive secrecy around the origin of the CCP virus, commonly known as the novel coronavirus.

The Chinese Center for Disease Control reported a cluster of pneumonia-like cases of unknown origin on Dec. 21, 2019. But months later, new evidence emerged suggesting that Chinese authorities were aware of the first CCP virus case on Nov. 17. The U.S. government wasn't informed about the virus until Dec. 30 of that year from Taiwan.

The State Department claims that the WIV was conducting research on viruses similar to the CCP virus as early as 2016. The regime has been secretive about the research and the State Department is demanding transparency.

Little is known about the first patients who caught the virus; the CCP hasn't eliminated a connection to the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), which isn't far from the seafood market that initially was thought to be the origin of the outbreak.

"The U.S. government has reason to believe that several researchers inside the WIV became sick in autumn 2019, before the first identified case of the outbreak, with symptoms consistent with both COVID-19 and common seasonal illnesses," the State Department fact sheet reads. "This raises questions about the credibility of WIV senior researcher Shi Zhengli's public claim that there was 'zero infection' among the WIV's staff and students of SARS-CoV-2 or SARS-related viruses."

The State Department pointed out that accidental viral outbreaks aren't new in China, including the 2004 SARS outbreak in Beijing which originated in a lab. The department added that any meaningful investigation of the origins of the out-

break must include interviews with the researchers in the Wuhan lab who fell ill in the fall of 2019.

"The CCP has prevented independent journalists, investigators, and global health authorities from interviewing researchers at the WIV, including those who were ill in the fall of 2019. Any credible inquiry into the origin of the virus must include interviews with these researchers and a full accounting of their previously unreported illness," the department said.

The State Department claims that the WIV was conducting research on viruses similar to the CCP virus as early as 2016. The regime has been secretive about the research and the State Department is demanding transparency.

"WHO investigators must have access to the records of the WIV's work on bat and other coronaviruses before the COVID-19 outbreak. As part of a thorough inquiry, they must have a full accounting of why

the WIV altered and then removed online records of its work with RaTG13 and other viruses," the department said.

The WIV, while claiming to be a civil institution, has worked on secret projects with the Chinese military, including classified animal experiments since at least early 2017, the United States has learned.

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"The United States and other donors who funded or collaborated on civilian research at the WIV have a right and obligation to determine whether any of our research funding was diverted to secret Chinese military projects at the WIV," the department said.

The Chinese communist regime took more than two months to alert about the outbreak of the CCP virus. The regime knew about human-to-human transmission in late 2019 but didn't inform the world until Jan. 20, 2020.



An aerial view of the P4 laboratory (L) on the campus of the Wuhan Institute of Virology in Hubei Province on May 27, 2020.

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