

A critique of the recent article in *The New Yorker Magazine*

by Evan Osnos, *China's Age of Malaise*

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Time magazine thought it was mocking Chinese President Xi Jinping, by portraying him as Mao Zedong on the inside. The joke is on Evan Osnos and the rest of the West. That was the plan all along: Xi was elected to be the Chinese people's 21st century Great Helmsman.

In the China Writers' Group (CWG, which I founded: www.seektruthfromfacts.org) we exchange a lot of information and articles together. Asking for comments, a member posted the recent article in *The New Yorker Magazine* by Evan Osnos, which covers China and President Xi Jinping, *China's Age of Malaise* (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/10/30/chinas-age-of-malaise>).



Evan Osnos and the artwork used in his article. By chance, I remarked on the famous Chinese motto that is included within (https://x.com/44_Days/status/1717917889078989265?s=20). Below right is an image of China's Politburo Standing Committee on a stage. The two three-character words mid-left are too fuzzy to make out.

At 10,000 words, I read it once straight through, without giving it much thought. My comment to CWG was that the people Osnos talks to would not even be known by 99% of the Chinese people, and even if they did know them or anyone else like them, they could not care less what they thought. Then I went back and read it again, studying it more carefully, his analysis of Xi Jinping, as well as his contextualization of China's future, based on what he heard. A critique of his article was needed.

Naturally, to write an article like this, I needed to do research about the author, Mr. Osnos. His biography on www.evanosnos.com does not even mention that he is a Harvard graduate, or where he grew up. Maybe for a reason. What I found is that he comes from a very privileged background that not only 99% of the Chinese people could not relate to, but 99% of the rest of humanity as well.

He grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut, USA, which I hardly even knew except for the name. I was surprised to learn that,

Greenwich, CT is home to two of the wealthiest zip codes in Connecticut, 06830 and 06831, with average adjusted gross incomes of \$638,560 and \$721,550... The median listing price for a home in the town was \$2.3 million in 2021. The coastal neighborhood of Belle Haven, along with Backcountry, have some of the wealthiest single family real estate in the world. In 2014, the highest asking price for a residential property in town was the Copper Beech Estate at \$190 million. It later sold for \$120 million ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich, Connecticut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich,_Connecticut)).

For comparison, where I grew up in the US state of Oklahoma, the average annual income is \$49,657, or about *fourteen times less*. I like to joke that if it were not for the NBA Oklahoma City Thunder team and the multimillionaire players living there, it would be much less. For \$2.3 million, I can buy *ten* nice, two hundred square-meter (2,000 square-foot) ranch homes in one of the pleasant suburban neighborhoods in Oklahoma City. I have never had a neighbor who had to settle for a measly \$120 million to sell their house. I cannot even begin to wrap my head around the idea.

Evan comes from a very elite, thoroughbred background. His father went to Brandeis, whose annual cost is \$86,242 (<https://www.brandeis.edu/student-financial-services/tuition-calculator/tuition.html>), as well as Columbia School of Journalism, in Midtown Manhattan, NYC. It costs a cool \$126,691 per year (<https://journalism.columbia.edu/cost-attendance>). Dad was a star journalist and publisher, who rubbed shoulders with many famous people we read about in the media.

His mother's father was a US ambassador. She is chair of the board of CIVIC – the Center for Civilians in Conflict (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Osnos). It receives funding from George Soros' Open Society Foundations and the latter's President Emeritus is on CIVIC's board. As well, Charles Koch Institute also contributes to CIVIC. Those of us who are informed about Soros and Koch, with their money and NGOs having fingers deep in so many color revolutions around the world, would run away from them and their money (<https://civiliansinconflict.org/>).

As mentioned, Evan went to Harvard, (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evan_Osnos) which costs \$88,881 per year to attend (<https://www.collegetuitioncompare.com/edu/166027/harvard-university/tuition/>). His wife studied at Barnard College, again \$80,693 per year (<https://www.collegesimply.com/colleges/new-york/barnard-college/price/>).

Osnos is a Senior Fellow at Brookings Institute. In Appendix I, I list some of its major contributors. Again, most of us would not be caught dead owing our allegiance to much of this roster. Donors do expect the *correct* outcomes. It focuses *The New Yorker* magazine's longtime support for NATO's genocidal and imperial operations around the world, going back to Iraq's destruction in 2003, up to today's Western wars against Russia and the Arab World.

It helps explain why his online biographies often do not even mention he graduated from Harvard (*magna cum laude*), much less all the rest of the above. It would put a dent in his projected, plebeian *New Yorker* magazine

moniker of *A Reporter at Large*, like he got a journo degree at humble Oklahoma State University, his first job was with a local newspaper, the nearby *Muskogee Phoenix*, and finally got his *big break*, by being hired at Channel 8 TV Station in nearby Tulsa. In reality, this is a typical career path for the less privileged, who work in MSM.

After learning all this, reading his recent article on China and Xi Jinping makes much more sense. His wealthy, elite, sheltered life is as alien to most of us, as our lives are surely to his.

In his essay, *China's Age of Malaise* (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/10/30/chinas-age-of-malaise>) Osnos interviewed the following people (to my best deduction, "NC" stands for *non-Mainland Chinese*),

- 1) Sociologist wife of a famous Chinese author, the latter who got a graduate degree in the US,
- 2) Chinese cover band playing only American rock,
- 3) an intellectual,
- 4) liberal bookstore owner in Shanghai,
- 5) Rhodium Group rep (NC-US outfit that does its annual *China Pathfinder Scorecard* for the uber-neocon-Wall Street Atlantic Council),
- 6) President Emeritus of the EU Chamber of Commerce in China (NC),
- 7) an entrepreneur,
- 8) prominent Australian historian and translator (NC),
- 9) Beijing bar owners,
- 10) a Shanghai man,
- 11) a Shanghai businessman,
- 12) a business executive,
- 13) a microchip engineer,
- 14) a man in a Beijing bar,
- 15) a 24-year-old master's degree student in Linguistics,
- 16) a financier,
- 17) a real estate developer,
- 18) a factory owner in Shanghai,
- 19) a Chinese investor living overseas,
- 20) a woman sharing her family's Covid experience,
- 21) an entertainer in Shanghai,
- 22) a respected writer,
- 23) a woman who injured herself badly by vandalizing public property,
- 24) an entrepreneur speaking for the top 0.01%,
- 25) a technologist,
- 26) a man in Beijing,
- 27) former lawyer who helps wealthy Chinese leave the country (NC),
- 28) local Singaporean businessman (NC),
- 29) a documentary filmmaker,
- 30) a former dean of Peking University's School of International Studies,
- 31) and 32) two China specialists at Peterson Institute for International Economics, Washington, DC (NC),
- 33) a former Party professor who left China,
- 34) a Chinese diplomat,
- 35) Chinese economist who fled China to go to Stanford University,
- 36) Director of MIT's Security Studies Program (NC),
- 37) head of a Chinese think tank in Beijing,
- 38) the US Ambassador to China (NC), and
- 39) an editor.

Talking to émigrés who fled China, to feel the heartbeat of the nation's people is odd. It reminds me of the funny observation by CWG author-journalist Ramin Mazaheri (<https://twitter.com/RaminMazaheri2>). He jokes that if you want to know how most citizens feel about Iran's Islamic socialist revolution, just talk to his grandmother who lives there. Yet, the West's Big Lie Propaganda Machine (BLPM) invariably consults Gucci-shoed, mink-stole-wearing, Ferrari-driving Iranians in Hollywood, who abandoned their people in 1979.

It is safe to say that most of these interviewees can relate to Evan's privileged status, much more than most of us can. Osnos would be comfortable talking with them and can relate to them. Many of them seem concentrated in Beijing and Shanghai, two cities I love, but are hardly representative of deep China*. Yet, based on these mostly urban, elite Chinese contacts and some other Western sources, Osnos takes a quantum leap in the name of China's 1.4 billion everyday citizens by claiming,

Few citizens believe that China will reach the heights they once expected. "The word I use is 'grieving,'" one entrepreneur said.

Osnos' contacts remind me of when I was traveling and working in Africa and Middle East, 1980-1990, frequently going to newly liberated Zimbabwe. There was an initial exodus of White Rhodesian farmers, with many fleeing to still-then Apartheid South Africa, and Australia. Locals liked to mock them, dubbing them *When-We's*, because all they could talk about was, *When we were in Rhodesia...*

Evan's contacts strike me as a bunch of Chinese When-We's, pining for the excesses of the 1980s-1990s. As an apparent neoliberal, Osnos has a nostalgic idealization of what I call the Deng Xiaoping Wild East Buckaroo Days. My wife and I lived and worked in China, 1990-1997, becoming parents of two children**. As I wrote colorfully in *The China Trilogy* (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2018/06/30/praise-for-the-china-trilogy-the-votes-are-in-it-r-o-c-k-s-what-are-you-waiting-for/>), it was like a Nat King Cole 5-pack-a-day nicotine habit. We knew it was terrible for our health and souls, but the hooks were dug deep into our flesh and every waking hour was like a drug rush. After we left China for France, it took us six months to mentally detoxify from the buzz and the high.

Deng & Co. let loose the street-level dogs of jungle capitalism, while maintaining the large public sector of the economy. The motive was to respect the Marxian arc of evolution from late industrial capitalism to socialism and then communism (that is still the official plan, by 2049). The West had five hundred years to industrialize and become bourgeois. The Mao Era was only one generation. Thus, with *reform and opening up*, the gamble was that this phase would replace what the West had done, over a much longer period of time.

Unintended consequences abounded. Everybody was lying, cheating, stealing and swindling everybody else, all to realize the government's exhortations to *get rich quick*, regardless of the social and environmental consequences. Violating millennial Confucian principles, there was zero trust among the people and between the government and citizens. Corruption became a cancer in the public, private and military sectors, smoothed over by 10% annual economic growth. Inflation hit over 30% and availability of everyday goods and foodstuffs became chaotic. It was these three socioeconomic pustules that triggered the protests in 1989, not Gene Sharp's bogus, CIA-contrived *freedom and democracy* color revolution

(<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2023/06/02/this-webpage-has-by-far-the-biggest-and-best-library-of-articles-videos-podcasts-and-images-about-1989s-tiananmen-square-protests-something-for-everyone-china-rising-radio-sinoland-continually-u/>).

Organized gangs came back. Crime among the citizens got so bad that the government recalled all the millions of guns the people had during the Mao Era, for civil defense against possible war with the West. Laws had to be passed reinstating the death penalty for a number of lesser offenses. Tens of thousands of crooks were executed and imprisoned. When I visited Shenzhen, there were hookers, touts and Fast Eddys every ten meters on the sidewalks, hustling and jiving. It was like a dog-eat-dog gold rush town. The Chinese had become a cynical, lawless mob of grifters, shysters and petty criminals.

If Evan and his elite interviewees want to idealize that 20 years of street-level warfare, where it felt like being forever high on speed, be my guest. As non-elites living and working in it, family in tow, it offers a completely different perspective.

Maybe they miss the endless reruns of American TV shows, like *Friends*, *Dallas* and all the other soul-sucking Western tittytainment that flooded the country. Mercifully, when we returned to China 2010-2019, that kind of *foreign culture* was flushed down the toilet.

With my life experiences and much more modest upbringing and education, I talk to Chinese with whom I can relate: farmers, factory workers, drivers, cleaners, teachers, repairmen, retirees, small shopkeepers, restaurant owners, waiters, cops, white collar workers, masseuses, TCM doctors, retail workers – in big and small cities, towns and rural villages.

Would you care to guess which group of people – the aforementioned 39 – or the socioeconomic level of citizens I talk to, is more representative of the broad opinions and attitudes of the Chinese nation?

The vibes and comments I got from traveling to Shenzhen and Zhuhai (in Guangdong Province), Anhui, Hunan and Guangxi Provinces, for two months in May and September/October, are the anti-universe of what Osnos suggests in his essay.

Admittedly, I did talk to two Shenzhen factory owners in the technology sector, the parents of Chinese students I teach online. They were very matter-of-fact: Covid was a tough three years, it really cost them, but now they are back in the saddle and extremely optimistic about the future. When I asked one if he was investing in the Chinese stock market, he said he is waiting for now. He said US-Russia tensions needed to play out in Ukraine, so maybe next year will be the right time to dive in. This was of course before the US's foray into Palestine, so it may be a while.

Out of all the scores of work-a-day Chinese I talked with, I got one real crank, a disgruntled taxi driver in Shenzhen, who was pissed off at the world. Most everyone else, with true Confucian-Daoist-Buddhist aplomb, said the three years of Covid lockdowns were tough. Now, it is not the easy pickings it used to be, but they are optimistic about the future.

From Shenzhen's 17 million citizens, to third and fourth tier cities like Zhuhai, Hefei and Huaibei in Anhui, to Hunan's Province's incredibly youthful capital, Changsha, to laid back Guilin, down to small towns and villages in Anhui, Hunan and Guangxi Provinces, I saw the Chinese people humping, pumping and jumping – a national beehive of productive forces. Some told me they were making ends meet, others were working to buy a house, pay for their children's pending marriages or get them through university, usually with a can-do attitude. Western pundits are obsessed with Chinese workers *lying flat*, i.e., goofing off on the job, to show their dissatisfaction with life. Among all the various kinds of people I met, the only time they have to lie flat is when they sleep. The Chinese people invented the much-banded Western concept of *grit* 5,000 years ago.

I have a cute t-shirt with a cartoon image of Xi Jinping encouraging the citizens to,



Roll up your shirt sleeves and get to work!

I like to wear it, because it is a fantastic way to start conversations with strangers I meet in public. When-We elites can cry in their wonton soup, but China's 99% are heeding Xi's message and not looking back.

The Chinese have been preparing for this phase of the country's economic arc of progress for almost a decade, when Xi Jinping began to talk about the *new normal* in 2014; meaning, a transformed, more responsible, more reasonable socioeconomic model (<https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/890962.shtml>). The citizens were sick and tired of foul air, foul water, filth everywhere and the lingering dishonesty and corruption at all levels: public, private and military. To cleanse the country of all that meant the need for new paradigms of governance and civility, and that could not happen with unfettered 10-12% annual growth.

What happened is that with Covid, instead of slowly ratcheting down the double-digit growth over a number of years, it was forced upon the country in three. Twenty-twenty-three is projected to have a GDP growth of 5.6% (<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/5443e6bba11cd7fa7c0c678a20edd4dd-0350012023/related/GEP-June-2023-Regional-Highlights-EAP.pdf>). This is by far the highest among major economies. North America? One-point-six (1.6%). Western Europe? Zero-point-six (0.6%). Japan? One-point-four (1.4%: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_real_GDP_growth_rate).

China's post-Covid new normal is working. According to the IMF, China's productive GDP is *three times larger* than #2 USA (<https://jermwarfare.com/conversations/china-is-more-capitalistic-than-the-united-states>). No wonder my factory-owning dads are so optimistic.

Country ranked by Productive GDP		Productive 2023 GDP @ PPP (USD trillions)	Productive 2023 GDP @ PPP (USD per capita)	Svc Sector %	Pop (m)
China Mainland	1	15.98	11,308	51.6%	1,413.14
USA	2	5.37	15,812	80.0%	339.67
India	3	5.02	3,586	61.5%	1,399.18
Indonesia	4	2.40	8,594	45.4%	279.48
Japan	5	2.02	16,335	68.7%	123.72
Russia	6	1.88	13,273	62.3%	141.70
Germany	7	1.74	20,676	68.6%	84.22
Turkey	8	1.40	16,796	60.7%	83.59
South Korea	9	1.22	23,463	58.3%	51.97
Mexico	10	1.11	8,544	64.5%	129.88
Brazil	11	1.10	5,019	72.7%	218.69

This is not Chinese information, but straight from the West. Read it and weep. China has more productive GDP than the USA, India, Indonesia and Japan combined.

Another boogey bear in his article is that there is a mass exodus of China's wealthy. First, there are sixty million overseas Chinese living and working in 198 countries and regions. Since the start of the Silk Roads during the Han Dynasty, before the life of Jesus Christ, there has been an endless flow of Chinese leaving the homeland and those returning.

China has 6.2 million millionaires

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_millionaires) including 820,000 RMB billionaires (= US\$137 million: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1752445116351631245&wfr=spider&for=pc>).

According to Osnos, in 2022, China had a net loss of 10,800 net rich residents, or 0.17% of the total millionaires and 1.3% of its billionaires.

My response: *yawn*.

In any case, by 2025, China is expected to organically increase its millionaire club to 10.2 million citizens, so the few who are not in solidarity with the people and leave the country, good riddance

(<https://www.asianinvestor.net/article/millionaires-in-china-to-nearly-double-by-2025-credit-suisse/470521>).

Ditto the 300,000 Chinese who left the country in 2022. Others came back. According to the source below, currently for every ten who leave, eight come back, so in reality, the net loss was only 60,000. I will let you divide that number by 1.4 billion to get the percentage. While only a projection, it predicts the in-out ratio will be breakeven by 2027 (<https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1681270845225012647&wfr=spider&for=pc>).

He also claims there is a brain drain out of China. However, statistics on the number of returnees with master's degrees to China show that as of 2022, there are 723,277 returnees with master's degrees from the United States, Japan, and Canada, an increase of 10% compared to the previous year. The year range is not given, but 723,277 returning master's graduates is a 10% increase over 2021, so that would be about 72,000 per year, not including Europe. This adds about 10% to the usual 700,000 master's graduates each year.

(<https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/2212324508129149708.html?fr=search&word=2022%E5%B9%B4%E6%9C%89%E5%A4%9A%E5%B0%91%E6%B5%B7%E5%BD%92%E5%9B%9E%E6%9D%A5%E5%9B%BD%E5%AE%B6%E6%9D%A5%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E7%9A%84%E4%BA%BA>).

Returning PhDs? Baba Beijing, my avuncular name for the country's millennial, paternal, Confucian governance, is going all out to court them back home, including providing financial subsidies, employment training, employment guidance, employment services, etc. Overall, about 32,000 PhDs return to China annually, to add to the 72,000 PhD graduates each year. Seems to me the brain drain is in the other direction, away from the West.

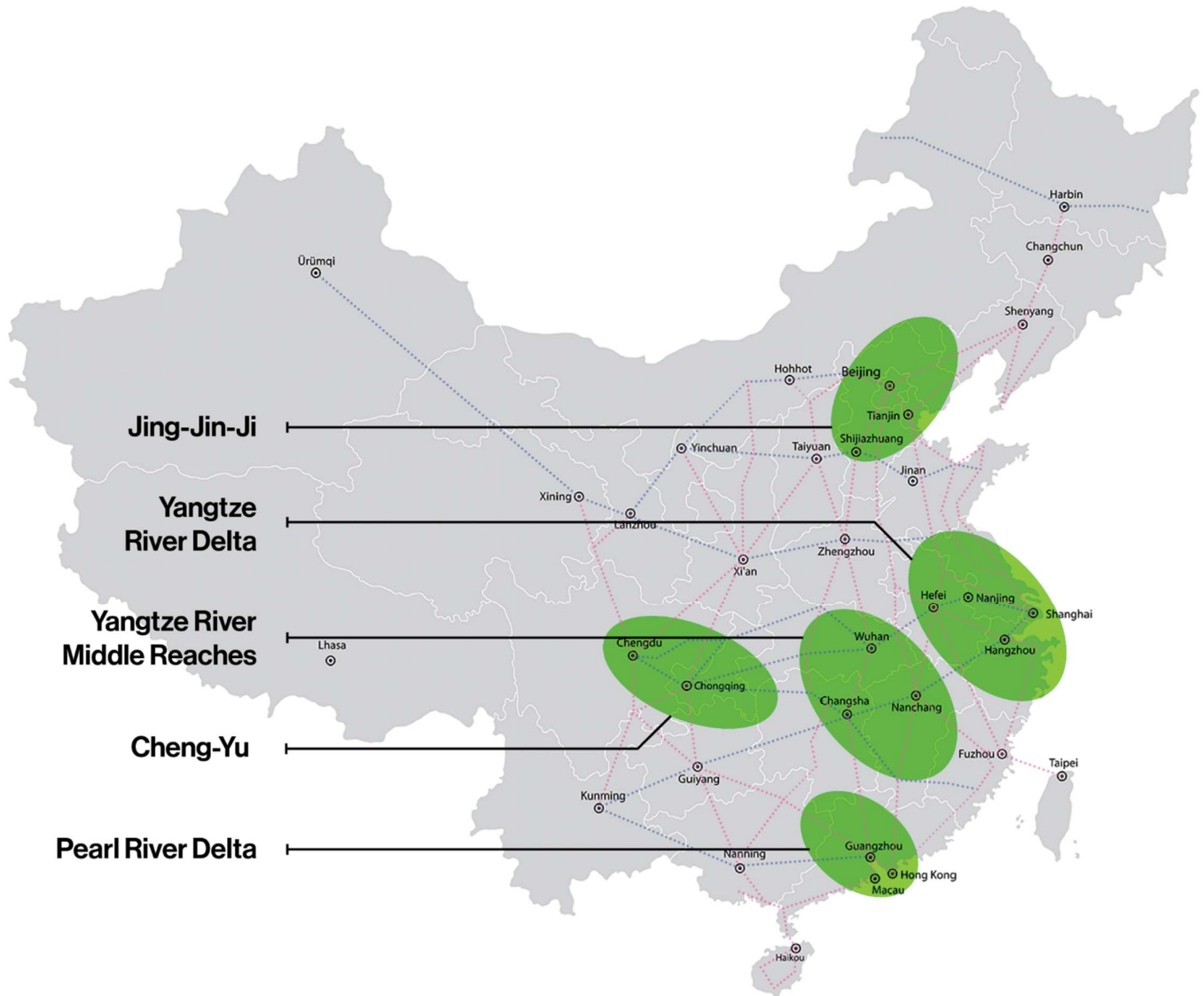
(<https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/755066107402145572.html?fr=search&word=%E6%AF%8F%E5%B9%B4%E6%B5%B7%E9%BE%9F%E5%9B%9E%E5%9B%BD%E7%9A%84%E5%8D%9A%E5%A3%AB%E6%9C%89%E5%A4%9A%E5%B0%91%E4%BA%BA> and <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1116221/china-number-of-masters-and-doctors-degrees-awarded/>).

Osnos wrote, *China has all the airports—and railways and factories and skyscrapers—that it can justify*. Seriously? China only became a majority urban population in 2014 and now stands at 65%

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urbanization_in_China). The USA passed its halfway mark in 1920, a hundred years earlier (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urbanization_in_the_United_States). China will need another 10-15 years to reach its desired level of urbanites of 75-80%. Hundreds of millions of citizens need cities, housing, commercial space, transportation, etc. It is easy to forget that China has 1.4 billion citizens occupying a country the size of Canada or the USA. With these stats, China continues to not have enough infrastructure.

Also, there are still big developmental disparities between the wealthy coastal zones and the poorer western interior (<https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3142294/chinas-provincial-gdps-show-widening-gap-between-coastal-and>). Baba Beijing does not want more urbanization in the prior, so it is building up the latter, to attract economic activity there, to better balance the country's population. What I saw in the interior was proof of this vision (see below).

Not only that, but even more urban infrastructure will be needed to create five mega-clusters, each with around 150 million citizens (<https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/04/28/1022557/china-city-cluster-urbanization-population-economy-environment/>).



No other country in the world could begin to create mega-cluster cities and only a socialist people can make it happen.

Everywhere I traveled in China, from the biggest cities down to the smallest villages in the interior, I saw nothing but wall-to-wall infrastructure going up and out. Westerners cannot think beyond the next quarterly report in three months, to satisfy the venal lust of all the preferred and A-share stockholders, among the officers and board members. Baba Beijing has a vision going out thirty years to improve the lives of all the people (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2017/03/22/crush-the-streets-kenneth-ameduri-interviews-china-rising-radio-sinolands-jeff-j-brown-170323/>).

Osno used as an argument that economically poor Guizhou Province, which is the size of the state of Missouri, USA has eleven airports, thus that is enough. I am not so sure. Guizhou has a population of 38.5

million, to Missouri's 6.2 million, over six times as many inhabitants. How many airports does Missouri have? Eight (<https://www.officialusa.com/travel/airlines/missouri-airports.html>).

Bloated state-run companies? Eighty-two of the Forbes Global 500 companies are Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs), more than half of the 143 Chinese companies that grace this list, the country with the most listed (http://en.sasac.gov.cn/2021/08/03/c_7528.htm). As just one example, the four biggest banks in the world, and they are massive, are Chinese: Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Agricultural Bank of China, China Construction Bank and Bank of Communications. I wrote an article about them not long ago. SOEs may have been bloated in the 80s-90s, but now they are world beaters (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2022/10/14/chinas-much-maligned-misunderstood-state-owned-enterprises-span-the-globe-and-improve-your-lives-china-rising-radio-sinoland-221014/>).

Osnos also claims *soaring debt*. China's debt is half as large as the USA's, as a percent of GDP, 68% versus 128%. Per capita? \$7,164 versus \$88,697 (<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-by-national-debt>). China's Central Bank Governor Pan Gongsheng says the debt level of the Chinese government is at the mid-to-lower level internationally. He just told the Financial Street Forum 2023 in Beijing that small banks exposed to scores of bad loans account for *a very small proportion* in the financial system. Not to mention that the world's biggest national financial sector is 99.9% Chinese-citizen-owned – no Wall Street-City of London dictators dictating the terms (<https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3240790/chinas-central-bank-hand-support-debt-ridden-local-governments-governor-pan-gongsheng-says>).

A crackdown on education? About time! The battle for Chinese children's minds has been ongoing since the tittytainment 80s-90s. Before the Foreign NGO Management Law was passed in 2017 (<https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/China-FAQ-Overseas-NGO-Law.pdf>), thousands of them, including George Soros' many color rev fifth columnists insinuated themselves into China's education system and textbooks. Citizens began complaining to Baba Beijing about seditious and trashy content in the schoolbooks and it spread all over social media. Parental suggestions poured in. Textbooks got an updated makeover to fully represent traditional Chinese and socialist values. T

he texts describing the Mao Era were made more objective, especially previous criticism about the Cultural Revolution, all of which I wrote about (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2020/11/02/the-fight-for-chinas-communist-socialist-soul-rages-on-in-its-textbooks-and-on-all-its-social-media-china-rising-radio-sinoland-201102/>). This is due in part to many ranking Chinese leaders, who experienced firsthand the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, such as Xi, Premier Li Keqiang and previous President Hu Jintao, among many others. As Xi likes to say, he left a boy and after the Cultural Revolution came back a man (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2019/04/14/its-the-cultural-revolution-all-over-again-well-kinda-sorta-china-rising-radio-sinoland-190414/>).

The other major reform was that all private schools had to become non-profit. Over the years, two classes of Chinese students developed, the vast majority going to local schools, and wealthy families sending their kids to

private, international ones, mostly with English and other European language curricula. With investors demanding double-digit returns, quality became secondary to cookie cutter outcomes, with parents assuming their children were getting their money's worth, costing up to \$35,000 per year per child. I know, because when my wife and I returned to China 2010-2019, we were teaching in them.

To help equalize this class disparity and take the go-go motive away from greedy investors, all private schools had to become nonprofit in 2021 (<https://www.farrer.co.uk/news-and-insights/a-new-regulatory-landscape-for-international-schools-in-china/>).

One subject I am mostly in agreement with Osnos, is the high youth (16-24 years of age) unemployment rate, last reported as 21.3% in July/August. This is clearly Baba Beijing's biggest headache and if not resolved, could have longer term and/or unintended consequences. I did not meet anyone in this category, but at one in five, they are out there. This is a topic I will be following attentively in the months to come.

Are foreigners suddenly worried about investing in China (<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/11/06/economy/china-negative-fdi-challenges-hnk-intl/index.html>)? Or is Baba Beijing, learning to live without them in the new normal?

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is falling and exports are down in 2023 (<https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CHN/china/exports>), but is it part of the new normal, war footing plan? Baba Beijing knows that the West will apply sanctions like the ones Russia has been pummeled with, since NATO started to try destroying it via Ukraine in 2022. Russia has done splendidly in its efforts to become self-sufficient since then, but for China, why not prepare now? Again, for the fastest growing major economy in the world and the most productive, it should be much easier for the Chinese than for Russians.

Besides falling FDI and exports, war preparations are also seen in Baba Beijing's feverish promotion to boost domestic consumption. The Chinese are the biggest savers among large economies, with a 45.9% rate (<https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/china/gross-savings-rate>). The US is 17.8% and the French 14.2%. Harking back to the Mao Era, China needs to be prepared to be cut off from much of global trade, so domestic consumption will have to take up the export slack.

All the many observations Osnos makes about a more hostile reception with foreign businesses, and a tougher anti-espionage law is all more proof that Baba Beijing is preparing for the day when the West has declared hot war, and China will no longer be able to count on FDI and huge exports, just like what the West is trying to do to Russia today.

It bears repeating. Baba Beijing's policies and behavior strongly suggest it is preparing the people for a Mao Era redux to batten down the hatches, be self-sufficient, to hell with the capitalist West and working with reliable, trustworthy partners. Like Mao Zedong, to do this, the people are rallying around their leader, President Xi.

This brings us to Taiwan Province and interviewees suggesting to Osnos that *El-Supremo* Xi could launch an attack on the island, to save his sinking presidency (*sic*), is another hoot and a holler. Baba Beijing will avoid a hot war at all costs to regain Taiwan Province, because time is on the Mainland's side. Public speeches state that the PRC will be made whole by 2049, when the people celebrate their centennial liberation. That is a generation

from now. In the meantime, a hot war would hamper the nation's development in infrastructure, technology, environment and on and on.

The Mainland will only take the offensive if Taipei declares independence, or NATO strikes first.

I always point out that 5% of Taiwan's people, one million strong, live and work on the Mainland, and they are not washing dishes or driving taxis. They are mostly in the managerial, entrepreneurial, engineering, technology sectors and have billions of dollars invested there.

Want to bring Taipei to the negotiating table really fast? All Baba Beijing would have to do is cancel ten or twenty thousand resident/work permits, sending all those owners, managers and their families packing. The loss of all that business activity and the sudden influx of those Taiwanese would collapse the island's economy, without the PLA needing to fire a shot.

The BLPM will never tell you that for China's leadership, the country has been at war with the West since 4 September 1839, the start of the First Opium War. Baba Beijing, since the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1921, always frames the country's *modern era* as beginning on that day. China's textbooks and media talk about the country's Road to Rejuvenation beginning with this nadir, and the following 110 years are still painfully called the *Century of Humiliation*, until communist-socialist liberation in 1949.

Ridding the country of Western, Japanese and Chinese fascists in 1949 gave the people their liberation and freedom, but Korea 1950-1953 and Southeast Asia, 1955-1975 demonstrated that the West's war against China never ended.

With Deng Xiaoping whispering exactly what the West's capitalist class wanted to believe, that China would rapidly become a continent-sized resource whore, like Indonesia or the Democratic Republic of Congo, there was a ceasefire from 1980-2011. And let us face it, China got the very long end of the global economic and trade stick during that period (GATT and WTO), thanks to Westerners' delusional hubris that the entire world is dying to be just like them.

What happened in 2011? The BLPM will never tell you this, but the West's war against China went hot again, with Obama and Hillary announcing NATO's *Pivot to Asia*. That is how Baba Beijing still sees it. Why? Since the end of World War II, China is increasingly surrounded by US military bases.



Now you can see why the Chinese people feel under assault. They are surrounded by a NATO Maginot Line, right off their coast.

I wrote a satirical piece, creating a mirror map of China surrounding the USA with bases, to empathize with what the Chinese see happening (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2018/01/01/a-china-rising-radio-sinoland-reality-map-if-china-were-the-usa-china-in-the-americas/>).

Even before 2011, Baba Beijing was already leery, after the blatant 2003 SARS (plus the 2019 SARS-COV-2) bioweapon attacks by the West (www.bioweapontruth.com and <https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2020/03/07/its-all-here-the-china-rising-radio-sinoland-Covid-19-chemical-and-bioweapon-file-film-and-tape-library/> and <https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2020/02/25/harvard-illegally-collected-dna-samples-in-china-throughout-the-90s-right-up-to-sars-lies-upon-lies-and-many-cover-ups-have-kept-this-criminal-conduct-hidden-in-plain-sight-looks-like-bio-engineere/>). By the time Xi was elected president, the Mao Era's self-sufficiency philosophy, independence from the global capitalist economy and highly successful anti-Western moxie became prerogatives.

Enter Xi Jinping, the 21st century Mao Zedong. By chance, President Hu Jintao's 10 years in office ended in 2012, just a year after NATO's Pivot to Asia. Of course, the 3,000-member National People's Congress (NPC), the 300-member Central Committee, the 25-member Standing Committee and the 9-member Politburo Standing Committee had been discussing who to elect as the next president. Xi Jinping had already been a member of the Politburo Standing Committee since 2007 (<https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/CLM35AM.pdf>). Clearly, from the NPC on up, these leaders had five years to observe Xi in action, including his overseeing the incredibly successful 2008 Beijing Olympics (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2022/12/20/timeless-transcript-buckle-up-world-you-are-entering-the-xi-era-44-days-radio-sinoland-2015-3-29/>).

Other candidates were surely discussed, but with Obama, Hillary and NATO swarming to Taiwan Province, Japan, Korea and the South China Sea, Xi's CV made him the obvious choice to get back the much-needed Mao Era visionary backbone to survive and thrive.

Living and working in China at the time, I remember reading articles by the BLP's *China Experts*. Former presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao continued to seduce Western capitalists with Deng's reform and opening up sweet nothings, while continuing to hold the Party line to avoid becoming a color revolution vassal – these experts were high-fiving, when it was announced that Xi had been elected president.

Why? Xi Jinping's father Xi Zhongxun had been branded as a *liberal do-gooder* by these so-called Western experts. Why? Mao Zedong tasked Xi Father to negotiate with Xinjiang to be reincorporated into the newly founded People's Republic. It took several years, and since it was done without firing a shot, Xi Father became a darling of the West, especially since Tibet returned to China, with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) marching onto the Plateau.

Then in 1978, Deng Xiaoping tasked Xi Zhongxun with tackling Hong Kong and how to stop Shenzheners – at that time a town of 20,000 fishermen and sea salt harvesters – from going to Hong Kong. Xi Zhongxun's concept was brilliantly simple: make Shenzhen even better than Hong Kong, by turning it into a special economic (SEZ: free trade) zone. He humbly credited his boss with the idea. Deng is everywhere in Shenzhen and there is only one small photo of Xi Zhongxun in the Municipal Museum. Still, Western Sinologists got wind of the story and now Dad was being touted as a free-wheeling, neoliberal capitalist.

Well, surely if Xi's father was a liberal softie and a neoliberal, then Son must be too!

That kind of self-congratulatory hubris can cause disappointments.

What they failed to consider is that to be commissioned by Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, a pair of hardcore communists to their last dying breaths, to take on two extremely sensitive projects, then succeed and win their praise and that of the people, logically means he was *not* a softie capitalist.



Deng's statue atop Lianhua Mountain, overlooking Shenzhen, when I was there in October. The group in front is members of the CPC, who were there to learn about Deng's life and accomplishments. They were from Jiangxi Province.

Baba Beijing did not elect Xi Jinping because he was going to be China's Gorbachev and sellout the people to Wall Street and NATO. They elected him, because they knew he had what it takes to be China's 21st century Mao, to defeat Uncle Slaughter and its global Wehrmacht.

It is almost comical how MSM writers transform in lockstep the West's enemies' leaders into cardboard cutouts, Dell Comic fiends. From Lenin to Stalin and Mao to Xi, the descriptions become lurid and fantastic, like lumbering James-Bondesque Frankenstein evildoers hellbent on snuffing out humanity, barking a two-word command, EVERYBODY DIES, then dramatically pressing the blinking red button.

Osnos is no different. I will let you read his article to see what I mean, but one passage jumped up and slapped me in the face,

"Why did the Soviet Communist Party collapse?" he (Xi) asked, according to excerpts that circulated among Party members. One reason, he said, was that the Soviets' "ideals and beliefs had wavered." More important, though, "they didn't have the tools of dictatorship" (emphasis mine).

Tools of dictatorship? Xi's comments about the USSR have been widely circulated since they were spoken in 2012, but this was the first time I ever read the *tools of dictatorship* line. A search of the web shows that Evan's article is the only place it is found. I could not access some paywalls, so maybe it is referenced, but what has been published for the last ten years is this,

The lessons Xi took from the (Soviet) collapse: retain tight control of the military, do not make reforms that undermine the Party's power, and make no unforced errors.

(<https://www.vox.com/world/23403324/xi-jinping-china-worldview-soviet-union-arab-spring>).

Which is exactly what has happened since then. Nonetheless, to paraphrase these three recommendations as *tools of dictatorship*, if that is what happened, is dishonest propaganda.

The screenshot shows a Bing search results page for the query "Xi Jinping They didn't have the tools of dictatorship?". The search bar at the top shows the query and navigation icons. Below the search bar, there are tabs for SEARCH, CHAT, WORK, IMAGES, VIDEOS, MAPS, NEWS, SHOPPING, and MORE. The results section shows "About 431 000 results".

The first result is from The New Yorker, titled "China's Age of Malaise | The New Yorker" with a URL <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/10/30/chinas-age-of-malais...>. The snippet reads: "More important, though, **'they didn't have the tools of dictatorship.'** With dogged efficiency, Xi has set out to strengthen belief in the Party and to build **the tools of dictatorship.** He has ...".

The second result is from The Economist, titled "Xi Jinping: the making of a dictator - The Economist" with a URL <https://www.economist.com/1843/2022/10/19/xi-jinping-the-making-of-a-...>. The snippet reads: "web Oct 19, 2022 · By Sue-Lin Wong Xi Jinping was 13 when he was dragged into a courtyard and forced to don a dunce's cap. The iron cone, so heavy that he had to prop it up with ...".

Below these results is a section titled "Videos of Xi Jinping They Didn'T Have The Tools Of Dictatorship?" with a link to <bing.com/videos>. It shows three video thumbnails from CBS NEWS:

- Video 1: "US President Joe Biden calls Chinese President Xi Jinping a ..." (2:43, 103,6K views, 4 months ago)
- Video 2: "U.S. President Biden angers China by calling Xi Jinping a 'di..." (3:18, 4 months ago)
- Video 3: "Biden refers to Ch Xi Jinping as a dic..." (68,4K views, 4 months ago)

On the right side of the search results, there is a large image of Xi Jinping with the text "Xi Jinping" overlaid. Below the image is a share button and an "All images" button. Underneath the image is a Wikipedia snippet: "Xi Jinping is a Chinese politician who has been serving as the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and chairman of the Central Military Commission, and thus as the paramount leader o... + Wikipedia". Below the Wikipedia snippet is a link to gov.cn. At the bottom of this section, there is a biographical summary for Xi Jinping:

- Born: 15 June 1953 · Beijing, China
- Political party: CCP (since 1974)
- Spouses: Ke Lingling · (m. 1979; div. 1982) · Peng Liyuan (m. 1987)
- Children: Xi Mingze
- See more

It may be referenced somewhere else, but Evan's article is the only place I could find his tools of dictatorship.

In any case, the idea that a Chinese leader can be some kind of demonic, strong-man El-Supremo is laughable, including Mao Zedong. With thousands of leaders in the NPC, the Central Committee, politburos, the massive Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_People%27s_Political_Consultative_Conference), not to mention vying regions and provinces, all with egos and expectations, Chinese governance has always been Confucian and consensual, going back millennia. Autocratic, tyrannical emperors, like Qin Shi Huang are few in number, and they are frowned upon by historians (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_Shi_Huang).

A careful study of Xi's career path clearly shows that his style of leadership is consultative. That characteristic he definitely got from his dad (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2023/09/23/xi-jinpings-ten-commandments-for-the-strict-governance-of-the-party-and-that-goes-for-the-public-and-private-sectors-too-china-rising-radio-sinoland-230923/>)

To claim *Xi has removed term limits on his rule* flies in the face of how a very functioning and rulebound government works. The term limit law was amended by the NPC, then they voted on it; next it was approved by the Central Committee and then approved by the politburos. The entire process was again done to modify the constitution. As well is the absurd notion, *A decade into Xi's campaign for total control*, goes back to the Dell Comic El Supremo theme. Mao Zedong had to sell his ideas and get consensus. Xi is no different.

Another favorite MSM chestnut is to say that *Xi has stocked the Politburo with trusted aides*, like it is some evil plot to surround himself with yes men. How many Trump supporters does Biden have on his team? The thought is ludicrous. Any leader worth their salt does the same as Xi: collaborates with people they know and trust.

Remember that one of the three lessons Xi learned about the fall of the USSR was to *retain tight control of the military*. The previous military leader in power was Deng Xiaoping and before him, Mao. Neither President Jiang Zemin nor Hu Jintao were military men, yet Jiang kept tight control over the PLA after leaving office, which really hampered Hu's administration. This was a big source of corruption in the military and clearly the NPC and Central Committee knew that it could not continue.

The fact that Xi and his wife were already PLA officers and had cultivated contacts throughout the military for years, was probably another deciding factor electing him as Party Secretary, President and by default, Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), which is like the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Claiming that *Xi cultivated the military by boosting investment and replacing top leaders with loyalists, making it his personal army*, is only partially true. Being a military officer, Xi knew the PLA was a long way from being able to win a modern war with NATO. China had to plan for a hot one. Investing, modernizing and radically changing the military commands, along the lines of the US's rapid response structure, was not to curry favor (<https://asiatimes.com/2023/11/think-chinas-pla-is-a-paper-tiger-think-again/>). It was to be ready to fight and win wars, which Xi & Co. publicly pronounce frequently (<https://japan-forward.com/china-watch-commanders-expose-reveals-chinese-military-troubled-by-peace-disease/>).

Of course, he replaced much of the top brass, who were corrupt, with his honest and trustworthy loyalists. What leader in their right mind would put their (corrupt) enemies in positions of power?

Xi's personal army? Ever since Mao Zedong, it has been an ironclad rule that the PLA owes its allegiance to the CPC and the people, the people command the Party, and the CPC is in command of the military. As Party General Secretary and Chairman of the CMC, it is colorful propaganda to call the PLA his personal army, but he is clearly the boss. He has transformed the military in incredibly positive ways, and has brought back high morale among the troops, not seen since the Mao Era. China is ready to go to war when NATO makes that decision.

It must be said, Xi does not help himself. He definitely has a low Q-score. He moves slowly, speaks methodically, rarely smiles or laughs. He is all business all the time, but did manage to crack a Cheshire cat grin when asked if he trusts Joe Biden (<https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSNaRnOqX/>). Mao had more charisma in his little finger than Xi does in his entire body. However, despite Evan's typical BLPM character assassination, Xi is popular among the people I talk to, especially getting credit for cleaning up corruption across the board. They call him *lianjie* (廉洁), meaning honest and uncorruptible. He also gets plaudits from bringing Chinese culture back into the mainstream, while jettisoning all that Western tittytainment.

(<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2019/01/19/we-decided-that-xi-is-our-president-chinas-participatory-and-petitioning-democracy-succeeds-online-china-rising-radio-sinoland-190119/>).



Xi's wry grin is all you need to know about how much he trusts Joe Biden. Other members of his team on the same translation feed also smiled or looked at Xi to see his reaction. Xi gave no other comment. His silent reaction said it all.

Osnos sees evil that Xi launched an "anti-corruption" campaign that grew into a vast machine of arrest and detention, China has investigated and punished 4.089 million people (from 2012-2021). Based on what I heard from the citizens I talked to, they would be happy for another four million crooks to get the same treatment. The lingering hangover of the fetid 1980s-1990s still looms large. This explains why the government's campaign is still pedal-to-the-metal, with detentions and punishment ongoing. Unlike previous anti-corruption campaigns, which were sporadic and too brief, Xi has promised the people that the fight against corruption, be it private, public or military, will never cease.

Proof of its success comes from Dongping Han and Mobo Gao (see below), who do extensive field work in several Chinese provinces. They both say that *pre-Xi* corruption has been all but wiped out, less some petty local corruption like alcohol, cigarettes and banquets. They say that local government authorities admit they may have been involved in or tolerated corruption around them (bribes), but now they are afraid to even consider or condone it, since oversight is so withering.

Fellow CWG members Dongping Han and Mobo Gao grew up during the Mao Era and are now full professors at US and Australian universities, respectively. They have written books about their youth, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, which I can highly recommend (<https://www.amazon.com/stores/Dongping-Han/author/B001I0PTC0> and <https://www.amazon.com/stores/Mobo-C.-F.-Gao/author/B001ITYLN4>). Since that time, they continue to do field work in rural China, interviewing hundreds of farmers, rural factory workers, retirees and village government representatives every year. I met Dongping in Hong Kong in May, attending a conference on Chinese labor, and he was going right after that to the Mainland's boondocks. They both say that Xi Jinping is by far the most popular leader since Mao Zedong, second only to their 50s-70s Great Helmsman.

Do not tell that to the West's BLPM. USSR history author Grover Furr (<http://chinarising.puntopress.com/2018/08/18/everything-you-know-about-russia-and-the-ussr-is-a-lie-dr-grover-furr-interviews-on-china-rising-radio-sinoland-180818/>) told me that you cannot get published by a major media company, unless you automatically conflate Stalin into an insane, bloodthirsty, psychopathic, genocidal terrorist, regardless of the facts. It is obvious that the same expectations for China's leaders are no different. Writers like Maurice Meisner and Jonathan Spence admit some of the successes of the Mao Era. Nevertheless, by the time Mao becomes a young adult, instead of teeth, he is portrayed as having mossy covered fangs, his hands are turned into blood-dripping claws, and he spends his days trying to figure out how he can mass murder another million citizens this week.

I fell for that propaganda when I wrote the first book of *The China Trilogy*, but after much research and reading, corrected myself in the next two volumes.

It takes a lot of courage to stand up to the West's BLPM. Ninety-nine percent of writers and journalists know their place, what they cannot write and what they must say. They are like trained seals barking tricks and balancing balls on their noses, so they can pay the mortgage, get on TV, receive MSM awards and write for big name media outlets. Members of CWG often call them *factotums* and *stenographers*.

James Bradley published four bestselling books (<http://www.jamesbradley.com/>). A Seek Truth From Facts director, all those years of research put him on a path of seeking truth and justice, even if it meant displeasing the establishment. Our 60+ podcast shows are proof that James is not backing down (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2023/06/05/jb-west-and-jb-east-present-see-you-in-the-hague-our-complete-show-library-continually-updated/>).

There are a few out there. The Greanville Post (www.greanvillepost.com) is a CWG member. The editor, Patrice Greanville got his graduate degree in economics at a big-name university in New York. Because of his

brilliance, even back in the seventies, he was getting six-figure salary offers from Fortune 500 firms. Instead of compromising his principles and taking Easy Street, he worked for pennies helping unions with their books and financing, while immediately jumping into anti-imperial writing and publishing, and has never looked back.

Pepe Escobar (<https://twitter.com/RealPepeEscobar>) is a CWG member who has evolved over the years. Formerly an edgy, more mainstream writer for *Asia Times*, he has since become one of the most powerful anti-imperialist voices in alternative media. With NATO trying to destroy Russia and now the Arab World, his thunderbolts are increasingly speaking hard truths to establishment power. He could have led a comfortable life writing for the BLP, but gave all that up to fight the good fight for the Global Majority.

Paul Craig Roberts was an Assistant Secretary of Treasury in the Reagan Administration. He could be making boatloads on the speaking circuit and getting wined and dined in the MSM. But world events outraged him. He threw all that away and is now a powerful anti-government tyranny author and journalist (<https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/>).

More inspiration comes from Michael Parenti. He got his PhD at Yale, all set up to be an MSM darling, but obviously the deans did not like what he was teaching America's future imperialists, so over the years he moved from school to school. Twenty books and three hundred articles later, he sacrificed the big bucks to stick to his anti-establishment convictions. A number of his eye-opening lectures are on YouTube. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Parenti).

As a Christian minister, Pulitzer prize winner Chris Hedges hewed to his religious convictions. A graduate of Harvard and then working at the *New York Times*, he refused to perform their seal barking tricks and was forced out. He has since become one of the leading anti-imperial, anti-war authors and journalists in the West (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Hedges).

All the aforementioned brave hearts and several others are my inspirational heroes.

As for me, I backed into my career as an author-journalist by accident, when I traveled across China and ended up writing *44 Days Backpacking in China*. At 69, surviving on a modest retirement income, continuing to teach online to supplement it, and getting extremely limited donations for my journalism, I can maintain my principles and passion, with nothing to lose, not wanting a Faustian pact with the BLP to ladder climb.

As I look out my window and gaze at the D-Day beaches of Normandy (<https://chinarising.puntopress.com/2022/06/06/dirty-dark-secrets-of-d-day-france-6-june-1944-with-crucial-background-in-world-war-ii-china-and-japan-china-rising-radio-sinoland-220606/>), I recall the wonderful French aphorism,

A clean conscience makes a soft pillow.

I sleep well at night.

*I love the crude Chinese joke about its three most important provinces. Guangdong supplies the brawn, as the manufacturing hub for Planet Earth. Shanghai offers the brains and culture, as the country's financial center

and cosmopolitan face to the rest of the world. And what does Beijing offer? Really BIG testicles, as it has the will and the force to keep the other two provinces under control, and the rest of the country on target!

**1990-1997, I was a high-flying businessman for two outfits. For the first one, I was country director for a grain trade office. Highlights included brewing Sino-American beer with Qingdao Brewery and conducting aquaculture trials on the PLA's farms. Next, I was the general manager of the first Mainland McDonald's bakery, which I installed, opened and ran. Those were the buckaroo days, all right!

Appendix I

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(<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-annual-report.pdf>).