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The PRC's New Strategic Narrative as Political Warfare: Causes and Implications for the United States

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Executive Summary

This concise analysis explains the changes in China's strategic narrative under the Xi Jinping regime from the "China Dream" to the "Common Destiny of Mankind" (CDM).

The new CDM strategic narrative is caused by the People's Republic of China (PRC) leadership's need to project an inspiring and benign vision for international politics to international audiences and to gain support for the PRC's strategic objectives, while simultaneously masking the PRC's hegemonic ambitions. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) maintains the "China Dream" (a prosperous, stable CCP-controlled China, dominating the world) as its strategic loadstar for domestic audiences. For both audiences, it now advances a common destiny for all states and peoples: the "Common Destiny of Mankind" strategic narrative. This is a momentous development in the PRC's political warfare against the United States. For the first time, the PRC is advancing a global narrative to combat the U.S. globally, including in the West. The PRC has executed this change for five reasons.

First, the CDM strategic narrative allows China to "reset the clock," and start a new dialogue with all audiences in international politics unfettered by the ideologies of the West. No longer will China be focused solely on concerns of economic growth, Maoism, or avenging the national humiliations of China's "Dark Age" since the First Opium War's conclusion in 1842. CDM marks the end of China's strategic "tone deafness": the expectation that the world will recognize – of its own accord – the greatness of China.

Second, Beijing's influence has grown because it has more power. However, its abuses in the application of that power, such as "debt-trap" agreements, have hindered its position in global politics. The strategic narratives advanced – Maoism, Dengism, or "China Dream," have

failed because they equated China's advances and interests as the sole concern of China's engagement with the rest of world. The CCP understands that now and has adapted.

Third, the CCP knows that a positive and benign global narrative is needed to advance while simultaneously concealing its grand strategic objective of domination. The CCP has grasped, first, that it must motivate and enthuse multiple audiences to dominate them effectively; and, second, that it must inspire as many international audiences as possible, not just the Chinese people or fellow authoritarian leaders. Global ambition requires a global message, and the CCP recognizes that COVID-19 has temporarily damaged it.

Fourth, this transformation in strategic narrative must be understood in the context of confrontation with the United States. Beijing consciously emulates the historical ability of the United States to project an inspiring global message. In this milieu, CDM is China's effort, first, to establish ideological superiority in this competition over the democratic message advanced by the United States; second, to unite allied and potential allied states behind the message; third, to use CDM to undermine the United States in Asia, Europe, and the Global South; fourth, to advance a narrative that is acceptable to Western policy-makers to minimize balancing and the perception of China as a threat; and fifth, for all audiences, the narrative advances the hopeful and positive message that the world has one destiny, around which all may unite, and, indeed, should now do so.

Fifth, the CDM narrative is still Han-centric enough to inspire the Han ethnic majority in China. Although the narrative is directed at international audiences it is also inevitably directly and obliquely targeted at domestic elites and the general population. The implicit content of the narrative is that it is the Han, and the CCP, who are

directing the rest of the world's population toward its "common destiny."

This study argues that the United States needs to escalate political warfare to counter China's strategic narrative, as part of the all azimuths change in U.S. and allied decision-makers conception of China from economic partner to strategic enemy. CDM is key empirical evidence that China is confronting the United States in an ideological conflict with all global audiences. Thus far, the ideological confrontation has been largely one sided. China is laboring vigorously to undermine the position of the United States and the West more broadly, while the response from the United States is still too weak. Thus, the United States must once again wage political warfare and ideological struggle. Its ideological prowess must not be rhetorical. It must be *seen*. It must be *shown*. It must be *persuasive*.

There are five measures U.S. national security decision makers should execute in response to the PRC's political warfare attack.

First, U.S. decision makers must recognize the ideological component of the threat from the PRC. U.S. and Western security are at stake in the ideological war with China. Ideology matters as much now as it did in the struggle with the Soviet Union or in World War II.

Second, the United States must draw the contrast between its ideology and China's. U.S. decisionmakers as well as other U.S. Government entities must understand and delineate the sharp contrast between the political principles and values of the United States versus those of China on a consistent basis to domestic and international audiences.

Third, the United States already has the most effective strategic narrative, the advancement of freedom and individual liberty. But it must employ it and launch it into the fight. The United States cannot match China's ability to invest but should more than match its ability to inspire.

Fourth, based on the clear ideological differences and concomitant competing visions of the futures, U.S. decisionmakers should attack the CDM strategic narrative not directly, but by positing the future envisioned by the United States. The world China will create is one where Western freedoms and liberties are eroded—and finally extinguished—in favor of the authoritarian political principles advanced by the repressive CCP. Emphasize that China is not a *status quo* great power. Rather, it is truly a revolutionary one that seeks fundamental and permanent changes to the contemporary order in international politics and thus is an existential threat to the U.S. position.

Fifth, prioritize ideological warfare by supporting an office dedicated precisely to political warfare, and require all U.S. Combatant Commands to confront the CDM narrative in conjunction with other governmental and allied partners.

Introduction and Significance

At the outset of this study, it is necessary to present four introductory points, which serve as the assumptions and bounding framework of the study.

First, China's grand strategic vision is one of primacy. The realization of this vision is intended to and will require that China supplant the United States as the dominant power in international politics. China's quest for greater resources, and expanding diplomatic, economic, and military capabilities are orientated toward achieving this grand strategic objective at the expense of the United States and the West in general. Accordingly, the United States must maintain its position as the world's dominant state. This position ensures, first, security for the United States and its global interests; second, the security of its allies; and third, it allows for the promotion of liberal democracy to ensure that freedom, open societies, and free markets are the dominant values of international politics. In sum, the United States, and only the United States, can sustain the liberal international order that has served as the foundation of stability since the end of the Cold War.

However, the world is at a pivot point. Were China to supplant the United States successfully, authoritarian government and predatory and exploitative economics would become the world's dominant form. Human rights abuses would accelerate as there would be no countervailing state with the interest and ability to prevent them. The world would look very different, perhaps for a very long time.

Indeed, the shades of this world are clear and present today. Associated with the growth of Chinese power are the territorial demands made by China in the East and South China Seas, as well as with its border with India. These demands are indications that China is not a *status quo* power, but seeks to revise the international order. Beijing's

actions are strong indications that it seeks to replace the United States as the dominant state. The CCP seeks to establish—as Chinese President Xi Jinping has implied—a China that can and should lead the world.¹

Second, China has been halting and rather imperfect in finding a strategic narrative, which is a statement or aphorism directed at multiple audiences based on ideology. They have two major ones. The first is the Sino-centric concept like the “China Dream” (or “Chinese Dream”), which is still widely used for domestic uses, as the second, the “Common Destiny of Mankind” is increasingly employed for international venues.²

Third, this analysis acknowledges that strategic rivalry between China and the United States is escalating and will continue to do so due to the change in the relative balance of power and China’s ideology and grand strategic ambitions. The signs of increased security competition are ubiquitous in the realm of ideas as well as in diplomacy, economics and trade, intelligence collection, and in power projection. In particular, the development of Chinese military and economic might has provided Beijing with the ability to exert a major influence on the development of events in international politics for the first time since the early nineteenth century.

Fourth, China’s prodigious growth in power does not mean that it is omnipotent. China has significant challenges, and growth has already slowed even before COVID-19 slowed China’s and the world’s economy. China’s growth in each of the economic, political, and

¹ Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, 2nd ed., 2 Vols. (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2018), Vol. 1, pp. 360-367.

² The phrase, the “Common Destiny of Mankind,” is often used by Chinese officials and in official statements, as are variations, including, “global community of a shared future,” or “community of common destiny.” CDM is closer to the true meaning which is why it is used in this analysis.

military realms is fraught with risks for Beijing. Inevitably, China will suffer setbacks. Major problems in the Chinese economy are myriad. There are economic bubbles in real estate and industry, endemic corruption, a lack of transparency in the banking industry, a host of environmental concerns caused by prevalent pollution, overproduction in key areas of the economy, prodigious debt held by Chinese firms, and an aging population – all of which conspire to retard China’s growth. While the growth of China’s economy will suffer reverses, the deep causes of its prosperity remain in place. The Chinese economy is not Icarus. Its descent from its dizzying highs of the last decades has not resulted in its collapse. It will continue to grow at impressive rates in the decades to come due to those deeper forces driving Chinese growth. The most important of which are its manufacturing efficiencies, the development of an internal market, and its growing influence in global politics, which permits China to penetrate local economies.

It is important to remain cognizant that China’s difficulties pale in comparison to the Herculean challenges the PRC has overcome in previous decades. No doubt, its economic growth will slow, but it will continue to expand. That wealth will siphon off into conventional and strategic military power, the expansion of its alliance relationships, technological development, and the fruits of the Military-Civil Fusion strategy. It is a false and pernicious hope to expect that an economic or strategic *deus ex machina* will spare the United States the stark and formidable task of confronting and defeating China’s drive for global domination.

This study is significant for three reasons. First, the CDM is a dramatic step away from China’s traditional Han- and China-centered (*tianxia*) narratives, or “all under heaven.” The “all under heaven” concept serves as the foundation of China’s traditional imperial ideology – the Chinese conception of how the world should be ordered

and is a key empirical indicator of China's hegemonic ambitions. CDM is a message to Han Chinese but also to all the world's audiences. Second, U.S. national security decision-makers must be cognizant of the strategic objectives of CDM as well as its effectiveness in political warfare so that they may labor to defeat the strategic narrative. Third, as the United States seeks to sustain the preservation of the U.S. position in international politics, CDM is a reminder of how comprehensive the threat from China is, and how rapidly the Chinese have learned from the U.S. experience.

The Causes of China's New Strategic Narrative: Maximize Support for China's Dominance, Minimize Resistance to It

As it has grown in power and influence, China has come to realize that the realization of its grand strategic goal of dominance is hindered by the absence of a strategic narrative for its political warfare that will allow it to advance its ambitions while minimizing balancing and other forms of resistance against it. This section addresses the causes of China's new strategic narrative, the "Common Destiny of Mankind" (人类命运共同体). It explains the historical uses of strategic narratives and the role of the "China Dream" before analyzing the five causes of the adoption of the new narrative.

Historical PRC Strategic Narratives Employed to Disguise China's Power and Ambition

The use of strategic narratives is not new and was present at the creation of the PRC in 1949. Ideology has always been essential to the CCP and its rule.³ Of all political parties the world has witnessed, the CCP is at the forefront for understanding the role ideology plays for gaining and sustaining power, for grasping the relationship between ideology and material power, for legitimizing political power, and as a front in warfare: political warfare is to be waged against the enemy as surely as kinetic measures are.

³ Documenting the importance of Communist ideology for the CCP is Chalmers A. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1937-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962); Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2019); Robert C. North, *Moscow and the Chinese Communists*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963); and Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951).

For the CCP, ideology is significant for five reasons. First, ideology provides the legitimacy of the CCP: a socialist party, ruling in the name of the workers-peasants alliance, which provides it with self-justified authority to rule over 1.4 billion people. Second, it explains why the Chinese people must support the CCP—it mobilizes the masses—and why they should sacrifice for it. Third, ideology explicates which states are allies and which are foes, and thus the ultimate reason for the struggle with other states: socialism is superior to democracy or other forms of government and has to be defended against its inevitable class enemies. Fourth, ideology is the force that unifies and provides cohesion for the Party and like-minded people around the world. As a corollary, it defines the domestic enemy, as well as the enemy abroad. Fifth, ideology is also a weapon to be used to expand the influence of the CCP as well as to challenge the legitimacy of liberal democracy and traditional imperial rule in the minds of the Chinese people, their allies, and worldwide.

The trinity of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism has long been enshrined as the official guiding ideology for the CCP, the largest and most powerful political party in the world with about 90 million members. But what is as important as the ideology is its interpretation by major leaders. After the foundational “Mao Zedong Thought,” which was added in 1945 at the Eighth Party Congress, China has witnessed a cavalcade of ideological guidelines for the CCP, the state, and the Chinese people: “Deng Xiaoping Theory,” “The Three Represents,” “The Scientific Outlook of Development,” and, most recently, “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.”

The ideological component of China's grand strategy should not be dismissed as boilerplate or philosophical musings. Beginning with Mao Zedong's “catch up with the British and surpass the Americans” (赶英超美) and advocacy of “Third World Solidarity,” with China

inherently understood to be at the forefront of the Third World movement, to Deng Xiaoping's "realization of four modernizations" (实现四个现代化), and, finally, to Xi Jinping's "China Dream" (中国梦), all should be considered ideological narratives for a consistent grand strategy of achieving Chinese hegemony in global politics, while simultaneously presenting the façade of denying and disavowing that objective.⁴

Historically, all major CCP leaders have denied that they seek hegemony or, indeed, that China should be a hegemon. "Never seeking hegemony" originated by Mao Zedong in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Mao issued one of his highest directives: "Dig deep underground holes, accumulate grain widely, and do not seek hegemony in the world (深挖洞、广积粮、不称霸)."

In using this terminology, Mao paraphrased Zhu Sheng, a great strategist in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Zhu advised Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming Dynasty, "to raise city wall high, collect more grain, but delay to the declaration of hegemony (高筑墙,广积粮,缓称王)." Zhu Sheng's fundamental point was that if Zhu Yuanzhang

⁴ For example, in September 2019, Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister and State Councilor delivered a speech at an event co-hosted by the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and the U.S.-China Business Council on the sidelines of the annual United Nations General Assembly in New York. Wang told the audience that he rejected the views of those who believe Beijing is aiming to surpass the United States as a strategic power, saying "seeking hegemony is not in our DNA." He also said China was a developing country still far behind the United States. "China has no intention to play the Game of Thrones on the world stage. For now, and for the foreseeable future, the United States is and will still be the strongest country in the world." David Brunnstrom, David Lawder, "China Says Has No Intent to Play 'Game of Thrones' but Warns on Sovereignty," *Reuters*, September 24, 2019. Available at: <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa/china-says-has-no-intent-to-play-game-of-thrones-but-warns-on-sovereignty-idUSKBN1WA04Q>>.

were enthroned too early, he would be the primary target for all warlords' opposition to the regime, and thus lose the opportunity to build an empire. It was far wiser to bide time and make the attempt when the time was propitious.

Six centuries later, Mao was in the throes of a fierce competition with the Soviets for the leadership of the Communist world, in the course of which he echoed Zhu Sheng's anti-hegemonic rhetoric. Accordingly, the real meaning of Mao's "not seeking hegemony" is to oppose the Kremlin's hegemony of the Communist world, while biding his time to make his own attempt.

Mao's principal successor, Deng Xiaoping, continued this theme with his "24-Character Strategy." In a series of talks with the CCP leaders in the wake of Tiananmen, Deng instructed them to "keep calm, handle well our own affairs, and do not stick our head out." In April 1992, when he talked with his staff about China's development issues, he first used the phrase "hide our capabilities and bide our time (韬光养晦)." Deng wanted the CCP to maintain a low profile and hide its real intentions.

Deng's talks were later synthesized into the "28-Character Strategy" to guide China's foreign relations: "Calmly observe, stabilize our own position, quietly handle affairs, hide our intentions, be good at pretending to be clumsy, never stick our head out, and achieve more" (冷静观察、稳住阵脚、沉着应付、韬光养晦、善于守拙、决不当头、有所作为).

The cause of Deng's strategic narrative was clear as China was weak and confronted a precarious situation. With the conclusion of the Cold War, and with the absence of the Soviet threat, China was vulnerable to U.S. pressure for significant reform of the CCP and pressure to democratize. Beijing needed favorable conditions for its economic development. Accordingly, a confrontational approach was not an option. Because China was not yet a

great power, it had to avoid being a target while Deng laid the foundation for a challenge to the United States.⁵ His strategic narrative contributed to the West's inability to identify China as a threat.

China's behavior post-Mao and pre-Xi can be seen as the "period of strategic opportunity." While avoiding military entanglements in the region and, especially, with the United States, China eagerly pursued—free from any serious challenger—the political and economic opportunities available to a rising power, particularly increasing its comprehensive national strength and international competitiveness.⁶

The "China Dream" Strategic Narrative

After being minimized for decades, under Xi Jinping's rule (2012-), ideology has returned to prominence. Xi clearly intends to stay in power beyond the traditional two terms since Deng's retirement, and is likely to remain in power for many years, as Mao and Deng did.⁷ Xi has moved the pendulum from oligarchic rule of the last two decades to increasingly totalitarian rule by a great leader as modelled by Mao's experience. Moreover, for a CCP leader, Xi is

⁵ These remarks were echoed by his successor, Jiang Zemin, who made the promise that China would never seek hegemony in a speech at Cambridge University in 1999. Hu Jintao, Jiang's successor, not only repeated the rhetoric of not seeking hegemony but also added "never engage in expansion," in a keynote speech at China's 2008 Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference.

⁶ Xu Jian, "Rethinking China's Period of Strategic Opportunity," *China International Studies* (March/April 2014), pp. 51-70, available at: <http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2014-05/28/content_6942258.htm>.

⁷ Nan Li, "Party Congress Reshuffle Strengthens Xi's Hold on Central Military Commission," *The China Brief*, Vol. 18, No. 3, February 26, 2018, available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/party-congress-reshuffle-strengthens-xis-hold-central-military-commission/?mc_cid=3132e01c7f&mc_eid=7bf8bdbc8d>.

extraordinarily open regarding his explanation—to both domestic and international audience—of why China should dominate.

Xi has stated that ideology decides the party's future and existence, as well as long-term stability of the country and national cohesiveness. Thus, he has challenged the Party to be indefatigable and steadfast in its ideological focus. Upon coming to power, Xi immediately tightened his grip on the Party's ideology, which is a major pillar supporting his leadership.⁸

As a fifth generation CCP leader, Xi does not enjoy the authority of Deng, not to mention Mao. Xi has no military achievements, no bureaucratic merits, or any notable achievement. To strengthen his position, Xi is drawing on Mao's playbook. The parallels Xi seeks to draw are transparent. Xi is employing every tactic of the Yan'an Rectification Movement of 1942-1944 when Mao established his dominance in the Party. Like Mao, he also launched an offensive war to defend and expand the CCP ideology.⁹ As

⁸ In early 2013, a few months after Xi became the party chief, he issued "Document 9," (the Central Committee's Ninth Report that year) in which he ordered a serious crackdown on competing ideologies. He labeled seven political "perils," which must be completely banned in China. These include the following so called "false ideological trends, positions, and activities": promoting Western constitutional democracy in order to supplant the current leadership and socialism with Chinese characteristics governance; advancing "universal values" in an attempt to weaken the theoretical foundations of the Party's leadership; encouraging civil society in an attempt to dismantle the ruling party's social foundation; promoting neoliberalism; attempting to change China's Basic Economic System; advancing the West's idea of journalism; challenging China's principle that the media and publishing system should be subject to Party discipline; supporting historical nihilism; trying to undermine the history of the CCP and of New China; and questioning "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

⁹ Estimates are that China distributed 4.6 million copies of Mao's work in 25 languages to 148 countries and regions in the world. This history is significant because Xi Jinping is following Mao's playbook in this as well. Xi's two volume book encapsulating "Xi Jinping Thought," *The*

a consequence, in villages and factories throughout the country, as well as within the CCP and government, the Party has held numerous study sessions of turgid and stultifying “Xi Jinping Thought” to enforce unity and control of the Party.¹⁰ Xi wages a constant ideological war to ensure control of the Party.

Similarly, Xi needs to establish his authority in international politics as a leader of a superpower. China’s economic success has enabled China to accumulate sufficient wealth. In turn, China’s economic power allows it to export its ideology to the world and influence international politics.

To accomplish this, Xi has launched an ideological offensive to secure his vision within the CCP and for the state and people of China, but also to fend off western ideology.¹¹ Under Xi, the CCP has warned that Western anti-China forces and internal “dissidents” are still actively trying to infiltrate China’s ideological sphere and subvert China’s ideology and cohesion. The CCP perpetually demands that Party members strengthen their resistance to foreign ideas, renew their commitment to work “in the ideological sphere,” and have renewed vigilance regarding all ideas, institutions, and people deemed threatening to the CCP’s rule.

Governance of China, has been published in 20 million copies and distributed to 160 countries.

¹⁰ *Xinhua*, “Senior CPC Official Stresses Deeper Study of Xi Jinping Thought among Officials,” November 16, 2019, available at: <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/16c_138560537.htm>.

¹¹ Xi has explicitly targeted the West in his “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,” which are: 1) all countries are equal; 2) mutual non-aggression; 3) no interference in other countries’ internal affairs; 4) opposing hegemonism; and 5) peaceful coexistence. Xi has touted this as the cultural soft power of China, which is offered as grounding principles for China’s relations with the world, in contrast to those advocated by the West, and as a mechanism to resist the penetration of Western values into Chinese society.

Foremost in Xi's ideological assault is the "China Dream" strategic narrative. Xi's attempt to move China toward a confident and greatly elevated position can be clearly seen in Xi's statements on the "China Dream," particularly its emphasis on "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" and developing "socialism with Chinese characteristics."¹²

The core of Xi's message is the belief that the Chinese model of global governance is superior to the *status quo* established by the West, particularly the Anglo-Americans at the end of World War II and in its aftermath. Xi suggests that China is the only country that can usher in this new world order. "Rejuvenation" implies the return to a *status quo ante*, which, it is reasonable to suspect, is Chinese domination. According to Xi, this "new era" that the "China Dream" describes is characterized by "Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving the problems facing mankind."¹³

With the rise of Han-centric ethnic nationalism in China, Chinese foreign policy has become more assertive and direct in its attempt to reestablish Chinese hegemony.¹⁴ Under Xi's leadership in particular, the CCP has used "brute strength, bribery, and browbeating"¹⁵ to suppress

¹² Xi, "Achieving Rejuvenation is the Dream of the Chinese People," *The Governance of China*, Vol. 1, pp. 37-39; "A Bright Future for Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," and "The Chinese Dream is the People's Dream," *The Governance of China*, Vol. 2, pp. 3-17.

¹³ "Opening ceremony of the 19th CPC National Congress," China.org.cn, October 17, 2017, available at: <<http://live.china.org.cn/2017/10/17/opening-ceremony-of-the-19th-cpc-national-congress/>>.

¹⁴ John Friend and Bradley A. Thayer, "The Rise of Han-centrism and What It Means for International Politics," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2017), pp. 91-114.

¹⁵ Edward Wong, "A Chinese Empire Reborn," *New York Times*, January 5, 2018, available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/sunday-review/china-military-economic-power.html>>.

any challenges to its authority domestically and internationally.

Thus, Xi's "China Dream" is an important component of control. By definition, the "China Dream" sounds anodyne and harmless and, as such, it implies that the world's population should support this vision.

The reality is more significant and dangerous for U.S. interests. In his elaboration of the "China Dream," Xi often speaks of the need for "taking our own path," which implies a break with the Western world order and the U.S. position in international politics. In actuality, this is a sustained effort to restore China's past glory when it was the dominant force in East Asia. Xi has created the foundation for China's takeover of the global economic order. His approach combines new narratives ("China Dream"), policies, institutions (such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, AIIB), and massive projects (e.g., Belt and Road Initiative, BRI) with the central objective of replacing the liberal world order, with new global governance ideas, concepts, and institutions that mask China's power and hegemonic ambitions.¹⁶

Xi uses ideology as leverage to continue consolidating power. At the same time, his efforts over the past seven years to create a single, unifying ideology for the CCP or a consistent strategic narrative have failed.

Competing ideologies remain a serious potential threat to his rule. The implication that Xi still does not feel secure in his position is inescapable. As only Mao did before, Xi continuously publishes articles elaborating his ideology of "Xi Jinping Thought." The reason, according to Xi himself, is that in the years after he assumed party leadership, there is deep ideological confusion existing in the party, misunderstandings in the society, and with the

¹⁶ William A. Callahan, "China's 'Asia Dream': The Belt Road Initiative and the New Regional Order," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2016), pp. 226-243.

international community. As with Mao, the need to reach international audiences has clearly received more attention.

Thus, from the CCP's perspective there is a need to establish the strategic narrative of a "Common Destiny of Mankind." China would naturally lead the implementation of this destiny as, by definition, no other state could.

"The Common Destiny of Mankind:" The Strategic Narrative Necessary to Realize China's Hegemonic Ambitions

The message of the "China Dream" is inspiring to the Han people within China, but is feckless outside of China, despite many attempts by Xi and senior officials to explain why other states will benefit from it.¹⁷ Accordingly, there is the search for a new strategic narrative that will reach beyond Chinese (Han) audiences. The new strategic narrative is not intended to supplant the "China Dream" for domestic audiences. Rather, it is caused by the Chinese leadership's need to project an inspiring and benign vision of international politics to international audiences, as well as to gain support for China, while simultaneously masking the PRC's hegemonic ambitions.

The "Common Destiny of Mankind" was first advanced in November 2012 at the 18th CCP Congress. Since then, it has been increasingly woven into leadership speeches and documents. In his speeches to international audiences, Xi has emphasized the need to advance to a "shared future" of mankind, which is necessary to address the world's problems. One of his most important references to CDM was in his 2017 UN speech regarding the need for creating a "community of shared future for mankind and achieving inclusive and win-win development."¹⁸

¹⁷ Xi, "The China Dream Will Benefit Not Only the People of China, But Also of Other Countries," *The Governance of China*, Vol. 1, pp. 61-62.

¹⁸ Xi, *The Governance of China*, Vol. 2, p. 590.

Importantly, 2019 was the watershed year for this strategic narrative, as evinced by Gen. Wei's Shangri-La Dialogue speech, Xi's and other CCP officials' remarks at the 70th anniversary of the PRC celebration, as well as major documents, including the July 2019 defense white paper.¹⁹ Precisely what the CCP means by this strategic narrative is deliberately vague and nebulous and, thus, it is unlikely that there will ever be a definitive exegesis of its content.

The CCP has employed the CDM strategic narrative for five reasons.

First, it allows China to "reset the clock," and start a new dialogue unfettered by the ideologies of the West for a vision of the world's future. No longer will China be focused solely on concerns of economic growth, or avenging the national humiliations of China's "Dark Age" since the First Opium War's conclusion in 1842.²⁰ CDM marks the end of China's strategic "tone deafness:" the expectation that the world will recognize—of its own accord—the greatness of China.

Especially under Xi, China wants to undermine the West and influence the rest of the world. To accomplish this, the CCP needs an appealing strategic narrative, and in

¹⁹ Remarks of General Wei Fenghe, State Councilor and Minister of National Defence, China, 18th Asia Security Summit, The IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, Fourth Plenary Session, Sunday 2 June 2019. Available at: <<https://www.iiss.org/media/files/shangri-la-dialogue/speeches/plenary-4---general-wei-fenghe-minister-of-national-defence-china-transcript>>. Also see The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *China's National Defense in the New Era* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2019), pp. 12-13. Available at: <<http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0724/c90000-9600021.html>>.

²⁰ On China's "Dark Ages," and its renaissance, see Robert Sprinkle and Bradley A. Thayer, "China's Strategy in Asia Is Simple: Kick the U.S. Out," *The National Interest*, July 22, 2017. Available at: <<http://nationalinterest.org/print/feature/chinas-strategy-asia-simple-kick-america-out-21632>>.

CDM, they have one. China possesses an attractive, global narrative for the first time.

Adroitly, the strategic narrative has the virtue of not being in the present, but of the future. To achieve the future destiny, CDM implicitly requires leadership from the CCP, and that other adherents must assiduously labor under CCP guidance toward the future. Of course, as with communism, or any teleological ideology or millenarian religion, its terminus will never be achieved.

Second, CDM's role is to reduce the likelihood of balancing against China by reducing its image as a threat. The CDM strategic narrative minimizes or conceals China's role and ambition. It stresses the respect of China's totalitarian political model, casting the CCP as the defender of world peace and stability, fighting only for a more equitable international order where different political systems may coexist, and selflessly promotes a brighter economic future for the world.

As expected, Beijing's influence has grown because it has more power. However, its abuses in the application of that power, such as "debt-trap" agreements, have hindered its position in global politics. The strategic narratives advanced – Maoism, Dengism, or the "China Dream--failed because they equated China's advances and interests as the sole concern of China's engagement with the rest of world. This is the result of a traditional Middle Kingdom (*tianxia*) mentality that continues to retard its ability to advance its interests. The Chinese believe it, but the rest of world does not. In sum, the CCP understands that now.

The strategic narrative cannot prevent balancing against China, of course, as that is caused by the prodigious growth of its capabilities and its malign ideology and grand strategic ambitions. However, the CDM strategic narrative allows China some concealment to advance its interests under the guise of its altruistic leadership to forge a happy world to come.

As there is no fixed content to the objective, “the common destiny,” it may be filled and altered to any local environment and any economic, diplomatic, or security goal. In Africa, South Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, the common destiny might be understood to be economic investment and infrastructure. Its diplomatic content will be erasing the legacy of neo-colonialism suffered by many of these states, as well as by China, the Chinese will be certain to add. The thrust of the CDM here is that the Global South develops with China’s assistance, including in combating pandemics like COVID-19.

In the West, the emphasis of “the common destiny” is different. It is and likely will continue to be voiced as the continuation of “win-win” economic development and wealth creation that will witness China achieving Western levels of *per capita* GDP. CDM will also allow China to capitalize upon popular Western political concerns. First, CDM will allow China to support rhetorically the West’s environmental concerns. Naturally, the disconnect between what China will advance and China’s atrocious environmental record may be rationalized away. Second, the CDM strategic narrative will also permit the Chinese to join with the West in advancing joint measures for space exploration, medical and other scientific progress, and technological advancement. Third, CDM will permit China to advance new norms in global politics for Western audiences, including in the realm of security. As the CDM requires a break with the past, mutual security, alliances, and international institutions will be based on new norms anchored on Chinese or “Confucian” principles which are purportedly “anti-hegemonic.” A major consequence will be to permit China to undermine U.S. alliance structures and sustainment of its position in global politics. CDM’s role in this capacity is modelled on Gorbachev’s “new thinking” of 1986-1987, which was a Soviet political warfare campaign to hinder the West German government’s ability

to host intermediate range Pershing IIs and Gryphon Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs) due to the attractiveness of Gorbachev's message with the West German public.

Third, the objective of CDM is to inspire people around the world who would otherwise be indifferent or unsympathetic to China's rise and ambitions. Again, as the details of CDM are intentionally undefined, it will mean different aims and objectives to different peoples. As a consequence, CDM allows the Chinese to unite the global population in a common world effort; second, the effort is one that conveys a sense of importance and implies meaning for those engaged in this enterprise; and, third, it permits local elites a rationalization for supporting a profitable relationship with China and protecting their alliance with China from serious critique. Local elites will contend that it is only the Chinese, after all, who have launched such an important enterprise for the world. Nothing similar has come from the EU or the United States. Indeed, from both there are only dire warnings about population extinction due to adverse environmental change, or claims concerning human rights, progressive cultural norms, and the value of democracy.

Fourth, the generation of the CDM strategic narrative must be understood in the context of confrontation with the United States. Beijing consciously emulates the historical ability of the United States to project an inspiring global message. The United States has done so in its history with Jefferson's "Empire of Liberty," Wilson's effort to make the "world safe for democracy," Franklin Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms," Churchill and Truman's "Free World vs. Communism," and, at the denouement of the Cold War, the Hegelian "End of History" epoch popularized by Francis Fukuyama.

The value of these strategic narratives for the United States has been considerable, as through them, it was able

to gain support from people around the world, including during the Cold War where Western liberal democracy and freedom helped to bring about the shift in the allegiances of many in the Warsaw Pact. These strategic narratives provide a future vision for international politics that was inspiring, particularly in contrast to the alternative visions offered by the foes of the United States. CDM shows that China has learned well. CDM is China's first successful move in an ideological battle for the future—who gets to define the global future is now contested space.

In the context of this direct competition with the United States, CDM is China's effort, first, to establish ideological superiority in this competition over the democratic message advanced by the United States; second, to unite allied and potential allied states behind the message; third, to use CDM to undermine the United States in Asia, Europe, and the Global South; fourth, to advance a narrative that is acceptable to Western policy-makers to minimize balancing and the perception of China as a threat; and fifth, for Western and all other audiences, the narrative advances the hopeful and positive message that the world has one destiny, around which all may unite, and, indeed, should do so now. The process of advancing that destiny and its terminus are, of course, not defined. In reality, conceptions about a common destiny and its terminus exist to serve China's grand strategic objectives.

Fifth, the CSM strategic narrative is still Han-centric enough to inspire the Han. Although the narrative is directed at international audiences, it is also inevitably directly and obliquely targeted at domestic CCP elites and the general population. The implicit content of the CDM strategic narrative is that it is the Han, and the CCP, who are directing the rest of the world's population toward its "common destiny." In this, it augments support for the CCP and thus contributes to the stability of the regime. Moreover, it is acceptable and attractive for the Han's

tianxia worldview, which places Chinese civilization as singular and exalted – the world's sole great civilization.

With these intentions, CDM allows China to advance a popular, benign, and inspiring global narrative which is an effective instrument of political warfare. While it is difficult at this stage to measure its effectiveness, it should be expected that it will resonate with the rest of the world in a far more effective manner than any strategic narrative ever advanced by Imperial, Republican, or Communist China. CDM has the potential to be the most effective with all global audiences.²¹

The PRC is Experimenting with Other Strategic Narratives

China has struggled with strategic narratives for the international audience especially as the CCP is not yet certain what will be effective with a global audience. While the CDM is most common, there are other narratives. The PRC is advancing variations of neo-Confucianism, and “Xi Jinping Thought,” principally for domestic audiences.²² For

²¹ The Chinese examine Western media and popular culture to convey their message effectively. While Chinese official media are usually a step or two behind, but certain to follow in close echelon. The Chinese Foreign Ministry has adopted a policy of producing sharper and cruder responses from its Twitter account to criticize for Western audiences U.S. policy and President Trump himself. It would be possible to overlook or dismiss this as trivial or maudlin. But that would miss the intended effect of these efforts which is to influence international audiences exclusively through a more entertaining response, as Twitter – and much of the rest of the internet – are denied to Chinese citizens. Adam Taylor, “China’s Foreign Ministry Adopts a Trumpian Tone on Its New Twitter Account,” *The Washington Post*, December 5, 2019. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/12/05/chinas-foreign-ministry-adopts-trumpian-tone-its-new-twitter-account-with-insults-typos-all-caps-emojis/>.

²² For example, in November 2019, Senior CCP official Chen Xi stressed the importance of a deeper study and implementation of Xi Jinping

international audiences, they are experimenting with other potential strategic narratives. Notable here is the narrative of “harmonic power.”

Modelled on Joseph Nye’s concept of “soft power,” getting others to want what you want through enticement, rather than the “hard power” of traditional diplomacy, economic means, and military might, the concept of “harmonic power” is being floated in opinion pieces and Chinese media.

While the concept is a work in progress, according to its principal, public advocate, David Bartosch, a professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University, the term describes the need to “jointly” solve the problems of economic and environmental development which “unite” those confronting these challenges.²³ “Harmonic power” is the “ability to see, balance out, tune and fine-tune all the perspectives and interests to create the new economic and cultural life of humanity. By making use of harmonic power we are transforming the tension of conflicting separate interests into complementary and shared forms of interest. This means to create win-win situations.”²⁴

Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. *Xinhua*, “Senior CPC Official Stresses Deeper Study of Xi Jinping Thought Among Officials,” November 16, 2019. Available at: <http://www.xinhua.com/english/2019-11/16/c_138560537.htm>.

²³ What is advanced is a “respectful practice which fosters a global network of win-win-situations is developing.” David Bartosch, “Harmonic Power of the New Silk Roads,” *China Daily*, November 15, 2019. Available at: <<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201911/15/WS5dce5c6ea310cf3e35577b25.html>>.

²⁴ For Bartosch, “the world might learn that” harmonic power “also represents the most ancient wisdom and understanding of the Chinese people: The harmonic principles of nature, the principles of shared unity and coevolution, have to be represented in the social relations and conditions of humanity.” Bartosch, “Harmonic Power of the New Silk Roads,” *China Daily*.

“Harmonic power” is clearly intended to entice global audiences with an appealing ersatz neo-Confucian phrase, while undermining a U.S. response to the growth of Chinese power. The United States should expect that many more terms will be created, each tailored to specific global audiences to aid Beijing’s effort to undermine the position of the United States and advance its own.

Implications for United States Decision-Makers

This section explains the implications of CDM for U.S. decision makers.

First, CDM is key empirical evidence that China is confronting the United States in ideological conflict with all global audiences. There are competing visions of the future anchored in the type of polity and grand strategic objectives. This competition, in turn, is an indication that China seeks to replace the United States as the dominant state in international politics.

Second, U.S. decision makers must recognize that the ideological confrontation has been largely one sided. China is laboring vigorously to undermine the position of the United States and the West, while the response from the United States and the West has been tardy, incoherent, and ineffective.²⁵ The United States must once again wage political warfare and ideological struggle. Its ideological prowess must not be rhetorical. It must be *seen*. It must be *shown*. It must be *persuasive*.

How it will be done will be informed by successful campaigns from the past, in World Wars I and II, and the Cold War, and will take many forms: protecting freedoms;

²⁵ This has been so for two major reasons. First, the economic interest of Western business communities. An open secret of China's rise has been its ability to influence Western firms in China, trading entrée to the Chinese market for access to their technology and procedures, while using the firms' influence with their domestic governments to ensure support for China. The second reason is a historically unique case of Western threat deflation. The West, and the United States particularly, consistently and gravely underestimated the dangers and implications of how China's rise will change international politics and its ability to threaten and contest long standing U.S. interests. U.S. strategists should expect that Clio will not be kind in her verdict. The ignorance of the China threat was the greatest U.S. grand strategic blunder since the Cold War, and likely the most significant in U.S. history.

honoring alliances; reminding states of the value of U.S. power and the international order it created. China, the Middle Kingdom reasserting its suzerainty, has shown less ability to compete on these terms since the end of Maoism. But that is changing under Xi, as the CDM strategic narrative indicates.

Washington has failed to match Beijing's growing power in political warfare. Certainly, its failure has been strategic but also, and more disturbingly, there has been a feebleness and unintelligibility in its attempts to define the ideological aspect of the China threat, in contrast to the economic and trade components. This is lamentable, as Western ideology is far superior to China's, and is a powerful asymmetry in the peer competition.

To address this situation, the United States should undertake five measures.

First, U.S. decision makers must recognize that U.S. and Western security are at stake in the ideological war with China. This requires a hard break with an "End of History" or "win-win" beliefs that have been prevalent in the last decades. Ideology matters as much now as it did in the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Communism, or with German National Socialism, Italian Fascism, and Japanese imperialism in World War II.

Ideology does not have a kinetic impact, but it strongly shapes the balance of power. It prepares the battlefield and motivates the opposing sides to confront the enemy in what is certain to be a long struggle. It sustains the struggle in the face of hardships and setbacks. It provides the explanation for why the United States should strive for victory and secures the legitimacy of that victory. Ideology determines the sacrifices the American people are willing to make. It provides the rationale for a whole of government, whole of society response. In the realm of international politics, ideology informs how many allies the United States will have, and the strength of their support, as well as and how

many opponents, and how many neutrals, and how many supporters it will have within China itself.

Thus, the importance of the ideological war must be conveyed by senior U.S. Government officials. A future free and open cannot be guaranteed by the United States alone, but it cannot be achieved at all without U.S. leadership. The world needs the United States if it is to avoid the strict hierarchy and raw exploitation of Chinese dominance. Freedom is legitimate and superior to authoritarianism, but freedom must be defended.

This yields an important opportunity for the United States to contrast its values with China's. Washington must convey to other states that if, in fact, China supplants the United States, the rest of the world is going to have to adapt to China's ideology, and the norms and principles it advances. In many cases, the opposite of what the West values will be the new "rules of road" in international politics. Western cultural, economic, and political elites have yet to consider fully what will be lost if, indeed, China were to become the world's dominant state and just how different the world would be in all respects, including for the rights of and opportunities for women, as well as racial, religious, and sexual minorities.

U.S. ideology serves as cement for alignment against China, particularly for states in Africa, Asia and even Europe, where pure self-interest might dictate alignment with China or neutrality. Equally important, as a free and open society, the United States offers a better alliance partnership with all states than does China, whose presence is all too often defined by the exploitation of people and the environment. The difficulties for China caused by its behavior and beliefs present a tremendous opportunity for the United States. But the facts do not speak for themselves. They must have an advocate with the power and resources of the United States and its allies to identify the opportunity and capitalize upon it.

Second, the United States must draw the contrast between its ideology and China's. Senior decision makers must understand and delineate to all audiences on a consistent basis the sharp contrast between the political principles and values of the United States versus those of China.

The core ideology of the United States is a composite of political liberty, free-market capitalism, religious freedom, rule of law, the protection of civil rights, and societal openness – as exemplified by the right openly to dissent. Its ideology unifies the American people and like-minded people around the world and explains why China should be resisted. The United States must contrast its dynamic, innovative, free, and open society – one that is able to correct its flaws – with China's.

China's principles are dangerously incoherent: hard authoritarian politics, a cult of personality advanced by a megalomaniac leader, free-market cronyism, endemic corruption and abuse of power, and suppression of rights, most particularly political, religious, and civil rights, gross abuse of minorities, and environmental destruction.²⁶

Third, there is no need for the United States to create a strategic narrative; it already has the most effective one: the advancement of freedom and individual liberty which has been its narrative since the American Revolution. But the United States must employ it and launch it into the fight. As occurred in the last year of the Trump Administration, senior U.S. decision makers should continue to advocate for all audiences the vision the United States has of the future,

²⁶ The West went through a Civil Rights Movement to create cultures of anti-racism throughout their societies. In China, the idea of a Civil Rights Movement that would aid minorities and undermine CCP rule is unthinkable – and that stark recognition essentially captures the profound differences between the two societies. Equally importantly, U.S. ideology may serve to undermine the legitimacy of authoritarian rule in the minds of the Chinese people.

and why the political principles of the West should be sustained to realize that future. The contrast between the ideologies of the two superpowers plays to U.S. ideological strength and is a great advantage for Washington. The United States cannot match China's ability to invest, but should more than match its ability to inspire. Inspiring global audiences is for political warfare the equivalent of a strategic system in kinetic warfare.

Fourth, based on the clear ideological differences and concomitant competing visions of the futures, U.S. decision makers should attack the CDM strategic narrative not directly, but by positing the future envisioned by the United States. The world China will create is one where Western freedoms and liberties are eroded—and finally extinguished—in favor of the authoritarian political principles advanced by the repressive CCP.

Increasing attention should be called to the fact that China is not a *status quo* great power, but truly a revolutionary great power that seeks fundamental and permanent changes to the contemporary international order, and thus is an existential threat to the U.S. position in international politics. China's ambition is just as revolutionary as Lenin's was. A partial review of the evidence is its territorial expansion in the South China Sea; the pressure against India along their common border; the use of "debt trap diplomacy" to exploit less developed states; support for the suppression of protestors in Hong Kong, who call attention to the PRC's violation of the 1984 agreement with the UK; and the gross human rights abuses against its Muslim minority in Xinjiang, all of which rightfully should receive greater attention in U.S. political warfare.

Fifth, prioritize ideological warfare by supporting a dedicated office precisely to waging this form of warfare, and require all relevant U.S. Combatant Commands to confront the CDM narrative in conjunction with other U.S.

Government entities. Waging political warfare cannot be left to the Department of State or the Intelligence Community, as important as they are. As this analysis has argued, ideological warfare impacts the balance of power, it preps the battlespace in which the United States may fight China, and were war to occur, ideology would be essential for sustaining the conflict to a U.S. victory. Any technology that so dramatically shifted the balance of power would almost certainly generate a major response from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and Intelligence Community. In fact, ideology's impact is far more significant than 5G or other related technologies, and compels a proportional response. Recognizing this, DoD's role is central as warfighters – ideological and kinetic.

CDM's shared, global future is certain to be dystopian. Any community that the CCP creates will be authoritarian and oppressive by its nature. Any shared future that it seeks to create will be one in which the rest of the world adapts to serve the interests of Beijing. The future will be shared only because China's power is great enough to trap states into it either by seduction or coercion. Beijing's conception of global governance is a firm hierarchy with it on top. This shared future will be less free, less diverse, and far more oppressive than the present one.

As this study has emphasized, CDM should not be dismissed as boilerplate. It matters because China is providing insight into the type of world it seeks to create in place of the liberal international order. In their struggle for power, the Bolshevik strategic narrative promised "Peace, Land, and Bread," to win their considerable number of supporters and legitimate their control. Like the Bolsheviks, the words and phrases the CCP chooses as a strategic narrative are designed to legitimize its position of dominance. However, Beijing's effort to provide a palliative phrase to win the "hearts and minds" of the world cannot mask its form of neo-imperialism. Their effort may

fail as more states question its ambition and encounter the truth about its behavior, particularly if the United States and its allies can call attention to the true nature of the regime and its ambitions.

Conclusions

Chinese information warfare practices are truly peer competitive for the United States. China has made significant progress repairing the damage its foreign and economic policies have caused the world. CDM demonstrates the importance and growing sophistication of Chinese ideological warfare. Ideological warfare was a component of Chinese foreign policy under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao but has fully flowered under Xi. China has accelerated efforts to influence foreign audiences through the spread of new ideas and perspectives. For example, Xi's new media strategy includes partnerships with foreign media to produce pro-China films and documentaries, and penetration of streaming services by Chinese propaganda should be expected. As part of its strategy of domination, China will continue to rely on its propaganda acumen to manipulate the views of foreign populations, influence domestic affairs of allies and enemies, and alienate governments that challenge or threaten the core values of the Chinese-led system.

At the same time, an ideological counterattack, and opening of new fronts in the ideological war is necessary. As part of the whole of government, whole of society response, the battle over strategic narratives and popular culture are key fronts. The year 2019 was an important one as more popular culture figures were willing to throw their "hat in the ring" to the ideological confrontation with China.²⁷

²⁷ The considerable critical response both to the NBA's leadership and basketball superstar LeBron James' disparagement of Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey's tweet in support of the Hong Kong protests suggests that Beijing may no longer shape the narrative as it wishes. Additionally, Steve Bannon's film *Claws of the Red Dragon* is an important fictionalized account of Huawei's Meng Wanzhou's arrest in Canada for extradition to the United States and its consequences. It is the first film to address this topic and provides an insightful exploration

In the realm of strategic narratives, the Chinese have gifted the United States with new avenues of advance in its ideological war—if only the United States will take the opportunity.

In the political sphere, the United States could usefully draw a stark contrast between Western and CCP values. The United States may remind the world of the benefits of a world order based on equanimity and by delineating the reality of Beijing's ideology and the empirical evidence of its actions with its public diplomacy rhetoric. China's business practices and hierarchical governance will undoubtedly attract a large number of enemies, as one's position within this system will be based on age-old Chinese race-based conceptions of superiority and inferiority. Despite the mask of CDM, a hegemonic China still draws heavily on these ideas and expects "inferior" nations to adopt the norms and values of the Sino-centric order.

But above all, the CCP has provided the United States with a strategic opportunity. In its suppression of China's Muslim minority, the CCP brought about the perverted renaissance of the concentration camps, in which estimates are that between 800,000 to 1.8 million Muslims are imprisoned. These victims are harassed, mistreated, tortured and targets for coercive and often violent, "thought-transformation," to ensure their loyalty to the CCP.

The re-birth of concentration camps compel the recognition that few people—China experts, business

of the deeper issue of how the PRC penetrated Western markets and ultimately societies, as well as their ultimate objective. Finally, Director Quentin Tarantino's reported refusal to re-cut his film *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* to placate Chinese censors ensures that Sony will not be able to release the film in the large Chinese market. His action deserves to be lauded and stands in stark contrast to Hollywood's either avoidance and neglect of China's human rights abuses on the big screen, or craven portrayal of China as the CCP desires.

people, foreign policy experts, or politicians—have recognized the CCP for what it is: a dangerous, supremacist superpower intent upon replacing the United States as the world's dominant state, and the liberal values and political principles of today's world—liberal societies that have transformed themselves to recognize the equal rights of women and of racial, religious, and sexual minorities—with the repressive beliefs advanced by the Party.

During the rule of Xi Jinping the world has witnessed not only the evils of the concentration camps, but tens of millions of Tibetans, Chinese Christians, Falun Gong practitioners and others have been oppressed. Xi has suppressed the democracy movement in Hong Kong, whose supporters have been brutally attacked, injured and killed by police. China has expanded territorial control in the South China Sea, flouted international law when the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled against it, accelerated Chinese prodigious military expansion and labored to modernize it to become a formidable conventional, cyber, and nuclear force capable of challenging the United States.

Concentration camps in the 21st century should illuminate for all that History has not ended; China's triumph will not be a "win-win." China's victory will only be a win for oppression and totalitarian principles and practices. They will replace liberal values with their opposite. Freedom will be replaced by tyranny, human rights with human suppression, and the open society with a surveillance police state. Washington needs to reaffirm its commitment to Western values and principles that stand in a positive light when compared to China's oppressive government.

The return of concentration camps explodes the myth of the CDM strategic narrative. That fact alone de-legitimizes Xi's government. It is necessary to weave that fact into every U.S. and allied comment or statement on China. Beyond this, the United States, its allies, and the global

community need to send a strong signal to the CCP that they see through the CDM strategic narrative, and to convey to the Chinese people the necessity of a stable and peaceful leader to lead that great nation. For millennia, Chinese civilization was unrivaled in its historical elegance, stability, and sophistication. The Chinese people should be governed by a political system that is the equal of their greatness.

About the Author

Bradley A. Thayer received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and has had a long academic career. He has been a Visiting Fellow at Magdalen College, University of Oxford, a Fellow of St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, and a Fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

His research integrates a broad range of professional interests: international relations theory; U.S. and other great power grand strategy; United States national security policy; nuclear deterrence; cyber warfare and deterrence; the causes and implications of nuclear proliferation; terrorism; the rise of China and its consequences for the U.S. and the international community; and NATO and transatlantic relations.

Most recently, Thayer is the co-author of *How China Sees the World: Han-Centrism and the Balance of Power in International Politics*. He is a Founding Member of the Committee on the Present Danger: China.

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