

Congressional Testimony

House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between
the United States and the Chinese Communist Party

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gallagher, Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi, and distinguished members of the Select Committee:

If any of the Xi Jinping quotations I just displayed in that three-minute film surprised you, you are far from alone.

That's because China's supreme leader and the Party he commands are masters at disguising their true intentions. They are masters at presenting an illusory image to the outside world while speaking, planning and acting in very different ways behind closed doors. Those quotations you saw, some of them from once-secret speeches and internal textbooks, are but a few reflections of what Chinese Communist Party (CCP) *really* thinks. The success the CCP has enjoyed presenting itself as constructive, cooperative, responsible, normal, is one of the great magic tricks of the modern era. Chairman Xi might actually agree on that point: He refers to the Party's propaganda and influence activities as a "magic weapon" for advancing his regime's interests. You could say the CCP is the Harry Houdini of Marxist-Leninist regimes; the David Copperfield of Communism; the Chris Angel of autocracy.

Dual messaging—that is, deceptive external propaganda for foreign ears twinned with authoritative internal-facing guidance for CCP members—comes naturally to the CCP. Here are just a few recent examples:

- On Friday, Chinese leaders outwardly urged "peace talks" to resolve Russia's war in Ukraine.¹ At the same time, however, Beijing was conniving internally to provide Moscow with lethal arms² that would prolong the most destructive European conflict since World War II. Publicly, Beijing feigns neutrality with calls for "respecting the sovereignty of all countries." Behind closed doors, it has described Russia's invasion of Ukraine as "a counterattack" and "the only action that could be taken."³
- In December, Beijing announced "boosting domestic demand" and "confidence" as the top economic priority for 2023, which drove a stock market rally. Beijing dispatched emissaries to Davos to reassure international business leaders that the "rectification" campaigns that have obliterated many private businesses across China over the past couple of years are mostly over. Internally, however, Xi Jinping simultaneously issued an authoritative set of "side notes" that weren't translated into English, and which call for *deepening* the Party-state's control over Chinese companies. "[I]t is necessary to strengthen the Party's overall leadership over economic work and adhere to the guidance of Xi Jinping's economic thought," the document intoned.
- At the 20th Party Congress in October, as Xi awarded himself a second decade as China's most powerful dictator since Mao Zedong, external-facing propaganda made comforting references to "Reform and Opening." Internally, however, Xi was revising the Communist Party Charter to emphasize the Marxist-Leninist concept of "struggle"—that process of identifying, isolating, and mobilizing against the Party's domestic and foreign adversaries.

Beijing's doublethink⁴ is ubiquitous once you learn how to spot it. Concentration camps holding more than a million ethnic Uyghurs and other minorities are called "vocational training schools." Beijing's

¹ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230224_11030713.html

² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-considers-release-of-intelligence-on-chinas-potential-arms-transfer-to-russia-8e353933>

³ <https://www.fdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/fdd-memo-no-limits-xi-and-putin-china-russia.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nineteen-Eighty-four>

dismantling of the rule of law in Hong Kong and the jailing of local journalists is passed off as “one country, two systems.” The use of covert operations to interfere in foreign elections⁵ is hidden behind slogans advocating “a community of common destiny for mankind.” Special units of China’s premier spy agency which infiltrate and influence U.S. scholarly and policymaking circles are called “think tanks” and “civil-society organizations.”⁶

Even a great magician would agree, however, that sleight of hand works best when the audience indulges a willingness to suspend disbelief. For too long, too many of us in the United States have done just that: We’ve indulged the wishful view that if we open our markets wider to China, transfer more of our technology, invest greater sums of money, and train more Chinese technocrats, government scientists, and military officers, we might finally persuade China’s leaders to see the world how we do. A policy of engagement, we told ourselves, would result sooner or later in the liberalization of China’s economy, society, and perhaps even its politics.

Given our remarkable, peaceful triumph over the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War three decades ago, it was once reasonable for us to believe Communism wouldn’t last all that much longer in China either. But Chinese leaders, we now know, have shown tremendous determination to avoid the fate of the Soviet Union, less by emulating democracies these days than by exploiting, outmaneuvering, and undermining them.

There’s no longer any excuse for being fooled about Beijing’s intentions. The canon of Chairman Xi’s publicly available statements is too voluminous, and the accumulated actions of his regime too brazen, to be misunderstood at this late hour. The proverbial fig leaf has blown away, exposing the regime and its deep hostility toward the democratic West and the liberal international order. What follows is a brief tour of the worldview of China’s supreme leader,⁷ followed by a few principles the United States and other democracies should adhere to in order to protect one another and counteract Chairman Xi’s autocratic vision.

“...CAPITALISM WILL INEVITABLY PERISH....”

Beijing’s rhetoric, particularly when it is directed at foreign audiences, is admittedly often confusing and ambiguous. But Chinese leaders’ most revealing statements are not the ones they make at Davos or the United Nations, but when they speak to their fellow CCP leaders. Chairman Xi’s internal speeches, which serve as guidance to the Party faithful, are sometimes kept secret for months or years before appearing in Chinese-language publications.

One key to understanding Xi is to look at his interpretations of history. It is well known that Vladimir Putin once declared the Soviet Union’s collapse to be the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century. Less widely understood is the extent to which the Soviet collapse also haunts Xi and how it functions as a fundamental guide to his actions.

In December 2012, just after becoming general secretary, Xi gave a closed-door speech to cadres in Guangdong Province, excerpts of which were leaked and published by a Chinese journalist in early 2013. Xi’s speech, framed as a cautionary tale, provided an early window into his worldview:

⁵ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-csis-found-specific-chinese-interference-in-canadas-election-what/>

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fjp3eXwiTes>

⁷ My gratitude to Matthew Johnson of the Hoover Institution and David Feith of the Center for a New American Security for some of the insights contained here and in our co-authored essay in December 2022 in *Foreign Affairs*: “Xi Jinping In His Own Words.” <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/xi-jinping-his-own-words>

Why did the Soviet Union disintegrate? Why did the Soviet Communist Party collapse? An important reason was that their ideals and beliefs had been shaken. . . . It's a profound lesson for us! To dismiss the history of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Communist Party, to dismiss Lenin and Stalin, and to dismiss everything else is to engage in historic nihilism, and it confuses our thoughts and undermines the Party's organizations on all levels.

Xi's mention of "historic nihilism" may have been an implicit criticism of the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, who had faulted the record of his predecessors. But the explicit villain in Xi's speech was Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader whose perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (opening) reforms set the stage for the dissolution of the Soviet Union. "A few people tried to save the Soviet Union," Xi said. "They seized Gorbachev, but within days it was turned around again, because they didn't have the tools of dictatorship. Nobody was man enough to stand up and resist."

The phrase "the tools of dictatorship"—the idea that it is essential for the party and especially its top leader to control the military, the security apparatus, propaganda, government data, ideology, and the economy—would recur again and again in Xi's speeches and official guidance over the next decade.

A month later, in January 2013, Xi gave another speech, effectively an inaugural address, to new members and alternate members of the CCP's Central Committee, which is composed of China's top few hundred highest-ranking officials. This speech, kept secret for six years, shows Xi directing the party-state in terms borrowed right from the Cold War:

Some people think that communism can be aspired to but never reached, or even think that it cannot be hoped for, cannot be envisioned, and is a complete illusion. . . . Facts have repeatedly told us that Marx and Engels's analysis of the basic contradiction of capitalist society is not outdated, nor is the historical materialist view that capitalism will inevitably perish and socialism will inevitably triumph outdated. This is the irreversible overall trend of social and historical development, but the road is winding. The ultimate demise of capitalism, and ultimate triumph of socialism, will inevitably be a long historical process.

Three months after that, in April 2013, the Central Committee issued Document No. 9, an internal directive to party cadres that has proved to be a foundational text of the Xi era—systematic and strategic in its vision, hugely influential on the course of Chinese governance, and deeply hostile toward the West and Western ideas. Kept secret until it was leaked to overseas Chinese-language media in the summer of 2013, Document No. 9 was formally titled "Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere." It told an unambiguous story: Western countries conspire to infiltrate, subvert, and overthrow the CCP, so the party must stamp out Western "false ideological trends," including constitutional democracy, the notion that Western values are universal, the concept of civil society, economic neoliberalism, journalistic independence, challenges to the party's version of history, and competing interpretations of the party's "reform and opening" agenda. "In the face of these threats," exhorted Document No. 9, "we must not let down our guard or decrease our vigilance."

Document No. 9 also warned of "color revolution." This term originated in the first decade of this century, when a series of antiauthoritarian popular uprisings in former Soviet states became known by colorful names, including Georgia's Rose Revolution (2003), Ukraine's Orange Revolution (2004), and Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution (2005). Beijing began using the phrase to evoke the ever-present specter of Western-instigated subversion. As Document No. 9 put it, "Western anti-China forces" will always "point the spearhead of Westernization, division, and 'color revolution' at our country."

BENEFITTING FROM EUROPEAN CHAOS

Xi, who often quotes Mao Zedong and paraphrases the ideas of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, believes that we are today witnessing a “qualitative leap” in world affairs, where China has moved to center stage and the U.S.-anchored Western order is breaking down. As Xi said in a speech published in April 2021:

The world today is undergoing a great change in situation unseen in a century. Since the most recent period, the most important characteristic of the world is, in a word, “chaos,” and this trend appears likely to continue.

This theme, and its zero-sum implication that China stands to gain from American and European misfortune, recurs in internal-facing textbooks and official study guides to Xi Jinping Thought. It also helps put into context Beijing’s firm support for Vladimir Putin and his military ambitions in Europe. As one textbook for senior military officers put it in 2018:

At present, the world is undergoing profound unprecedented changes. The heart of the matter is that the United States is in decline, China is growing stronger, Russia is hardening, and Europe is in chaos.⁸

Xi depicts the current historical period as one of great risk and opportunity. It is his “historical mission” to exploit the inflection point and push history along its inexorable course through a process of “struggle.” Xi expanded on these ideas in an impassioned address to the Sixth Plenum meeting of Communist Party leaders in November 2021, lauding Mao’s 1950 decision to send “volunteers” across the Yalu River into Korea to fight the U.S. and UN forces commanded by U.S. General Douglas MacArthur.

Comrade Mao Zedong, with the . . . strategic foresight of “by starting with one punch, one hundred punches will be avoided,” and the determination and bravery of “do not hesitate to ruin the country internally in order to build it anew,” made the historical policy decision to resist America and aid Korea and protect the nation, avoid the dangerous situation of invaders camping at the gates, and defend the security of New China.

Xi’s speech made an equally strong endorsement of the CCP’s “decisive measures” to violently end the student protests at Tiananmen Square in 1989 and withstand “the pressure of Western countries’ so-called sanctions” that followed. This saved the party, in Xi’s telling, and today “the CCP, the People’s Republic of China, and the Chinese nation have the most reason to be self-confident” of any “political party, country, or nation” in the world.

Like many of Xi’s most aggressive and important statements, his Sixth Plenum speech was initially kept secret. It was delivered behind closed doors and published in *Qiushi* magazine nearly two months later. The CCP does not appear to have published an official English translation of it, and the speech was all but ignored by Western news outlets.

But just over a year later, its implications have become clear: regardless of near-term economic considerations for China, Xi is being guided by ideology and his firmly held diagnosis that the West is

⁸ 当前，世界进入前所未有的大变局·大变局的核心就是美国在变衰·中国在变强·俄罗斯在变硬·欧洲在变乱·

Source: Ren Tianyou and Zhao Zhouxian (eds), *Strategic Support for Achieving the Great Chinese Rejuvenation* [实现中华民族伟大复兴的战略支撑] (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2018), p. 217.

declining and that Beijing, led forcefully by Xi himself, must take risks and act decisively to assert new spheres of influence and build a world conducive to Marxist autocracy.

MARXIST MEANS AND ENDS

Xi Jinping Thought makes clear that Marxism is not just the means to achieving global supremacy but also the goal of that supremacy. “Marxism is not to be kept hidden in books. It was created in order to change the destiny of human history,” Xi said in 2018 while presiding over Marx’s 200th birthday celebration in Beijing—an event surrounded by weeks of propaganda and publications timed to establish Xi as the designated heir to Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao.

This phrasing evoked a major foreign policy initiative that Xi has embraced called “A Community of Common Destiny for Mankind,” which aims to shape the global environment in ways favorable to Beijing’s authoritarian model. (The ominous-sounding term “common destiny” is often misleadingly translated by the CCP into the more anodyne English phrase “shared future.”) Xi’s 2018 speech made clear that the initiative and Marx’s vision of a stateless, collectivized world are linked.

“Just like Marx, we must struggle for communism our entire lives,” Xi said. “A collectivized world is just there, over [the horizon]. Whoever rejects that world will be rejected by the world.”

Passages from internal textbooks on Xi Jinping Thought, cited in Ian Easton’s 2022 book, *The Final Struggle: Inside China’s Global Strategy*, underscore the idea that overturning U.S. leadership around the globe is only one phase of Xi’s plan. Xi also seeks to upend the concept of equal and sovereign states that emerged from Europe four centuries ago and is the cornerstone of international relations, according to the texts. As one of them, *Strategic Support for Achieving the Great Chinese Rejuvenation*, explains:

The Westphalian System was founded on the notion of a balance of power. But it has proven unable to achieve a stable world order. All mankind needs a new order that surpasses and supplants the balance of power. Today, the age in which a few strong Western powers could work together to decide world affairs is already gone and will not come back. A new world order is now under construction that will surpass and supplant the Westphalian System.

This and the other textbooks leave little doubt that the system that replaces the 1648 Treaties of Westphalia must be the socialist and autocratic model made in China. “As we push for the fusion of the world’s civilizations on the basis of developing our nation’s unique civilization, there are several things that must be done,” reads one passage. “[We] must insist on taking the road of development with Chinese cultural characteristics. . . . And we must insist on our principles and our bottom line as we actively engage with others.”

Another quotes Xi’s starkly zero-sum thinking directly: “Xi Jinping has emphasized that our state’s ideology and social system are fundamentally incompatible with the West. Xi has said ‘This determines that our struggle and contest with Western countries is irreconcilable, so it will inevitably be long, complicated, and sometimes even very sharp.’”

CONSTRAINING XI’S BIG AMBITIONS

Granted, Beijing’s aspirations, like Moscow’s, may be greater than what it can realistically accomplish. But Xi, like the man he has described as his “best, most intimate friend,” Russian President Vladimir Putin, does not seem to believe that his reach exceeds his grasp. Here are a few principles I believe are

worth bearing in mind as your committee goes about its essential and bipartisan work of protecting our democracy and our sovereignty.

- Protect the rights of Chinese Americans. Protect, also, Chinese nationals studying and working in the United States so they can enjoy the freedoms that so starkly distinguish the American way of life from the increasingly oppressive atmosphere in China today. This means standing up against bigotry and discrimination here at home. It also means standing up against the Chinese Communist Party's activities inside our borders to censor, intimidate, and coerce people—particularly people of Chinese descent. It does this through coordinated attacks over social media, through threats to people's relatives back in China, and through members of the security apparatus sent to people's doors here in America. Beijing reportedly even has extraterritorial police stations on U.S. soil. We should always distinguish between the CCP on the one hand, and China and the Chinese people on the other.
- Keep high-level channels open with Beijing. This is to help prevent Xi from making grave miscalculations—an occupational hazard for long-serving dictators, as his friend Putin reminds us. But let's not kid ourselves that Beijing is interested in pursuing cooperation with us for the greater global good. When I was in office, I made good-faith efforts to start a cooperative dialogue with Beijing on pandemic prevention back in 2018. Beijing wouldn't even share flu samples with the World Health Organization as member states are obliged to do. I got the impression that Beijing viewed our desire for cooperation as a point of leverage for Beijing to extract concessions from Washington having nothing to do with public health. This is the way that Leninist regimes think. Whether it is protecting our oceans from pollution or our climate from hotter temperatures, or stopping flows of fentanyl and laundered money, or mitigating against natural pandemics or catastrophic accidents in laboratories, we will usually find that the CCP, far from helping, is often a leading cause of these problems.
- To impose steep costs on Beijing's actions that harm us and our allies isn't provocative—it is *stabilizing*. Some policy pundits tend to see the CCP as a romantic partner who has been wronged, and who needs to be soothed and reassured and treated to “trust-building” measures as a way of stabilizing the relationship. This is inaccurate. The CCP should be thought of as a hungry shark that will keep eating until its nose bumps into a metal barrier. Sharks aren't responsive to mood music. But nor do they take it personally when they see divers building a shark cage. For them it's just business. It's what they do. The more resolutely and unapologetically we take steps to defend our national security, the more that boundaries will be respected and the more stable the balance of power is likely to be. One of the paradoxes of Marxist-Leninist dictatorships is that the more comfortable they are, the more aggressive they become. Gratuitous efforts to reassure Beijing are sure to be taken as signs of weakness. It does us little good to repeat again and again that we aren't seeking a new Cold War when the CCP has been stealthily waging one against us for years.
- It would be better to constrain and temper Xi's ambitions now—through robust, coordinated military deterrence (including an urgent expansion of our defense industrial capacity) and through strict limits on China's access to technology, capital, and data controlled by the United States and its allies. That's better than waiting until he has taken fateful and irrevocable steps, such as attacking Taiwan, that would lead to a superpower conflict. The war in Ukraine offers constant reminders that deterrence is far preferable to “rollback.”
- A policy of “constraint” could be helpful in this regard. Unlike containment, constraint accounts for the current realities of economic interdependence and seeks to tilt them to

Washington's advantage. Constraint should seek to puncture Beijing's confidence that it can achieve its aims through war. It should also sap Beijing's optimism that it can decisively accumulate coercive economic leverage over the United States and other democracies. The Biden Administration's October 7 export controls on semiconductor-making equipment are useful steps in this direction. Beijing currently must import hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of chips annually—a dependence that Washington should work to sustain. The most important elements of the new rules are limits on the export of chip-making equipment and U.S. skilled labor to China. If enforced diligently, the rules will foil Xi's ambition to make China the world's largest chipmaker and erode his goal of commanding high-tech supply chains. To put it in 20th Century terms, our goal shouldn't be to cut off Beijing's access to oil, but to foil Beijing's goal of becoming OPEC.

- The “main battleground,” to borrow Xi's term, where the United States and other free nations should be winning, but are in fact losing, is in information warfare. Beijing employs many varieties of information warfare, from “united front” activities, to “cognitive warfare,” to “deep fakes.” I hope this committee commissions a glossary defining these forms of warfare. Xi has invested billions of dollars into these techniques to enhance what he calls China's “discourse power”—the power to shape perceptions and narratives worldwide to whitewash China's record and to disintegrate free people's faith in their fellow citizens and in democracy itself. We need to go on the offense and the defense simultaneously. Right now we are doing neither. Free societies need not employ disinformation. We need only keep Beijing's platforms from manipulating our discourse at home, while we make it easier for Chinese citizens to communicate safely with one another and with the outside world.

Thank you for inviting me to testify today.