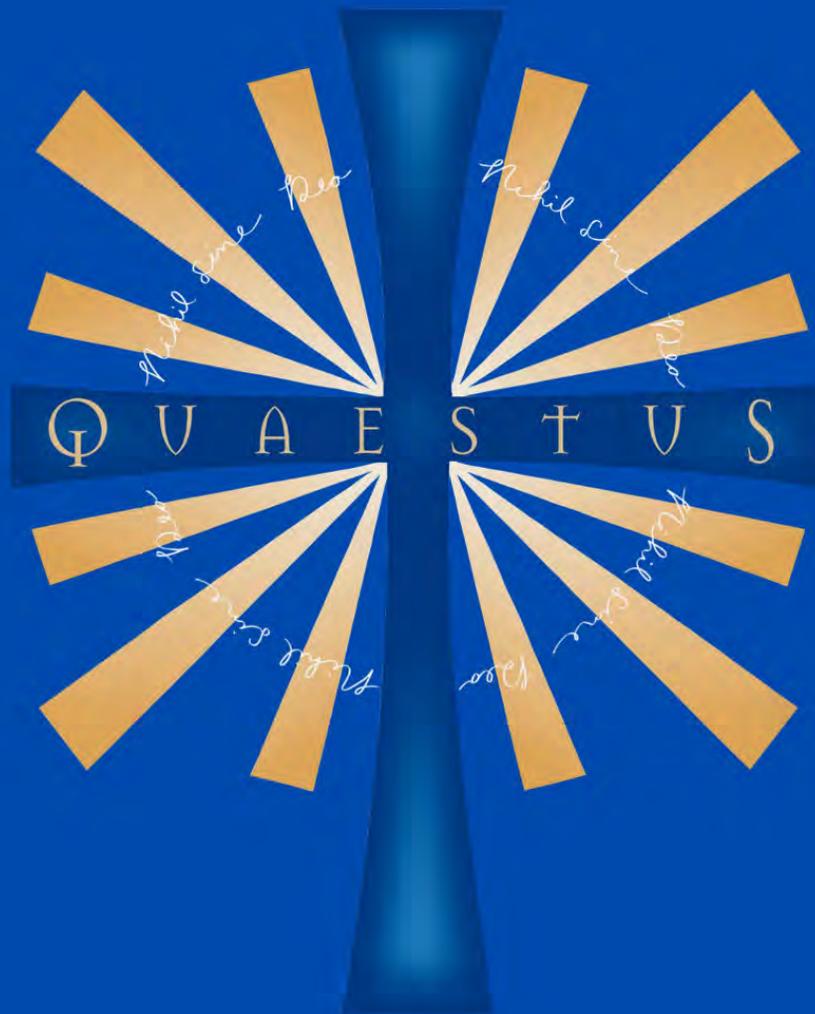


QUAESTUS

LIBERTY | FAITH | ECONOMICS



EROSIONS OF FREEDOM:
VOLUME IV NO. 1

DECEMBER 2022

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Our Mission

Quaestus is a student-led journal presenting ideas about Liberty, Faith, and Economics from a Christian perspective in order to promote human flourishing.

Our Vision

We aim to inspire the next generation of Christian thought and leaders by addressing global issues with sound moral and economic principles.

God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."

Genesis 1:22

Editorial Board



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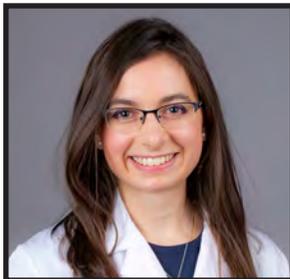
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So... What is Quaestus?

Because it will be most conducive to clear communication, I'm going to take this opportunity to be somewhat informal. Quaestus (*Kway-stus*) is basically a group for students who want to get people to talk about important topics. Together, we form an editorial board of between five and seven undergraduate or graduate students, led by Dr. Scott Niederjohn with Dr. Daniel Sem as an advisor. We run two writing contests, one in the fall and one in the spring. Student editors are either chosen from the winners of these contests or invited by the current editorial board after demonstrating writing ability.

Quaestus Serves Two Main Functions

First: we publish two periodicals a year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The fall periodical involves transcriptions from speakers at CUW's annual Liberty, Faith, and Economics summit. The spring periodical includes articles by students, faculty, and Quaestus editors. Any CUW student or faculty member can publish articles through Quaestus, although they must be accepted and peer-reviewed by the editorial board. The idea is that people can read the fall periodical for inspiration, then write articles for the spring periodical based on the themes of the fall periodical. Themes generally relate to free speech, economics, healthcare, and politics.

Second: we develop and lead forums to promote conversations on contentious topics. Our general model is to select one or more experts to speak on an issue. If we can, we will invite speakers with opposing perspectives. Our speakers will present publicly on the topic, demonstrating to the student audience that a healthy and productive conversation on this topic is possible. Students always get a chance to question our speakers at the end of the forum. In the past we have led forums on racial relations, *Roe v. Wade*, educational issues, and the like. This spring our topics will be climate change, gender and feminism, and religious freedom. Expect one forum each month of February, March, and April.

For the members of the editorial board, Quaestus serves as an excellent opportunity to practice writing, editing, and publication. We experience the peer-review process, develop strategies for marketing our publications, and learn to sharpen our thoughts. There are also opportunities to interact with leading experts in various fields, as well as chances to attend and present at conferences.

The following periodical includes transcriptions from the fall Liberty, Faith, and Economics (LFE) Summit at Concordia Wisconsin. This event is run by the Concordia Free Enterprise Center in association with the Acton Institute, an American think tank focusing on religion and liberty. The summit is held annually and has drawn numerous high-profile speakers including this year's keynote, Yeonmi Park. The focus of this year's LFE summit was freedom under pressure. A second periodical will be published in the spring including student and faculty articles related to this topic.

Ultimately, our goal as an institution is to practice fruitful conversations and careful thought. Quaestus, which means *profit* in Latin, has a special emphasis on things that are profitable for us to be thinking about and discussing. As you read the following transcriptions, we hope you will be inspired by them into further questioning of our world, conversations about truth, and perhaps even to step into publication yourself.

Isaiah Mudge
Editor-in-Chief

Economics, Politics, and Philosophy

ON THE BLUFF

Speaker Series - Spring 2023



Mr. John Stossel

February 22 | 6 PM

Zoom Webinar

Freedom and its Enemies

John Stossel is a television presenter, author, consumer journalist, and pundit. He is known for his career as a host on ABC News, Fox Business Network, and Reason TV.

101.7 FM “The Truth” Live from CUW

February 24 | 4 - 6 PM | Robert W. Plaster Collaboratorium

CUW's own Dr. Ken Harris will host his radio show from Concordia University Wisconsin as he explores the economics of the African American community in Milwaukee. Guests to include Dr. Rachel Ferguson of Concordia University Chicago and author of *Black Liberation Through the Marketplace*.



Dr. Anne Rathbone Bradley

March 1 | 6 PM

Robert W. Plaster Center Collaboratorium

Is Christianity Compatible with Economic Freedom?

Dr. Anne Rathbone Bradley is the George and Sally Mayer Fellow for Economic Education and vice president of academic affairs at The Fund for American Studies. Through this position, she works to enhance the reach of TFAS and the Foundation for Teaching Economics economic education programs.



Ms. Diane Hendricks

April 4 | 6 PM

Todd Wehr Theater

Promoting and Preserving the American Dream

Diane Hendricks is the sole owner of ABC Supply Co., Inc., the largest distributor of roofing materials in the United States and a leading distributor of interior and exterior building products in the nation, with over 17,800 associates, in 840 locations. She is Chairman of Hendricks Holding Company, NorthStar Medical Technologies and the Hendricks Family Foundation. She believes in civic responsibility and has made significant investments to help rebuild her hometown of Beloit.

Visit [EPP-SPRING23.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/epp-spring23) to register for all 4 today!

Quaestus Journal Interviews with Ukrainian-American Concordia University Students

Transcribed by: Natalie Bodnar

This year's LFE Summit marked day 225 of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Russia has been ruthless in its invasion, most recently implementing conditions to claim legal responsibility for the Ukrainian nuclear power plants in Zaporozhia.

Three Ukrainian student colleagues at the Ukrainian-American Concordia University in Kiev were asked to share their perspectives and personal histories since the war. Arsenii was able to escape the invasion and currently resides in Germany as a junior at the University. Maksym lives in Switzerland as a full-time student, working with the Response Ukraine Special Taskforce, which is an effort to assist Ukrainian churches in their humanitarian efforts. He also works for the Ukrainian Institute for Religious Freedom and serves as a translator for the NGO, Save Ukraine. Anton is a senior at the University studying management while also working as an intern at the Business Media Network in Ukraine.

After introducing themselves, Anton and Maksym discussed how their lives have changed since the war began and how their families prepared for evacuation. Anton shared, “Being brutally honest, my life has...gone downhill since the beginning of the invasion...my personality changed to some degree...[and] life in general in Ukraine has become difficult... [because] prices have changed...[due to] inflation and, of course, unemployment...is [a] reality right now...To give a little of my backstory, so before everything started, I got sick with COVID and I’m right now in Bucha and I’ve also been in Bucha [since before the war]...I recovered approximately February 20 but I faced another issue unfortunately, and reality is, I had a family dog. It was seventeen years old, and it died in the morning, so I had to bury it outside somewhere in Bucha. So that was...tough because I was sick: psychologically, I was exhausted and physically [exhausted] at the same time; but that was only...the tip of the iceberg. At 5 AM [on February 24] specifically, I was in my bed; my Mother [comes] barging into the room, and she is telling me, ‘The war has started!’ and I thought it was [all] a prank to be honest. It [sounded] like a joke so I went back to sleep because I didn’t believe [what she was telling me]. Somewhere between 30 minutes and an hour passes by, and my parents come in and tell me that the war has actually started. I woke up, I [went] to the downstairs living room—we all gathered there—we were watching TV...and of course the headlines stated that the war had started, and that was one of the moments that came in shock because I wasn’t expecting it... and it [said] ‘breaking news’ ...and [that] this is reality. One hour passes by...[and] I see Russian helicopters—at least ten or twelve—[and] they’re

just flying right above my head, and at first, I couldn’t understand who it was, but it turned out it was Russian helicopters...I saw missiles. They started shooting back and forth.”

“I also lived near an airport...where the largest airplane in the world, Mriya, was located at that time...it got destroyed because of the bombings and et cetera...after the bombings, [my family] realized that this was serious and we ran to our neighbors who had a cellar underground, and we hid there while there were bombings and...the Russian troops were landing in that airport...Three days later it was living hell for me because I had seen a dozen Russian helicopters...missiles flying above my head and even drones. I saw one day a drone—[it] was flying on top of a skyscraper, and [it] was scouting the area. The only good thing which I personally saw, which gave me hope and... [a] will to...live, was the aspect that I saw a [plane from] Kiev. It’s a fighter-jet and so that was the moment I realized that we have people fighting for us and protecting us. On February 27...my brother and I pressured our parents to flee the area because we knew that if we didn’t run away...we could’ve died. That’s reality. We could’ve been dead [right now]...we realized it’s now or never... luckily, we packed our bags as quickly as possible. We left a lot of stuff [behind]...we rushed to the car, we sped through all the way to Lviv...it was a huge risk for us but at least we arrived late in the evening. Next morning I was on my feet and I decided to go to a volunteering center because I knew that was the right thing to do...we [Ukraine] need help right now, and [volunteering] was a dire need. It was [overall] a terrible experience, and I can’t understand what people have gone through. So, this is my short story and background...maybe Maksym wants to add more.”



Maksym added, “My answer will be shorter because for me, my life changed even before the war began, as I have a big family and in late January, we made the decision to leave Ukraine as we felt unsafe in the face of a possible conflict...My story is quite different than most of my peers’ because I have never heard an air-raid siren actually; I’ve never been under a shelling, as [my family] left before [the war] started. However, my life has changed dramatically too as it’s unusual and, in many ways, uncomfortable to be detached from everything I know as home and from everything dear to me. Of course...I can no longer go to a café in Kiev with my friends; of course, I can’t go to my church; I [haven’t slept] in my bed for over eight months now. In March I saw a video of the very place where essentially my entire childhood happened being shelled with missiles. So yes, I think that my life has changed very much even though I was not in Ukraine when the war started.”

Arsenii and Maksym then shared more about Russia’s past behavior and how the war appears to be an extension of Russia’s attempt to eliminate Ukraine’s sovereignty. Even though Ukraine exists as a culturally, politically, and linguistically separate state, Ukrainians understand that Putin is relentless to exterminate them if

that’s what unity with Russia demands: clearly, residential areas are deliberate targets of this war.

Arsenii first shared his story, “I was living in Kiev when the war started, but I’m originally from Donetsk. It’s a big industrial city at the eastern part of Ukraine. It was occupied in 2014...Still here in Germany, and from other [foreign countries] I always hear the question, ‘Ukrainian, do you speak Russian or Ukrainian?’, and that’s a tough one because back then [when I was] living in Donetsk, I [had] never heard Ukrainian because—it doesn’t mean that no one supported...the [Ukrainian] government or no one supported the course of our country: it’s just [a] geographic peculiarity. While, for example, when I was in Lviv, in [this] big historically important city of western Ukraine, I saw no one speaking Russian...I think that’s the main point... [how] the country, its whole history, and people could be manipulated...As you may know, before 2014, our government was pro-Russian; it was led by Victor Yanukovich, [who] was a thug who became a president...by a set of coincidences and by Russian support and their secret service support [bribing] the elections and of course...throughout four years people were bombarded with pro-Russian propaganda. Some of them...especially in the eastern regions like Donetsk—some of them

really believed at least some of the notions of that [Russian] propaganda.”

Then, what happened in 2014...during the Revolution of Dignity...Russian-backed separatists took over governmental buildings in Donbas—the [regions of] Luhansk and Donetsk—and they manipulated people...[with] all the statements that Russia claims right now [such as], ‘OK, now they [Ukrainians] are Nazis and...[also] pro-western politicians...will destroy the country...’ Those people on the eastern part—some of them believed it [this propaganda] because...they were manipulated into these pro-Russian streams... Now...I can say that the region [of Donetsk] is just dying. It’s just a blackhole on a map because all the infrastructure, all the facilities, they were just deteriorated to the zero-level because



obviously it’s not a real country. [Despite false] claims [of being] a ‘democratic republic,’ it’s not a real country...I can say that throughout all our [historical] relations with Russia, the Soviet Union, the Russian Empire, that [particular] side of the globe was always trying to capture our country [Ukraine] through different ways—whether it was [through] an ‘alliance’ during Soviet times, whether it was [through] occupation, or whether it was [through] a full-fledged war, as we can see right now. So...yes Russian past behavior influenced [the current war]. The Revolution of Dignity...really stimulated them [the Russians] to [start a war] because they felt that they could no longer control the country [Ukraine] with just a puppet-president as Victor Yanukovich was. And that’s why I think...the war has started actually—they are no longer able to control us in any way except for military and power-control.”

Maksym concurred, “Just to add...to what Arsenii is saying—in more general terms, historically, Russia as a concept has always been an empire...[there] was first the Russian Empire... [then] the Soviet Union was an empire, [and now] the Russian Federation in its current state is an empire too. The only difference [between these three] is that the [Russian Empire was actually called an empire]...[and] as you can see by [Russia’s] actions and by their mindset, they all are empires...As for long ancient history...[it] is a historic fact that Ukraine, which was then the Kievan Rus, existed as an established entity when Moscow was just a swamp: there was nothing there [on the map]...Russia has been trying for long time to claim that Ukraine is just a lost part of their system, which should be reclaimed...[Russia] has been passively, and later actively, trying to pull Ukraine into their orbit with the specific goal of...absorbing it [Ukraine] back into their empire at some point. Our fight has been going on for centuries. The Revolution of Dignity was really a fight of the people of Ukraine against Russian influence... It was, yes, an internal struggle but it was not...two equal sides of a nation fighting: it was a nation against a tyrannic government installed by Russia, and it...wasn’t the first fight, it was the second revolution [that took] years for our independence [to be recognized]...The Orange Revolution of 2004 was about the same

thing—about a Ukrainian nation fighting Russian influence. When in 2014, Russia saw that the people will always fight back against tyranny and Russian influence, their only choice left—in their perverted, totalitarian minds—was aggression. So that’s why the war started and how Russia’s past behavior influenced it [the war].”

With the recent annexation of four Ukrainian territories, Russia now controls almost 20% of Ukraine. Despite this, the Ukrainians’ Christian faith and their spirit of freedom has not died down but has continued to live on, strengthening day by day, hour by hour. Ukrainians are motivated by a powerful national identity by a people who seem to bear a united struggle towards independence.

Arsenii expanded on what exactly built that movement, saying, “There are a lot of people now in Ukraine who say that...there are no ‘good Russians,’ that they are all imperialists...Frankly, I was always against such claims because I don’t want to claim...that [a] whole country, or [a] whole nation, or every person [can be characterized by] some vague explanation [or trait]...Still, I do believe that a broad statement about Ukrainians—about bravery, about national identity—[can be made] because...people are now fighting for their [freedoms] and they [would] sacrifice anything for [freedom]...Even from ancient times when Cossacks were in Zaporozhia...I think Ukrainian people just got used to the understanding that there is no long-term benefit for...sacrificing...dignity and...freedom...because...your freedom could be heavily restricted in the future when a new government...will come and try to enslave you and your neighbors and your family...I think there inherently exists in all of us [that spirit] that we don’t want to give up our identities, our national sense of freedom.”

Anton elaborated on why he thought Russia instigated this war, sharing, “Russia is doing this because [it] wants to claim territories they think is rightfully theirs...we have to understand that the world has changed...hundred[s of] years [have] passed—a lot has changed. All [of Ukraine’s] borders were set-up a long time ago... It’s really a shame that the territorial issues are still being solved by power...Russia claims that it is protecting its citizens on our territories—that’s one

of their claims—but it’s a very weak argument, and it contradicts itself sometimes because all the people in Ukraine have the same exact rights, so it doesn’t matter where you’re located. In my opinion, it’s a political issue...and Russia wants to see their leaders in Ukraine—and not the ones that we have chosen as the people. In my perspective, there are two lessons to be learned. I’ll tell you one of them: genocide is not a form of tool to resolve any conflict—it just doesn’t work—God forbid anyone to ever see this—and the second lesson...is that not a single nation in the world should resolve other nations’ political interests by power. [Resolution of conflicts] should be done individually within the nation by themselves.”

Maksym expanded on how he has witnessed religious freedom being affected by this war: “I have been working for the Institute of Religious Freedom in Ukraine for a little over a year now so everything that I am going to say now...is less of an opinion and more of a factual statement. I will provide material to back [up] what I am saying. I have a report that was released just last month, and I will share the link. You will be able to get [the report] by contacting the organizer of this event [Dr. Niederjohn]. This report...lists the attacks on religious freedom in Ukraine by Russia. I wanted to share a couple of facts and stories.

Ukraine is one of the most pluralistic and free countries in terms of religious freedom. No one is persecuted or restricted for their religion in Ukraine. Of course, Christianity is...the majority [religion] but we also have Muslims; we also have Jews...They are all allowed to freely practice their religion...but in Russia, it is just a different story. Russia has [a] dominating religion...the orthodoxy of Moscow Patriarchy, which they made into a political tool. They are suppressing and persecuting other religions and even other forms of Christianity. What is happening in Ukraine is that...territories which Russia occupies...are [also] doing the same thing, which is against international humanitarian law: You cannot change laws in occupied territories, but [Russia is] doing just that. For example, Jehovah’s Witnesses are a completely pacifist organization, but Russia deemed them extremist for [purely] political reasons. Now [this] was happening in Crimea

before—it is happening on occupied territories such as Kherson, Zaporozhia, Donetsk, Luhansk right now—they are persecuting Jehovah’s Witnesses, which are allowed to freely practice their religion in Ukraine—but if Russia takes over, [they would be persecuted] and some of them would be sent to jail, just for their beliefs.

I can give you another personal example. So, people are being tortured...at this moment, [corrupt] Russians are torturing someone, and they have been [doing so] since the war began and even before that. Religious figures, leaders—there are no exceptions. Nobody makes an exception for a pastor. In the report that I am sharing, there are personal video testimonies of over ten people who testify on either how their church or their religious site was attacked, or how they [themselves] were assaulted by Russian forces. [To share a personal example] my church...is based in a Kiev suburb, and we have our rehabilitation center in...a village northeast of Kiev...The center was attacked at the very beginning of the war. It was late February or early March, and the pastor, who is the head of the center, he was imprisoned, tortured, and kept in a sewer pit for several days. This is...a man who is familiar to me...I don’t know him personally, but my grandparents know him personally...so he was sitting in that sewer pit; this is a very famous story. It has [reached] many Ukrainian outlets; and again, it is in [my] report, along with his video testimony. [While in the pit] he [the pastor] heard people being tortured and executed on the surface [above him]. He was left alive by a miracle. Essentially, the Russian troops didn’t finish him off; they left him in...a barn...This is just one of many stories.

A lot of pastors—they are tortured—to force them to cooperate with Russian authorities. So, Russians are trying to explicitly use faith and explicitly use churches and other religious institutions as tools of influence by coercing and forcing their leaders into submission. And this is all documented and proven; again, I am not mistaking anything...these stories aren’t even [by] word-of-mouth; it’s all verified information, which you can personally see [and read] for yourself. I’m not going to list more brutal examples here but they’re all [in] the report. Over 270 religious buildings and churches were damaged since the

beginning of the war—damaged or destroyed. Many...beautiful Orthodox churches, which were [standing] for centuries, were destroyed. An interesting fact is that the biggest number of destroyed churches and religious sites as belonging to the Orthodox Church of...So Russians are destroying even their own churches of their own religion. They don’t care. People of almost any faith cannot freely practice their religion; they are persecuted by Russia...if they are just regular practitioners, they will be probably restricted in their meetings. Their houses of worship may be used as a firing position; and if they are leaders, they will be subjected to death threats, torture...some of them have been...executed for refusing to cooperate...you...break, and this strategy usually has been used [for leaders] to sign documents for cooperation [which] then [have them] leave. You either break or you just never get out alive, and that is a reality...and this has been happening not only since February 24 but actually since 2014. It’s just that the scale has been multiplied one-hundredfold since the beginning of the full-scale invasion.”

Arsenii then spoke of America’s position in the war, saying, “I’ll be candid...first of all, I always knew that countries were inherently egoist...I didn’t expect anyone to help...I’ve experienced the same [thing] when we were fleeing Donetsk in 2014...it was such a pity for me to read all the stories that, ok, they [other countries] are all really concerned with the situation, [that they] will impose some sanctions. But still, these sanctions are just...to cover that point that ‘We at least did something.’ That’s the reason why I didn’t expect anyone to act—literally...maybe some Baltic countries because they are also interested in keeping...their borders safe...because as you can...understand, if Ukraine fell, I think no one would stop a power country... My opinion of the U.S. and of neighboring countries changed a lot because although military expenses are super high, they are skyrocketing... but still it’s not that full support that could be given to us...from all over the world. Still, I’m thankful for any drone, any vehicle, any dollar that is given to Ukraine, and that’s why, yeah, my opinion dramatically changed.

As for NATO, obviously they are not

acting because [becoming involved] would cause the war to become the third world war, and it could...result in the whole destruction of the... earth...NATO is not there to help...it's not their authority to...solve...conflicts; it's an alliance to protect its members, and it was our [Ukraine's] mistake that we didn't become part of NATO when they've actually opened their obligations to Ukraine before 2014. Concerning the U.S. and concerning the whole world, my opinion positively changed because I didn't expect anyone to act; and as for NATO, it became neutral, as it was before the war.”

Maksym added, “I want to add a little bit to what Arsenii said because I slightly disagree on some of the opinions that [he] has...While we are immensely grateful to NATO and our western allies—and most of all, to the United States—who have in their supply of, especially armored vehicles...are second only to Russia, because Russia still supplies more [vehicles] by letting us capture them, but we are very thankful to the U.S. But for NATO, there is a problem we have with NATO, and it's that ...[their] statements are vague; they do not have a concrete roadmap...They're not saying whether they want Ukraine to join NATO, they're saying NATO is always open; but when Ukraine has filed for NATO membership, their responses have been vague and incomplete. They are saying something that is not affirmative and not negative at the same time. They are trying to... walk the edge...and they're still afraid of Russia. They're afraid that Russia is going to...escalate. They even say that they will accept Ukraine, but I think that it would be amazing if NATO would have the courage to at least say that they would accept Ukraine—for example, when the war is over or in 2025—[and] say something concrete, say something that can be relied on and not just statements [such as] ‘We are open to everyone,’ and...[their PR] is a bit problematic but their support is invaluable.”

Anton continued, “Realistically, it will be a difficult path for Ukraine specifically to become a nation allied with Europe—and, for example, the EU—because there is a plethora of aspects. [For example] you have to take into consideration that there could be internal issues, and of course... adjustments that we [Ukraine] would have to

make...certain standards, guidelines...economic regulations...It doesn't mean that we shouldn't focus on that vision, or pursue it, or just neglect it...We've been accepted as an EU candidate; so, we do have perspective...on becoming part of [the] European Union...becoming a nation allied with Europe will...require tremendous amounts of work, and the key element...in diplomacy, politics...is time. Time is one key [element] we shouldn't forget about; it's a tool that can make it or break it, and you can't change anything about it...I personally believe that Ukraine does have the capabilities to become a nation allied with Europe...We do have so much perspective...We have natural resources, our culture...aligns with values, beliefs of Europe...it's just time—it's going to take adjustments and et cetera. What I do hope is that we will...we as people will always value... traditions and cultures of others, and respect other people's beliefs.”

In order to expand on how Russia has influenced civil discourse both today and before the war, Maksym warned, “What is important to know here is that there is still media controlled by Russia—even in Ukraine. Russian propaganda is, of course, blatant and very similar to what happened in Nazi Germany—but that's only the surface-level of Russian propaganda...There [are]



deeper and more subtle ways that Russia affects people's minds. There...is Russian propaganda that doesn't look like Russian propaganda, and that's the most dangerous type of...Russian propaganda because...there is propaganda that is manned to just make you question something, make you uncertain about some facts that are presented, for example, by the Ukrainian side...there can be articles or opinions, which say, 'Maybe Ukraine should just give Crimea away to Russia to end the war.' And this sounds like an opinion...like it is a brainstorming for peace...Not all people who spread Russian propaganda even know they are doing so.

For example, Elon Musk has been tweeting a rhetoric which is heavily pro-Russian from our point of view, as Ukrainians, in the past couple of days. And, of course, I'm not saying that Elon Musk is paid off by Russia, that would be ridiculous...what I'm saying is that people who believe in Russian propaganda...those people, they spread it [the propaganda] with or without intent... For example, Elon Musk said, 'If Ukraine makes another referendum on the occupied territories, that's maybe the way to solve [the war],' and... this is Russian narrative. While [a statement like this one] may sound neutral...this is beneficial for Russians. And again, it is a thin line; I'm not saying Elon Musk has been paid for by Russians, I'm not saying he consciously wants to support Russia; what I'm saying [is] that, unconsciously, by making this statement that to him and many other people, [this] may seem like just an opinion, he is spreading the Russian narrative...Many of his statements are grounded on Russian narratives, not on...history...It's those subtle manipulations, which may seem...not significant, and maybe in isolation, they [aren't]; but when you look at [these statements] and they come together, you see that Russia keeps...trying to control the narrative...They are successful even if they made just a couple people doubt, 'Well, is that really genocide?'—that's what they want, that's it."

Arsenii added, "I'm really into psychology; and also, one of the topics I'm really...interested [in] is propaganda...I have quite a personal story... as I said, my grandparents lived in Donetsk. My grandad—he is one of the smartest men I've ever seen...if I'm not mistaken, he was...head of

safety at one of the coal mines...he still reads tons of books...after the war started, obviously [the] Russian propaganda machine started working 120%...I was just astonished at the statements he was making...He was making to me—his grandson—these statements about Nazi people in Kiev, [also] that there are biochemical laboratories in Ukraine...this struck me to the deepest of my heart...and I started to research. So, how average propaganda works—there are three types of information that any propaganda proposes; first, is a total lie; second, is...grayish information [such as] a half-lie, half-truth; the third type of information is truth...basically what they do is they take a semi-truth, they take truth, then they distribute it [and propose it] that way; and people believe in it...So [for example] if I take just these 20 photos [of 20 Neo-Nazis in a city of 5 million] and make one photo appear in one separate news article for 20 days in a row, then...[an audience is] seeing for 20 days in a row, Neo-Nazis in that city, and that [is] how [a people can be] manipulated. So, [a] propaganda machine, unlike Russian military, is very good and is very intelligent, and we shouldn't underestimate it."

Anton related, "CNN, BBC, ABC News—they've been quite accurate with all of the information being delivered...much of the information was delivered by reporters right there...on the battlefield. We have to, however, understand that what's going on—and I also watch and read international news, though mostly I watch [and read] Ukrainian news...in U.S. and maybe other nations, [people] don't get more details. They get the overall story—and get some portions...of it—but the reality is there [are] additional details that only the citizens are going to know...because there's always censorship, that's one aspect you should understand but again, the coverage, was pretty spot on—it was accurate, it wasn't manipulated, it wasn't changed, it wasn't somehow...repackaged...We also have to understand that [the war] has been prolonged for a long period of time—the invasion specifically of Russia on Ukraine—and international and Ukrainian mass media...keep getting insight regarding the current situation in Ukraine, which is also a 'thank you' and a positive aspect which should be taken into consideration."

Arsenii spoke from his personal experiences living in Germany, sharing, “I definitely agree with Anton because...these big media companies...give you the big overall picture...Two days ago, one...citizen or soldier...found a bucket full of teeth...that were just [torn] off by someone who was torturing the citizens or military, and obviously, such a moral disgust...would not be a part of [a] CNN article, for example...When we were leaving Ukraine, before we moved to Germany, I [had] been living for one month in Hungary, and as you may know...is pro-Russian...and you may also have heard that Germany is...supportive...[A] statement that is true for both Hungary and Germany is that...average citizens [in these nations] show tremendous support to anyone who is there and is Ukrainian... [However] there is fake information that comes from the governmental control of media... it’s mostly not what the people say but what governmental authorities say.”

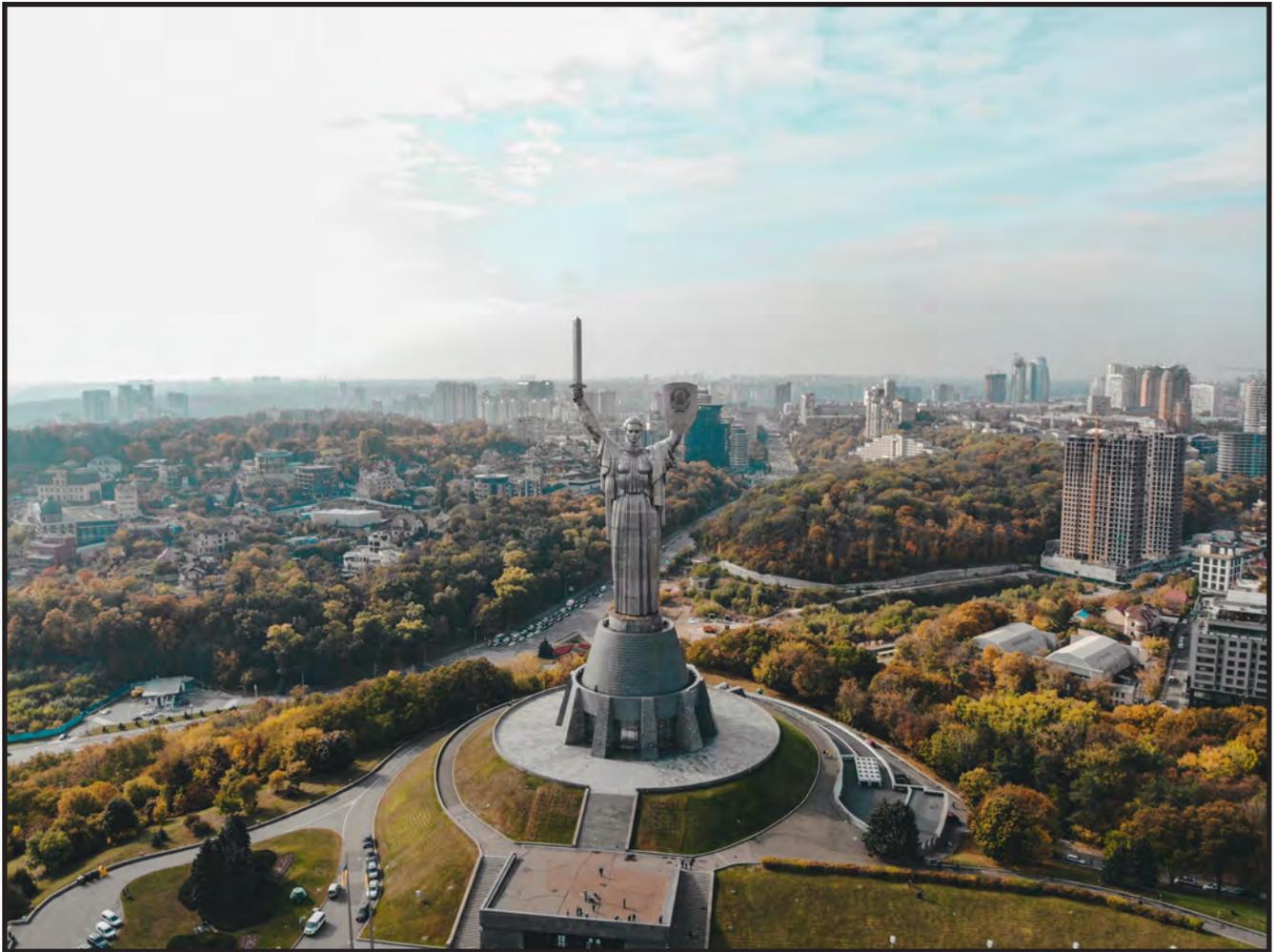
Maksym added, “I want to make just one example. As you know recently there have been...so-called referendums...referendums were meant to show that it is the will of the people of the Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporozhia regions, to join Russia. And, of course, they were a joke, just like any election held under Russian control with their votes being...97, 98, 99%. I don’t know why they didn’t go over 100; probably their computer was broken. I want to give an example of coverage. So, Reuters, which is one of the biggest media outlets out there—they posted this on September 27, and then they edited it, but I saved the article because I knew they were going to edit it. But this is how a lot of people got their first impression: the article said in the headline, ‘Big Majority Said To Favor Joining Russia in First Vote Results on Future Occupied Ukraine Regions.’ Why is this a problem? When I first read this headline on Twitter, my first reaction on this was maybe Reuters head...had a day off...because they have just ironically written in a headline of one of the biggest news outlets in the world—without any notes that the referendums are fake, that they are not to be believed—they just throw that a big majority is said to favor joining Russia, and they called it a vote. They didn’t call it a so-called referendum or...worthless paper[s] being

wasted at gun-point, which it actually was. They called it a ‘vote,’ and this is what I mentioned about subtle Russian propaganda; this is how it works. You just [conveniently] forget to mention something; you just call fake referendums a ‘vote;’ you just say that people are really in favor, and this is all it takes. They edited it later, they deleted the Tweet, but...a lot of such mistakes can be seen that are made by Western media. Sometimes those mistakes seem less of a mistake and more of an intention...”

In his final statements to the audience, Arsenii warned, “When I moved to Germany and obviously lost everything that I had because we were living in a host family with my family...for a month. Living in someone’s house, as you can understand...doesn’t feel so good. I realized that my inner happiness level—it remained the same... In Kiev [before the war] I had everything but just didn’t value it: the thing is, when everything is cool and everything is great...that is how our psychology works...What I still see in America from my point of view [is that] you [Americans] are really concerned with some topics that come to the point of discussion just because everything is great in America...I compare that situation with my situation...[with] what we have in Ukraine, and I realize that...people in developed countries—like Germany, like America, like Canada—they have to embrace what they have right now—that they don’t have a war on their landscapes, they have a good medical system...and just enjoy the state you have right now and embrace it; don’t fall out inside the nation due to some small troubles that ‘someone tweeted something’...[You] just have to be concerned with more basic needs [such as] being safe, being healthy, and being in a good country—and just...respect what we have right now.”

Maksym likewise prepared a closing statement, declaring, “Freedom is something you fight for. If it’s not actively defended and nurtured, freedom will always decay and die out. With that, freedom is not a thing you fight for once; freedom is a constant struggle. Our legendary heroes and defenders fought for freedom in the 14th century; our great-grandfathers fought for freedom in 1940s and 1950s; our parents fought for freedom in 2004; we are fighting for freedom since 2013,

and the fight will go on—tomorrow, next year, in fifty years, in one hundred. Fighting for freedom has been our identity since when we were born as a nation, and if we ever die as a nation, we will die fighting for freedom; but until then, for as long as we exist, even if invaded, annexed, or imprisoned, we will always be free. Slava Ukraini! Heroiam Slava!”





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Taiwan—Security and Freedom

Transcribed by: Ben Dubke, Senior Editor

Dr. Lamont Colucci is professor of political science at Concordia University Wisconsin. He is a senior fellow in National Security Affairs for the American Foreign Policy Council as well as a foreign policy commentator for a variety of national publications. Dr. Colucci regularly speaks on a wide range of topics, from United States national security and foreign policy to economic and financial profiles of various countries. He was also a diplomat for the United States Department of State. Dr. Colucci gave this presentation at Concordia University Wisconsin as part of the Liberty, Faith, and Economics Summit in October 2022.



We'll talk today about Taiwan. I've spent time in China and Taiwan, and I'll bring you some of that perspective. The subtitle for this talk could be "How did we get into this mess?" The national security problem we have faced since 1949 is a policy the United States adopted called strategic ambiguity. The idea of strategic ambiguity is that the United States can maintain flexibility while also making guarantees. In the case of Taiwan, we have an official, state-to-state, diplomatic relationship with the People's Republic of China, and we do not have that official relationship with Taiwan. Yet we can still have the relationship equivalent, and we do not have to commit to any particular action regarding Taiwan because we have not made an official agreement with them. The theory behind strategic ambiguity may be sound, in a way. It gives the United States the ability to pivot, move, and react to crises as it chooses, not governed by some organization or treaty such as NATO. NATO is very clear: an attack upon one is an attack upon all. Yet because of the duration of strategic ambiguity, of this ambiguity over time, here we are in the situation we are in today.

To understand that situation, we need a basic understanding of China's foreign policy and strategic concepts. China is currently classified as a "pacing threat." This means China is a clear competitor, in some areas trying to be superior to the United States, in some areas equal to the United States, in some areas inferior. That is a powerful statement, considering where China was twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. China's strategic vision is based on three foundations: they want

strategic independence; they want to maintain their territorial sovereignty; and they want to project that power, first into Asia and then beyond. In defense, they rank 3rd in the global firepower index, which is a quantitative attempt to rank the world's militaries according to not just guns and missiles, but in all elements that make up military power.

If you want to understand the China-Taiwan issue, we have to delve deeper than the news. We really have to look at Chinese foreign policy over the last 500 or 1,000 years. If you look at some of China's foreign policy goals from the Ming and Qing dynasties, the last two dynasties in China, we can see elements of their imperialism being resurrected today. That's pre-communist. In other words, many people misunderstand that every country has certain strategic imperatives regardless of their type of government. Russia, for example, has a strategic imperative, and has for centuries, of creating buffer states, and unfortunately they consider Ukraine a buffer state between themselves and the West. I'm not defending these strategic imperatives; I'm simply stating that they are reality.

The debate in Chinese foreign policy during the Ming and Qing dynasties was, "Do we want to be an inward-looking, isolated, and very protected society, or do we want the reverse?" People who deal with strategic issues like to point to the story of Admiral Zheng He. He convinced the Chinese emperor to launch a massive expedition called the Treasure Fleet. They had this incredible navy, incredible merchant fleet aside from warships, and they sailed all across

the Indian Ocean and parts of the Pacific. It was an incredible military-economic juggernaut. When he returned to China from his final voyage, it was decided that the negative influence of outside forces was too great, that it outweighed the benefits, and the emperor burned the fleet down and closed the borders. Many people in top Chinese leadership today realize that was a mistake and are determined never to make that mistake again.

Another aspect of Chinese foreign policy is that China has an interesting ability to initially appear non-threatening in every statement and diplomatic action, and then they engage in some heavy doses of realism. Then, when there's a serious pushback from the United States or United Nations, they will try to convince the world that they are a victim of Western imperialists. It's a fascinating and genius method if you can pull it off. You first appear nonthreatening, then you engage under the table with massive levels of aggression, and when pushed, you then claim to be the victim of the very people you engaged the aggression upon. So we are witnessing in China a very aggressive form of nationalism, especially during the administration of President Xi.

The problem the Chinese government has (and this could be amplified greatly over the Taiwan issue) is their ability to dial up the fury, rhetoric, and propaganda, and their tendency to unleash the Chinese people into rampages. We saw this, for example, when the United States mistakenly bombed the Chinese embassy in Serbia during the Clinton administration. The problem is that each time China does that, they dial it up. They've had very little success in dialing it down without the use of force. If you look at Taiwan, China could easily dial up the rhetoric to cause a furor in China about the Taiwan situation. I question whether on that issue they would be able to dial it back. One thing the news doesn't report is the massive amount of civil unrest in China. We don't even know the full extent of uprisings, especially in the interior. Inside the interior of China (roughly 70% of the country), the uprisings and unrest get so out of control that China must call in what they call "the people's armed police." It's not the army or the police, but a militarized

security service that in many ways looks like the military.

China also has a great desire, and they have for a very long time, for a buffer state. They think the buffer state should probably be in southeast Asia, places like Burma, Vietnam, and North Korea. They have mapped out a policy they call the "first island chain," which means they believe that region is Chinese sovereign territory. When they strategize, their goal is to push the United States (militarily primarily, but any American influence) out of that first island chain. One of China's policies that has been very successful so far is President Xi's "One Belt One Road" initiative. This is an attempt to link Chinese markets and economic power to the rest of the world. Some people imagine it as a 21st century Silk Road. The problem with One Belt One Road, aside from the fact that it is an attempt to replace the United States as the number one economy and currency, is that they've only been able to advance this through predatory economic practice. They suck countries in with massive loans that they can never repay, and when they can't repay, China turns up the heat about other ways they could be compensated, such as building a naval base in the other country's territory.



Today, China is no longer asking the question, “Will the United States come to the aid of Taiwan?” but rather, “Can the United States beat us in the conflict?”

On the American side, there’s an old debate: What is China? Is it an enemy, is it a competitor? During the Clinton years, some tended to call it a “strategic partner.” That policy was prevalent among both political parties. The theory was that if we could engage China at the corporate level, we could somehow change Chinese political culture to become more liberal, open, free, and democratic. For decades, that was the standard response of the center in American politics. When I was in the state department, some of us said, “That’s insane. That will never work.” Those of us in that era were seen almost as war hawks, trying to agitate for no reason. One of the leading lights on that side was a famous American household name, Ambassador Jim Lilley. He kept saying, “This can’t work because there are strategic reasons that overcome business and economic reasons why China will never be able to accept that.”

Let’s shift to Taiwan. Taiwan is a difficult situation because both the Chinese and Taiwanese sides invoke history. From 1885 to 1895, Taiwan was part of the Qing empire, so some argue it was part of China during that period. But then from 1895 to 1945 it was a Japanese colony, so that relationship between Taiwan and China was severed. Then when World War II ended, the Republic of China declared that Taiwan was part of the Republic of China, and that remained the case until 1949. In 1949, the Nationalist Party which ran the Republic of China was defeated by the communists in mainland China. The nationalists moved en masse to Taiwan and declared Taiwan the rightful government of all of China as the Republic of China.

From that moment on, we have what some people call “two Chinas.” One is the People’s Republic of China, which the United States in 1949 did not recognize as the legitimate government of China but that de facto controlled

mainland China; the other is the Republic of China which the United States recognized as the legitimate government of all of China which was located at that moment in Taiwan. The United Nations shifted in 1971 to derecognize the Republic of China on Taiwan and to recognize the People’s Republic of China on the mainland. From 1949 onward, China has viewed Taiwan as a “renegade province” or, as some translate, a “province under the state of rebellion.” Taiwan from 1949 onward as the Republic of China had an authoritarian, fascist-style regime under Chiang Kai-shek. So, from the United States perspective, both sides were dictatorships. One was a left-wing, communist dictatorship, and the other was a right-wing, militarized dictatorship that had been and remained an ally of the United States. This right-wing dictatorship in Taiwan began to soften in the 1990s, ultimately becoming a democracy. That’s critical for our purposes today. Until 1986, the government of Taiwan prohibited other political parties, but then they began to legalize other parties.

Taiwan politics is divided into two major political parties. The first is the Kuomintang (KMT), the Nationalist Party that left mainland China in 1949 and sought sanctuary in Taiwan. This party ruled China for almost the entire remainder of the 20th century, meaning they claimed to be the rightful government of all of China. The generalization about the KMT is that they tend to have an authoritarian mindset, and that lots of corruption exists related to links between politicians and corporations. In their opinion, Taiwan is already fairly independent, though not officially. They see no reason to cause rifts in international politics or their relationship with China, so they tend to support the status quo. The KMT has strong support in urban centers and the business community, especially in the north and the capital of Taipei.

The other party is the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). They had been under suspicion, only legalized in 1986. They are the more liberal party, believing more in democratic reform and free markets, with less statist attitudes. They are clearly the party that favors independence, or at least a trajectory toward

independence. Their base of support tends to be in the rural areas and the younger demographic. They do not believe the status quo is tenable. In their view, Taiwan must become an independent, democratic country that can make independent, democratic choices and ally itself with the West, in particular the United States.

The first contested election in Taiwan was in 1996. That election was very interesting because China figured that the Nationalist Party candidate, Lee Teng-hui, would win. On the surface of what I've said that may have been fine for China, but Lee decided that Taiwan's best interest was to transition away from the old Nationalist Party politics, not to go as far as the DPP, but that Taiwan needed to stand up stronger, that Taiwan needed more democratic reforms. China was so angry about the possibility of him winning (they figured the DPP candidate wouldn't win anyway), that they used gunboat diplomacy to try to sway the election. They used the typical routine—more mobilization, missiles into the sea, bellicose language. It backfired. Instead of bullying the Taiwanese people to do what they wanted, Taiwan elected Lee.

In the 2000 election, we had a very different animal. We had the potential of the DPP candidate favoring independence, Chen Shui-bian, winning the election and for the first time taking control away from the Nationalist Party. I was a watch officer during that period, and the United States government was seriously concerned at the highest levels that we would go to war. There was a real chance that if Chen won, that would be the final straw, that things would finally boil over from all these decades.

We worried that China could not tolerate the victory of a pro-independence candidate because they knew what would happen next: Taiwan would declare independence and attempt to break away entirely from the Chinese orbit. I remember those nights, 24 hours essentially with no sleep, because we just didn't know.

In 1996 we had moved in military assets, primarily naval assets in those days, and we did the same in 2000. China tried the same bullying tactics; it did not seem like they were going to work. And Chen Shui-bian won the election.

That's a critical moment, considering the title of this summit: Liberty, Faith, Economics. Because now, no one can argue that China doesn't have a democracy. It just happens to be in Taiwan. China has its first real, viable democracy in 5,000 years, and I think that gets lost in the news debates. We tend to focus on how many missiles the Chinese are throwing over the sea, or how many times they violate Taiwanese airspace. Those things are not unimportant, especially to military strategists, but if we are ever in a conflict with China over Taiwan, even if it is not full-scale war, we must remember that this would not just be an argument between two groups of people that both speak Chinese. This would be a conflict between communist China and democratic Taiwan, and if we believe American values have a stake in American foreign policy, that would be very difficult to ignore.

The DPP had their day for several years, then the Nationalists came in and tried to return to the way things were. They made more peaceful overtures to the mainland and tried to bring back the status quo, but the Nationalists didn't want to become subservient to China. They said, "Just let things go along as they have been. We're not officially independent, but everyone knows we are in most ways. China won't get angry because we won't actually declare independence. We'll have a lot of economic interchange"—and then we have Taiwanese business adopting the American attitude I discussed from the 80s and 90s—"If Taiwanese business can engage with Chinese business, if we can open factories and employ people, there can be cross-state economic relationships. Then they won't be interested in war because our economies will be so bound together." Just like the American business community missed the mark, I think there were many in the business community in Taiwan that didn't understand what was really at stake here, that it cuts into the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party if Taiwan leaves.

China proposed the "one country, two



The American Institute in Taiwan. Photo credited to Moore Ruble Yudell.

systems” solution to Taiwan in 2017. They said to Hong Kong in 1997, “You are rejoining China, but we will not alter your lifestyle, domestic political situation, press freedoms, or assembly freedoms for 50 years. On foreign policy and defense, you will acquiesce to us, but not in domestic affairs.” Those of us who had an alternate view immediately said, “There is no way they’re going to keep this promise,” because how could they allow a free market, democratic Hong Kong within a totalitarian, communist dictatorship? It makes no sense, but dollar signs and yuan signs prevailed, and people said, “This is great, we have a formula now: one country, two systems.” Then China went to Taiwan and said, “This can work. We’re doing this with Hong Kong.” For a few years people thought it might be true, so the Nationalist Party said, “Yes, this is the solution we’ll hang our hat on.” Then in the last few years, things in Hong Kong have gone off the rails, exactly how you could have predicted if you had a realistic view of Chinese policy. What could have been a Nationalist Party victory actually ensured the victory of the DPP candidate Tsai Ing-wen, the first woman president of democratic China.

I’ll end by addressing the “one China policy.” The problem with that phrase is that

American and Chinese officials will both say, “We believe in the one China policy.” It sounds like they hold the same policy, but that is not true. When Americans use the term “one China policy,” it is first of all an acknowledgement. The word we have used diplomatically is that we “acknowledge,” not that we accept or agree. We acknowledge that the Chinese side believes there is only one China.

Second of all, the one China policy is the idea that we will maintain diplomatic relations with only one side. President Carter decided that side would be the People’s Republic of China, but we also passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which allowed the United States to have essentially the same level of relationship with Taiwan, but unofficially. For example, instead of an American embassy in Taiwan, we have something called the American Institute of Taiwan. Strangely, it can issue visas and engage in discussions with Taiwanese officials, but it has the same status as a thinktank or a research institution. I have friends who were “stationed” in Taiwan, so they had to officially resign from the foreign service and then be hired by the American Institute in Taiwan. They would serve their rotation, magically get credit in the foreign service for that time, and magically be

rehired into the official foreign service when they left the American Institute in Taiwan. To some degree, you could call this a game, but it was all part of the delicate dance to avoid problems with mainland China while maintaining a de facto relationship with Taiwan.

Another thing about the Taiwan Relations Act is that when the Carter administration passed it in 1979, it was a choice between an authoritarian dictatorship in Taiwan and a communist dictatorship in China. The choice now is between the same totalitarian, communist system on mainland China and a democratic, free China on Taiwan. In international law, there's a basic concept called *rebus sic stantibus*. It means that if the same conditions exist now as when the treaty was established, then the treaty should be enforced. When we consider the Taiwan Relations Act, we must ask, "Do the basic terms when the treaty was made exist now?" The answer is no, because now we have a democratic, free Taiwan, so one must question whether the original 1979 agreement can be invoked.

I think the United States will soon be faced with some difficult decisions. The Biden administration recently endorsed what some are calling the "porcupine solution." The porcupine solution is to give Taiwan enough weapons and arms to withstand a blockade by mainland China and to make it impossible for the Chinese to invade without a hard, rough slog. That goal can't last forever. The concept would be to equip Taiwan as a porcupine long enough for the West to react. Then there's the follow-through: what would the United States, the British, or the Japanese be prepared to do if China does invade? There are plenty of war simulations out there, and some don't go well for the United States. You can look those up and decide for yourselves.

To conclude, strategic ambiguity was never a policy that made much sense. The argument is that it maintains American flexibility, but it also maintains ambiguity, which causes a lack of credibility. If I can pivot and do whatever I want, but I don't tell my adversary what I'm prepared to do, then I lose one of the primary tools in diplomacy—deterrent. Nobody desires war, casualties, or loss of life. If the way to stop that

loss of life is deterring the action to begin with, then you can't have an ambiguous policy.

An Indomitable Spirit: “The Hong Konger”

By: Harrison Hulse, Publication Editor

“We must show that liberty is not merely one particular value but that it is the source and condition of most moral values. What a free society offers to the individual is much more than what he would be able to do if only he were free. We can therefore not fully appreciate the value of freedom until we know how a society of free men as a whole differs from one in which unfreedom prevails.”

- F.A. Hayek

The worst atrocities of tyranny and authoritarianism have taught that humanity must understand the inestimable value and hefty price of freedom in order for freedom to be preserved among us. To such an end, it also takes a special kind of drive—a spirit that does not falter in the face of even the greatest challenges—to act on the wisdom that properly understands such freedom. These same ideas would find their way from the pages of Hayek’s works into the mind of a young, scrappy businessman from Hong Kong and rouse a wave of revolution unlike any other seen in this generation. In an age where many Americans take their freedom for granted, Jimmy Lai shines as a brilliant example of these qualities put into action against the growing tyranny of China in “The Hong Konger” by the Acton Institute.

The film traces Lai’s life to illustrate his growing understanding and spirit of freedom as he himself grew in age and experience. While documenting his fateful escape from mainland China in a fishing boat as a youth all the way to his valiant efforts to enlighten his fellow “Hong Kongers” with the truth in the printed pages of Apple Daily’s news, various knowledgeable talking heads provide key facets of Jimmy Lai that neatly humanize and characterize him as one joyously discovering the wonder of human freedom. Moreover, Acton takes great care to give accurate historical context to Jimmy Lai’s role in Hong Kong conflict in a way that does not distract but helps to inform their audience for maximum understanding of the tension between China and the people of Hong Kong. The footage selected for each portion of the film leaves a meaningful impression, depicting the heart-wrenching terror of the chaotic devolution of Hong Kong’s pro-democracy protests with equal gravity and grace as the inspiring and hopeful clips in which Lai proudly urges his countrymen to stand up against the injustices they lived through each day.

Even though it leaves its audience breathless with anticipation on a story that has yet to reach its conclusion, “The Hong Konger” conveys a hopeful message throughout: We can ensure the longevity of freedom if we, like Jimmy Lai, understand the blessings of freedom from within and without its embrace and also strive earnestly to protect it, no matter how stacked the odds may be against us. While you and I may not own a printing company or have the platform to reach entire countries at a time, Acton masterfully displays the indomitable will of Jimmy Lai, a man committed to guarding the well-being and flourishing of his fellow “Hong Kongers” at the very cost of his own freedom.

*Want to see the film for yourself? **It’s free!** Use this link to discover how you can learn more about Jimmy Lai and his fight for Hong Kong’s freedom:*

<https://thehongkongermovie.com>

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JIMMY LAI'S EXTRAORDINARY STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM



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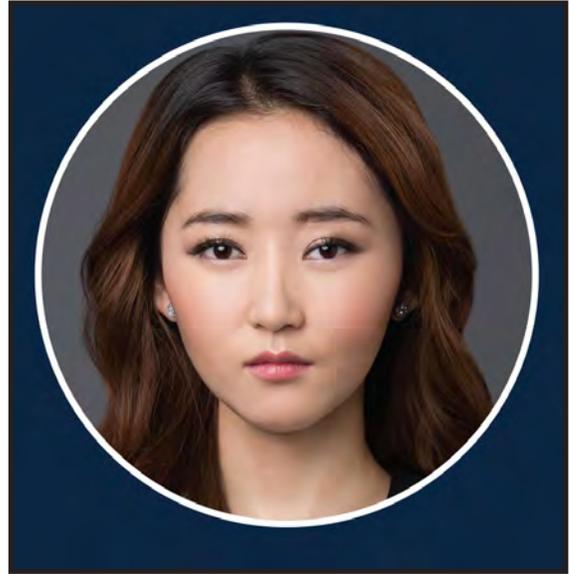
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To the Students of Concordia (Yeonmi Park)

Transcribed by: Isaiah Mudge, Editor-in-Chief

Yeonmi Park, a defector from the brutal North Korean communist state, has lived through experiences that few people of any age will ever know—and from which most will never recover. In this speech she gave to the community of Concordia University Wisconsin, Park retells her story in gripping detail and cautions those listening against the different kinds of tyranny she witnessed in North Korea and the seeds of similar erosions of freedom that she sees here in the United States.

(adapted from In Order to Live, Yeonmi Park's autobiography)



Hello everyone, good evening[...]

I'm so honored that you came out here, to see me and hear my speech. I was in college a few years ago and I remember every Thursday I'd be excited to get done with my classes. Now that you're here it means so much to me [...] There's a saying I wrote [in my book] that there are two things that I'm most grateful for. First that I was born in North Korea, and number two, that I escaped [...]

The reason why I'm so grateful to have been born in North Korea is that if I was not born in that darkness, if I was not born in that oppression, I would not have known how unique, how amazing, how miraculous it is to be in this free country. And if I had stayed in North Korea, first of all, right now I would not exist. I would be dead by 2007, when I was just a mere 13 years old. I just turned 29 and people tell me I'm young. You know in North Korea, at 29 I'm seeing the ending of my life. Most people do not make it to even after 50. So how can I not be grateful for being born there and coming here? I was hearing about how this forum is about civil discourse and freedom of speech, and that reminded me of the first thing that my own mother taught me when I was growing up in North Korea. The first thing I remember [...] was my mom telling me, "Don't even whisper," because birds and mice could hear

me. She said that the most dangerous thing I have in my body was my tongue. If I said one thing that was wrong in the eyes of the regime that was bad, they were not just going to kill me only. They were going to kill three generations of my entire family. What they say is, "kill the entire root." That's the cost of having a tongue and practicing the freedom of speech in North Korea.

I was born in 1993, in the northern part of North Korea, and I went to school like you guys. I went to school, but I never even saw a map of the world. I did not hear about biology or anything, the only thing I heard about was how amazing my dear leader was, and how powerful he was. And the other things they taught me was how horrible the American bastards were. So, it's so surreal for me right now, standing on this stage in front of so many bastards. But I was brainwashed to think that if I saw them, I would have to kill them, but now I'm here. I just became another bastard; I became American this year.

I remember seeing my textbook in school, it went like this, "There are four American bastards. You kill two of them. How many American bastards are there left to kill?" So even at 6 years old, 5 years old, everything they teach us, even the music, even sports [...] Everything that education in North Korea does is to brainwash. And helping us to not realize what a 27

horrible, oppressed country [we] are really living in.

So, when I was 13 years old it came to the point that we couldn't really find any more food. The reason why North Korea is poor is not because we're like Haiti or Africa, it's because the regime chose to starve us. So, for instance, there are a lot of people saying, "Why are these North Koreans so poor?" The reason is, if our tummy is full, we're going to start thinking about what the meaning of life is, what's out there, why our lives are not better. But if we are constantly starving, the only thing that we are allowed to think about is finding the next meal. If you do not find the next meal, you're going to die. Hunger means death in North Korea. So, most of the days growing up in the country I remember going to the fields and mountains, catching dragonflies, grasshoppers, but don't worry, they're very good for diets. They're very high in protein and you never get fat from eating that food.

Surviving on that, we still couldn't find food. So when my sister was 16 years old, she escaped to China first. I wanted to go with her, but I couldn't go because one day I had a very, very bad stomachache. My parents took me to the hospital and, you'd expect—this is a socialist paradise right—that everything is free there. Free education, free healthcare, but in that free healthcare system the doctors didn't even have mere electricity or X-rays and machines to see what's wrong in your body. They just literally rubbed my belly and that afternoon they just opened my stomach without any painkiller. And as soon as they opened my stomach, they realized it was just malnutrition and I had a high fever. But they still removed my appendix. I think they just wanted to say something to my mom afterwards. So I'm going to sue them when I go back. It's the one thing that Americans taught me, is how to sue people. We don't have that in North Korea. They stitched me back; I remember just fainting and screaming and fainting again during the surgery. And that's the last thing I remember of my home country. [Leaving] from the hospital [...] and there are piles of dead human bodies. And on top of the human body I remember this lady wearing these flower patterned pants.

And her eyes [were] hollow and her mouth was wide open and her body was frozen. And then you see these rats, going, start eating human eyes first, because that's the softest tissue that we have in our body. And there's laughing children, running around these rats and catching these rats that are eating human bodies. And that's when I realized, whatever it takes, I have to escape from North Korea.

As soon as I got out of the hospital, I found a little note that my own sister left me. She said, "Why don't you go find this lady, and she will help you to escape." At the age of 13 I found this lady and then she said, "Same day, you can go to China, I can help you." When you're so desperate you don't even ask why this person is helping [you]. It [didn't] even matter if she would kill me, it [didn't] make a difference because I was going to die anyway in that country. It was March 26, 2007. My mother and I were crossing the frozen river into China, through the boat she helped me to go with.

As soon as I arrived in China, the first thing I [saw] was my own mother being raped. And these people wanted to rape me too, but [my mother] saved me, offering herself instead. And then, we realized there are more than 30,000,000 men in China [and] because of the One Child Policy they cannot find women to marry them. So, they buy North Korean girls as sex slaves. And this is not the worst thing that can happen to North Korean women who escape. There are four places that North Korean girls like me ending up in China. The number one place we get demanded is organ harvesting. They find North Korean girls and they take their organs out and they discard their body. Nobody will look for these people, we are less valuable than even mere dogs they have in their houses. And that's the constant thing I heard, living in China, is these human traffickers telling me, "You're less valuable than that dog. Nobody cares, even if I kill you right now." Number two, they buy North Korean girls for brothels. They

drug these young girls, 10 years old, 9 years old, 15 years old, they rape them until they die. Usually, these girls don't last more than 3-6 months. And sometimes entire villages buy one girl and rape them until they die. Or entire families buy them and rape them until they die.

So right now, as a free person standing right here in this stage with you I'm talking, there are more than 300,000 North Korean girls just like me are being killed and raped and being sold every single day. My mother was sold for \$65, and they sold me for just over \$200 because I was a child, and I was a virgin. Two years I lived as a sex slave by the men who bought me. By some miracle two years later, I met missionaries coming from south Korea. These missionaries, they were risking their lives and helping rescue North Korean defectors. It's like during Nazi Germany, there were people helping Jewish people, exactly like that. They told us "There's a way out of China," and we asked them, "How do you get out of China? We don't have a passport, we don't have money, how do you get out?" And they said, "You have to walk across the frozen Gobi Desert into Mongolia from China." When you're so desperate, of course risking your life is the easiest thing you can do. So, at the age of 15—it was 2009, right after facing all these things in China—I chose to [do] that with my mother and a few other North Korean defectors. In February, we started crossing the frozen Gobi Desert.

By some miracle, I didn't die from the -40 degrees cold or the guards. I made it to Mongolia. And Mongolian soldiers eventually helped me to go to South Korea. So at 15 [...] I'm safe, I became free. But this is a whole other journey that I began. You'd think that's the end of story, right? That all this trouble ended. So, when I arrived in South Korea I had a major problem of trust. The first thing that I arrived in South Korea, these intelligence people telling me, first of all, well Kims are not gods. He's a fat dictator, he goes to the bathroom, he poops and he pees. And as a North Korean defector I was so brainwashed to think he was a god, he can read my mind, and this is what North Korean regime did. They eliminated all religion and they copied the Bible, so Kim Il-sung said he became a god. [He said] "I love you

guys so much I'm giving you my son," that's Kim Jong-un—he's like Jesus Christ—his body dies but his spirit returns forever. And that's how he knows what we think, how much hair we have on our head. Because he was copying Christianity.

So, in South Korea they were telling me that they were not gods, and first of all Americans were not bastards they were amazing, lovely people. And [they told me] the world that they knew, the different continents, there's a space and there are different races, and they were telling me everything about that [and] I had no idea. Like I was almost time traveling, I came from a different planet. It's like coming from Mars to Earth or something. But the hardest thing I remember was [that] if everything that I believed when I was in North Korea was a lie, then how do I know what you're telling me is not a lie? How do you ever trust again? And that was helped by reading a book by George Orwell, *Animal Farm* and *1984* [...] That book really helped me to understand what happened to me and what happened to my country.

Moving forward, even though I was living in South Korea, there were a lot of threats of my security that Kim Jong-un [was] constantly sending assassins and killing defectors and anyone who speaks out. And I'm actually still on the killing list of Kim Jong-un. And I was facing heavy discrimination in South Korea, so I had to get out of South Korea. So my second home, that was America. I came to America in 2016, January, starting my education at Columbia University New York. "Man," I was thinking, "I'm going to the promised land! I'm going to the best country that's ever existed in human history. Not just in the contemporary world but entire human existence, this has been the best country, and that's where I'm going to." I was so excited; I was like jumping up and down and thrilled [to be] coming to this country. And then, the first day at orientation at Columbia University, my ideal just completely shattered because at orientation [...] the professors were [telling] us that the only problem that exists in the world is not because of [...] dictatorship, but because of white men and because of capitalism. That's why the world is so screwed.

And [there were] then my fellow Columbia

university [students] who were wearing like I don't know \$100 yoga pants and drinking these green juice cups detox things, I don't even know. And they're vegans! They chose to eat like North Korean people [...] I was so offended. They were eating this rabbit food, like salad. I ate this plant in North Korea because I was starving, and they were eating this plant and paying like ten to twenty bucks and they're telling me how they're so oppressed. And I was really shocked, like maybe there's some mental disease spreading in America you know? I cannot fathom, and then I was starting [to tell] them my story, you know, actually maybe with all the problems America has, still, this is the best country we've ever gotten as humanity. And they were telling me, "You're brainwashed." Telling a North Korean that I'm brainwashed by white men again.

And then of course there's a constant threat that I have to respect the students [by] conducting in the code we have, I need to make sure that students can have a safe place. Safe places not from being raped or being hit by other people, it's emotional safe space. Like where people cannot hear anything that upsets them or offends them. And then in class, like I just learned English a few years ago before coming to America by watching Friends TV show, and then suddenly in this lecture room every single class the professors were asking our pronouns. Some of them are Ze, like, I mean there are 50 something different pronouns. I just learned English by watching friends, there's no "they" in there, right? There's only "she" and "he." So of course I messed that up, it's not bad intention, I just don't know how to incorporate "they" as a pronoun yet back then. And then there was a "they," Justin, I called him, "him," even though he's they. "They" is gender fluid, does not know what he is. And then I called "him," so they come after me crying, I make they feel not safe.

I feel like, this is the end of civilization at this point, I mean, if you cannot pick that one word, and you think your life is ending? And then living in this financial hub of Manhattan, my friends working for the financial institutions, they're the investment bankers [...] they're having a very, very good career and they're winning in this free market system and they all go to therapy

all day long. All they're searching for is find the best therapist, and my agent was telling me "Yeonmi you're traumatized, you need to go see a therapist." So of course, as a North Korean, in North Korea by the way we don't have word for stress. Do you know why? Because how can you be stressed in a socialist paradise? You cannot be.

The regime simply [removed] words like "oppression, stress, gay, freedom, human rights," it's exactly what George Orwell writes in his book: doublespeak. If you do not know the word that means you do not understand the concept. And that's why it scares me right now that there's so much force in America trying to control the speech and what words we can say and what words we cannot say.

So, as a North Korean in New York City, of course I do not know what therapy is, I do not know what trauma is, and I ask how [...] a whole hour complaining about my problem to somebody costs \$250. And it was a 70% discount rate. I was like "no way," that's how much I was sold for you know? That's like the last thing I'm going to do.

As you just heard about why I'm here, because it wasn't enough for me to just escape coming here, because I know what those 25,000,000 people in North Korea are going through every day. I know what those 300,000 girls are going through in China. I wanted to tell the world about what's happening. As soon as I started speaking up, the people in American mainstream media and corporate world they were telling me I can't talk about that, because they have so much interest making money with China Communist party.

Nobody was willing to stand up for this truth. Nobody in Hollywood, nobody in DC, nobody anywhere. They do not want to talk about the North Korean issue because then they have to talk about China, what the Chinese Communist Party is doing behind the scenes, because they are the ones sponsoring this modern-day holocaust in North Korea. So now I'm getting cancelled in America, right? I was invited to speak at Samsung

Electronic in the US last year and right a few days before my speech, I got a call from the head of diversity and [he said] my political ideas do not align with their values so they cannot have me speak at their event. This is not the America that I know, this is a country where we can be equal despite our values and our ideas. And there are so many things that I see that are happening, those things that I saw in North Korea, [that] were happening in North Korea, but the American people do not understand.

Just a few examples that I want to give to you today. Number one is the idea of white guilt, white privilege. This is exactly the North Korean regime, what they did to control North Korean people and divide us from each other. So this concept, when I heard about white guilt and white privilege, I was so confused. Nobody that was born right now in America owned a slave, right? Nobody ever did that. So why on earth are you punishing people for something they didn't do? In North Korea [...] before I was even born, my fate was determined based on what my great, great grandfather did. Apparently, he had a small land in front of his house, so he was marked as a landowner. And therefore, his daughter and my mother, my grandmother, our blood was forever tainted in that system. So even though the North Korean regime said they were going to make us all equal, they eventually [divided] us into 51 different classes within the same people, based on what your ancestors did. And now in America when I hear white privilege, white guilt, that's so evil. You do not divide people. You do not punish people for something they did not do.

I did not choose to be born in North Korea, I think that was the greatest injustice that I've ever felt, being punished for your birthplace, being punished for something that you didn't do. Choosing your color of person [is] like choosing your country, nobody chose that. It was just a random event and we cannot ever go that path of North Korea. A merciless, dark, and evil country where [we] punish people for something like that. And I think that's why it made me come to you today, to preserve this amazing country. There are more than 4 billion people right now on this earth who are not free. And as a human rights activist,

often I get this question from people: "Why do I have to care about human rights? Why do I have to care about people [...] suffering in China and North Korea?"

I actually work with a lot of animal rights activists people at the UN, and a lot of other places. You know when you fight for puppies, you're a hero. When you fight for dolphins, people really appreciate you. Nobody asks, "Why do I have to care for these little puppies?" When I heard of animal's rights for the first time, I was really offended. What do you mean? There are billions of people who don't even know what human rights are, but here even animals have rights. But what made me eventually understand is, the reason that we care about little puppies is precisely because they do not have a voice. They cannot speak for themselves. That's why we care for animals, because they don't have voice. And it is time for all of us to stand for human beings who do not have a voice. In Iran, in Cuba, in North Korea, in China, all around the world. So many people dying to have a voice, and as a free people if we do not do that, that's shame on us. And if when we are not free, I know that no rabbits, no dogs, can fight for human rights. This is a thing [that only humanity can do], to fight for each other's rights.



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