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CHINA: Domestic Crackdown May Intend to Increase Control as Foreign Involvement Expands

Summary: Beijing's recent slew of crackdowns on private enterprises may intend to increase control of the citizens living in mainland China as many others are leaving to live and work abroad. Details of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and President Xi Jinping's consolidation of power suggest that Beijing is hoping to become increasingly involved in the lives of Chinese citizens, possibly to safeguard against foreign influence.

Background: Since July, Beijing has introduced several large-scale regulations affecting private enterprises. These regulations, promoted as efforts to rein in large internet platforms and reduce social anxiety, have driven a wedge between Chinese tech companies and foreign investors. Foreign direct investment in China had increased consistently for several years, but the crackdown risks millions of investment dollars and has unnerved global investors, according to Bloomberg. Beijing now requires many after-school education companies, including English language centers, to operate as non-profits, and many have therefore reduced offered services. In addition, Beijing has increased content monitoring for imported entertainment like music, movies, and video games. The most recent restrictions apply to the gaming industry; children may no longer play video games on weekdays and can only play between 8 PM and 9 PM on weekends and public holidays. Video game companies also face increased content restrictions surrounding homosexual relationships and effeminate men. Beijing expects video games to display correct values and an accurate understanding of Chinese culture.

Xi's Consolidation of Power: Xi's ongoing consolidation of political power likely ensures his ability to make large-scale reforms without fear of significant domestic backlash. Since coming to power in 2012, Xi has tossed aside many political norms in place since the 1980s. He has spearheaded anti-corruption campaigns inside the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and forced China into international affairs while suppressing internal dissent and building a system loyal to him. Constitutionally mandated term limits would have forced Xi from office in 2023, but lawmakers amended the constitution allowing him to rule indefinitely. Additionally, Xi has a personal ideology, Xi Jinping Thought, now incorporated into the constitutions of both the CCP and the People's Republic of China and integrated into school curriculums from primary school to university. With no legitimate political rivals and allies established in key positions of power, Xi likely feels free to initiate any regulations or reforms that serve his vision of a future where the CCP governs Chinese society and China commands the world stage.

Consequences of the Belt and Road: As the BRI increases the number of Chinese people moving abroad to live and work, Beijing may fear increasing foreign influence. Under the BRI, Chinese international involvement has grown far beyond its usual regional sphere of influence. The infrastructure development projects of the BRI often stipulate the use of Chinese construction and development firms that can hire and import Chinese workers instead of using local labor. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of Chinese people living abroad increased by

nearly 10 million. Although most continue to remain in Asia, the distribution has begun shifting towards more distant continents (*Figure 1*). Living and working in another country almost certainly exposes Chinese citizens to other cultures, types of government, and ways of life. Living abroad increases a person's sense of self and compels them to repeatedly question their own values and beliefs, according to Harvard Business Review. A growing number of people questioning the values Beijing imposes likely threatens the intense national identity that Xi promotes.

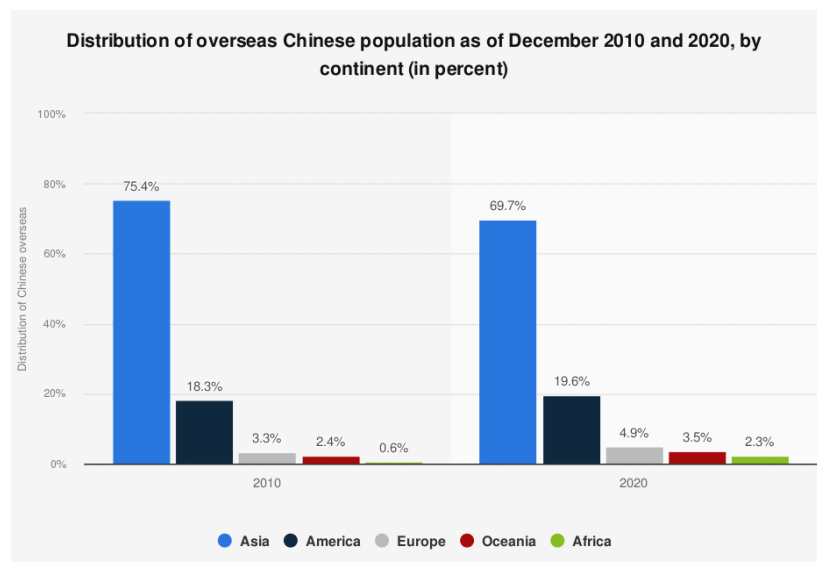


Figure 1. Distribution of overseas Chinese population

Outlook and Implications: Beijing may intend for its recent domestic crackdown to lessen the risk of foreign influence on Chinese people, particularly minors. Many of the new regulations, aimed at children, likely intentionally limit youth access to foreign ideals in native-language-speaking tutors and entertainment such as K-Pop and Hollywood. Also, by removing some child-rearing decisions from parents, Beijing likely hopes to develop future generations more reliant on and adherent to Xi's ideology before they grow and enter the workforce. Xi will likely continue enacting policies and changes that further his political goals. He likely views increasing numbers of Chinese people abroad as necessary to his stated goals of growing China's place in international affairs but will likely continue seeking means of controlling the population. Beijing will likely continue to use the BRI to build relations with other countries and expand Chinese influence abroad.

[Alyson Martin]

IRAN: Revived Diplomatic Talks on 2015 Nuclear Deal Likely to Fail

Summary: The revival of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which defines parameters limiting nuclear enrichment and stockpiling, likely will fail because of Tehran's near completion of its nuclear weapons program.

Development: On 27 October, Iranian Political Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani announced on Twitter that negotiations to restart the JCPOA would resume on 29 November. After an attempt in 2018 to salvage the deal failed, Western powers reinstated harsh economic sanctions on Tehran which devastated its economy by constricting oil exports. Tehran's economy then crashed because of rampant inflation and plunging currency, according to Reuters. Tehran has since steadily defied the JCPOA by increasing uranium stockpiling and enrichment levels far beyond the limitations described in the JCPOA, which alarmed the international community, according to MSN. Tehran also denied access to United Nations (UN) Nuclear Watchdogs and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect its nuclear weapons. The IAEA states that during the last inspection, Tehran enriched its uranium to 60% purity, with 90% required to make a nuclear bomb.

Analysis: The diplomatic talks involving the revival of the 2015 JCPOA will likely fail because of Tehran's rapid progress on its nuclear weapons program. Refusal of access to UN nuclear weapons inspectors likely indicates a near completion of its nuclear weapons program, especially given the previous 60% enrichment level. Tehran probably does not intend to abandon its nuclear weapons program, which almost certainly reduces any possibility of reinstating the JCPOA. Tehran almost certainly wants sanctions lifted so it could restore its economy to pre-sanctions levels, but also could want nuclear weapons to deter foreign rivals and gain a foothold in international negotiations, especially in the Middle East. As a result, Tehran likely will attempt to get both by deceiving diplomats at the negotiation table with empty promises of lowering nuclear parameters in exchange for lowered sanctions.

[Michael Doolan]

CHINA: Newly Launched Satellite May Cripple Competing Space Technology

Summary: Beijing's recently launched satellite may utilize the suspected ability to impair adversaries' satellites and spacecraft.

Development: On 24 October, Beijing sent satellite Shijian-21 on a rocket into space. Western officials determined this satellite incorporates a robotic arm capable of grabbing and crushing space debris, satellites, and other space technology. Beijing recently stated its goal of galactic domination, claiming if it controls space, it controls Earth. Beijing believes in its Manifest Destiny to capture the moon and space for greater economic and security influence. Beijing continues to develop and grow its arsenal of space weaponry, which includes anti-satellite weapons. Beijing ignores international space laws and treaties that demand the moon or any celestial bodies remain unconquered, even those it signed in the past.

Analysis: Shijian-21 likely could cause major detriments to space technology. Beijing's rapidly progressive critical satellite technology may lead to space supremacy. With possibilities of incapacitating any country's spacecraft, nations globally may need to take an accelerated approach in expanding and strengthening its space technology. Due to Beijing overlooking rules and regulations, it could potentially gain momentum and grow its goals in space. If Beijing succeeds in claiming space territories, it may secure the ability to cripple and dismantle other nations' critical infrastructures.

[Tatum Leyvas]

RUSSIA: Potential Foreign Purchases of Advanced Fighters Could Accelerate Production

Summary: Expressed interest in foreign purchases of Russian fighters could accelerate the production of Russian weapons.

Development: On 28 October, Moscow-backed news publication TASS conducted an exclusive interview with Russian military officials who stated that multiple countries showed interest in the new “Checkmate” fighter. The plane used technology from the Su-57, Russia’s first 5th-generation fighter. The Su-57 focused on only Russia’s military needs, causing it to receive no foreign customers to offset its immense cost. While incorporating additional modern technology, the new aircraft has foreign customers in mind. This consideration stems from the plane’s manufacturer, state-corporation Rostec, which developed the project without an order from the Russian military. Rostec advertises Checkmate’s “open architecture,” intended to help foreign customers tailor the aircraft to their needs. Rostec first announced the Checkmate fighter at the MAKS-2021 convention as a competitor for planes produced by China.

Analysis: The Checkmate fighter will probably see immense advantages in production with the help of foreign capital. With foreign weapons sales, Moscow would probably encourage production to take on an economy of scale while lowering manufacturing costs for the Checkmate. Moscow will likely utilize revenue from the Checkmate program to fund its other weapons programs, like the Su-57. This additional funding would probably enable Russia to pursue its more expensive programs with greater freedom, further accelerating Russia’s weapons development.

[Edward Micklos]

CHINA: Beijing's Pressure Against Taipei May Lead to Confrontation

Summary: Recent tensions with Beijing and Taipei continue to rise. The war of words between Beijing, Western actors, and Taipei might turn into a larger confrontation.

Development: On 26 October, Western actors publicly declared their commitment to helping support the island of Taipei's constant resistance to Beijing's government. Over recent weeks, tensions grew between Beijing and Taipei with Beijing continuously displaying its military strength. Examples include Beijing's flyover over Taipei's defense zone earlier this month and Beijing's public display of working closely with Russia in the Japanese Strait. Despite Beijing's attempts at forcing Taipei into its control, Taipei insists on its independence. With tensions still rising, Western actors officially started taking steps to support Taipei by sending military personnel to train in Taipei.

Analysis: Beijing's constant pressure on Taipei to accept Beijing's sovereignty and other global actors deciding to step in may lead to direct confrontation between the acting countries. Beijing most likely continues to see Taipei's partnership with other actors, specifically ones in the West, as a threat and drives Beijing's efforts to pressuring Taipei into its sovereignty. However, tensions remain exacerbated and the public display of Taipei accepting aid from Beijing's opposition likely will not help calm the heightened tensions.

[Madison Pera]

About GSIS

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU) Bachelor of Science in Global Security & Intelligence Studies (GSIS) degree program at our Prescott Campus blends both academic and professional studies to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become future leaders in intelligence, security, and law enforcement. The program provides students with a sound foundation in the liberal arts, including international relations, foreign languages and cultures, international law, foreign policy, political and military history, and other essential topics.

About EE

Eagle Eye Intelligence (EE) is an intelligence and research organization led by the students of the GSIS program at ERAU in Prescott, Arizona.

Dr. Philip E. Jones founded EE and Embry-Riddle's GSIS program in 2002, following a career with the Central Intelligence Agency and consulting work in international development and global security. Currently, Professor Dale R. Avery, a former career intelligence analyst, serves as EE's faculty advisor.

EE strives to provide actionable intelligence and analysis to its customers during the academic year. We are driven by a number of goals – continuous development, nonpartisanship, interdisciplinary studies, global awareness, and professionalism.

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Alli McIntyre, a senior in the GSIS program, currently serves as EE's Editor in Chief. For questions or comments, contact the team at editorsee@gmail.com or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 391, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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