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Issue 407

Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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CHINA: Beijing Unlikely to Contribute Military Aid to Moscow

Summary: Beijing will likely continue to offer Moscow an economic lifeline to avoid sanctions due to the “No Limits” friendship between the two nations. However, Beijing likely will not contribute direct military assistance to Moscow in the form of weapon sales or troop deployment due to fear of sanctions from Western powers.

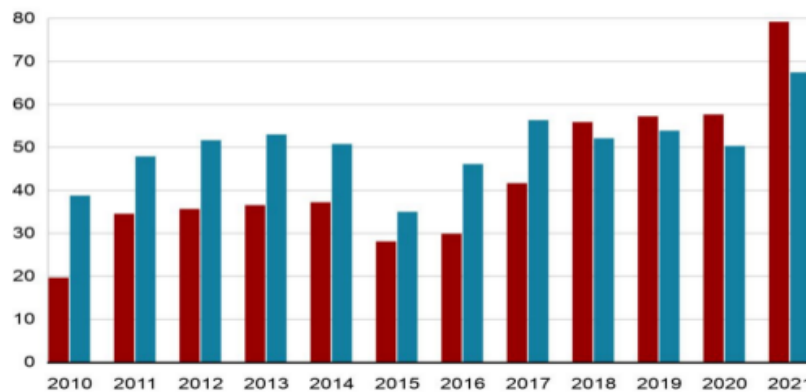
Background: On 4 February, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping held a summit and announced a “No Limits” friendship between their nations. On 24 February, Putin announced a “special military operation” in Ukraine sending in troops and launching missiles against the country. Despite sanctions on Moscow and widespread condemnation of the attack by Western powers, Beijing offered Moscow an economic lifeline and refused to condemn the attack on Ukraine.

Historic Alliance: The “No Limits” friendship between Moscow and Beijing likely stems from historical economic cooperation between the two countries and a common adversarial relationship with Western powers. Moscow and Beijing have historic economic and diplomatic relations going back to the signing of a treaty in 2001 establishing their relations with each other. Beijing relies heavily on Moscow for its grain and energy needs. In return, Moscow receives needed capital to fund its economy. Additionally, both countries see this economic and diplomatic cooperation as a way to challenge what they see as threats from Western powers. This economic cooperation manifested in several ways, including the expected completion in August of a railway bridge between the two nations. Beijing’s trade with Moscow rose by 12% in March according to the South China Morning Post. Both the historical cooperation and economic benefit indicate that Beijing will likely continue to provide Moscow with an economic lifeline.

Russia's growing trade with China

\$US billions

■ Exports ■ Imports



Source: World Bank and China official customs data

BBC

Fear of Sanctions: Beijing likely sees providing military support to Moscow as potentially undermining its relationship with other countries. Other countries like Australia stated intent to sanction Beijing if it provides Moscow with military support for its invasion of Ukraine. Despite

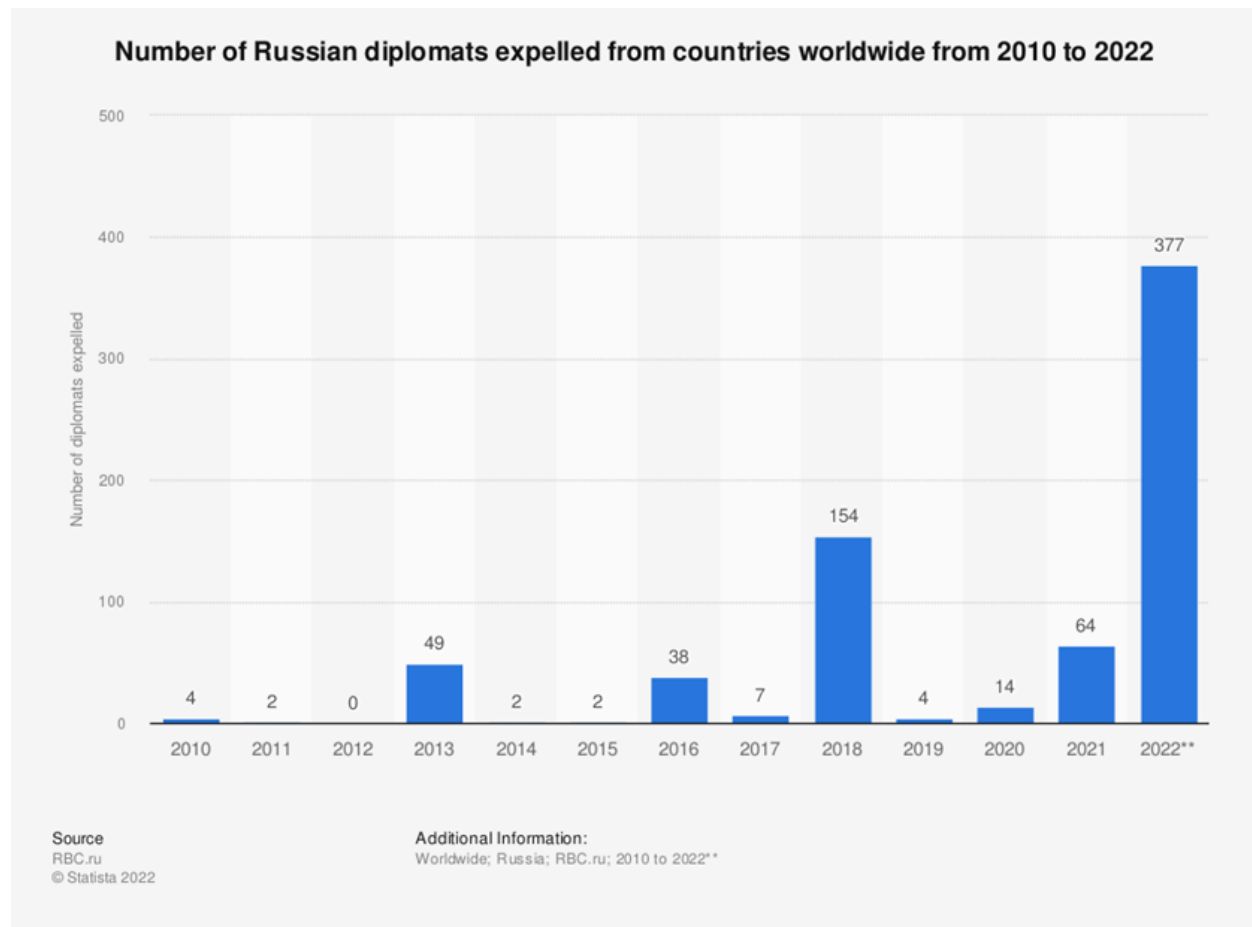
its “No Limits” friendship with Moscow, Beijing likely does not want sanctions placed on it or to otherwise undermine its economic relationship with Western powers, according to Evan Mederios speaking on NPR. Beijing likely fears sanctions from Western powers that would halt its economic recovery from the pandemic.

Outlook and Implications: Beijing likely will continue its economic activity with Moscow as a means of supporting the “No Limits” friendship between the countries and to meet its energy needs. Despite the “No Limits” friendship, Beijing will likely not provide Moscow with military support due to fear of sanctions which would stall its economic recovery from the pandemic. Going forward, Beijing will likely continue its current course of action with regards to Moscow and the conflict in Ukraine in a bid to remain neutral. Beijing probably sees the spread of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other Western alliances as a threat, and this likely motivates it to, while not directly encouraging Moscow, turn a blind eye to its invasion of Ukraine. This action of ignoring the invasion by Moscow seems particularly likely given Beijing and Moscow’s historic alliance.

[Dante Rocca]

RUSSIA: Ukraine Conflict Will Likely Damage Intelligence Capabilities

Summary: Moscow’s intelligence capabilities on NATO will almost certainly decline as a result of recent diplomatic expulsions and internal arrests. Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly blamed the shortcomings of Moscow’s offensive in Ukraine on the Federal Security Service (FSB). Expulsion of over 100 Moscow officials from Russian embassies in Europe occurred in March, with many nations alleging espionage.



Background: Moscow previously faced issues with expelled diplomats from foreign nations. In 2022, various countries expelled 377 Moscow diplomats, compared to 64 in 2021 and 14 in 2020. Recently, Putin’s public treatment of his advisors remains poor. A video filmed on 21 February shows Putin interrupting his head of Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) during a security council meeting and telling his advisor to, “speak directly!” On 24 February, Moscow escalated its military action concerning Ukraine. In response, European nations placed economic and diplomatic sanctions on Moscow, which included an ousting of many Russian diplomats.

Putin’s Staff Purge: Moscow’s aggressive counterintelligence efforts shows Putin will likely attempt to shift the burden of the Ukraine conflict onto the FSB. On 11 March, Moscow placed

Colonel-General Sergei Beseda under house arrest. Beseda formerly served as the head of the FSB's Fifth Service; the service responsible for providing Moscow with intelligence related to Ukraine. On 8 April, Beseda went to prison along with 150 other FSB officers in the following days. Moscow alleges that conspirators inside FSB embezzled \$5 billion to form an intelligence network in Ukraine. Many targeted FSB officials took part in intelligence and counterintelligence activities in Ukraine. Putin will probably use the arrests as a tool to shift the blame and restore his reputation and legitimacy as a leader.

Europe's Response: The expulsion of alleged Moscow intelligence officials from nine European countries will almost certainly reduce Moscow's intelligence collection on NATO members. Belgium, the host of the NATO headquarters in Brussels, represents one of the nine nations. Brussels' ousting of the officials probably highly impacted Moscow intelligence due to the lack of access to the NATO headquarters. Without a strong network of officials in embassies around Europe, Moscow will likely have to rely on human intelligence (HUMINT) collection via non-official covers (NOC). Using a NOC presents more risk and costs than embedding an agent with an official cover.

Outlook and Implications: Moscow's internal arrests and Europe removing many Russian officials from their diplomatic positions will almost certainly harm Moscow and its intelligence collection capabilities. With Moscow's claim of a traitorous conspiracy involving 150 FSB officials, Moscow's intelligence officials will likely operate under more skepticism. The expected internal distrust in Moscow's FSB will likely make rebuilding an intelligence network in Europe more difficult. In the coming years, Moscow will probably rely more on NOC agents to collect HUMINT in Europe.

[Kaden Gaede]

CHINA: Nuclear Buildup Likely Indicates an Effort to Intimidate and Secure Claims

Summary: Although Beijing explained the move as a way to deter future conflict, it will likely use the accelerated buildup of nuclear weapons as an intimidation tactic to deter meddling in its operations within the South China Sea. This includes a likely effort to prevent involvement from other powers in a possible conflict with Taiwan, referring to recent pushback to Beijing’s contested influence in the region.

Background: On 9 April, a number of individuals close to Beijing leadership released public statements regarding Beijing’s newfound need for a larger nuclear deterrent against foreign powers, according to the Wall Street Journal. Additionally, these insiders claimed that Beijing feared there exists efforts backed by the United States and its allies to attempt an “overthrow” of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This comes amidst confirmation that Beijing recently completed the construction of an estimated 120 nuclear missile silos this year. Satellite imagery first discovered the existence of these new nuclear silos, located near Yumen in the Gansu province back in early 2020. Beijing initially denied their existence, as well as any efforts to dramatically increase capacity for nuclear silos. Additionally, previous statements by Beijing officials included plans to increase the nation’s total nuclear arsenal to over 1,000 nuclear warheads by the end of the decade, including the implementation of new long-range DF-41 intercontinental ballistic missiles; by current estimates, Beijing possesses around 350 total nuclear warheads in its arsenal.

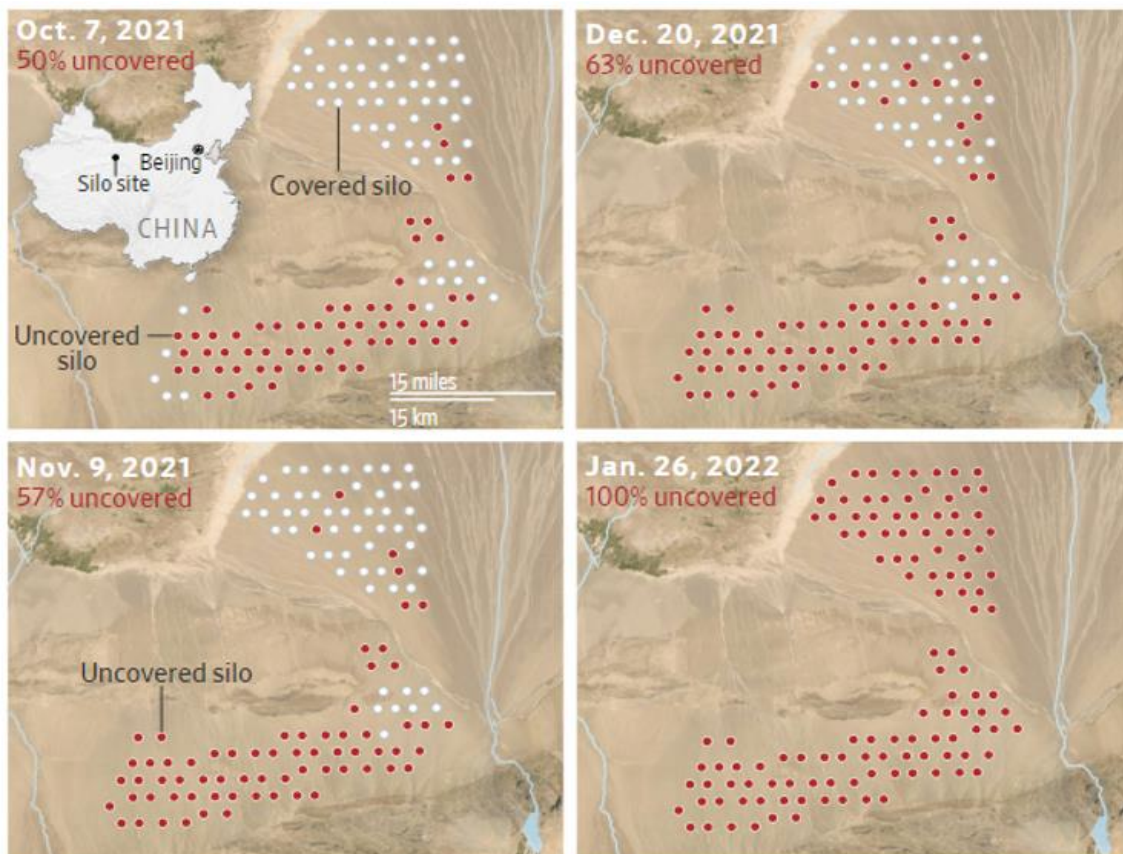


Figure 1: Progress of Yumen missile silos (discovered from satellite imagery)

Growing Resistance to Beijing: There most likely exists a concern from Beijing surrounding the growing resistance to the country's influence in the South China Sea, namely from nations such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the United States. On 16 April, Tokyo reaffirmed its commitment to a bilateral alliance with the United States, citing the national security threat posed by Beijing as its main reasoning. This commitment follows a trend in recent years where the Japanese military steadily began remilitarizing (a move that continues to see heavy criticism from Beijing) due to the rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific region. With this in mind, nations such as Australia and New Zealand recently decried a security deal drafted by Beijing which allows the Chinese navy to station troops and vessels in the Solomon Islands; this location serves as a vital node for trade in the region, connecting important shipping lanes to Australia and New Zealand. Although Beijing and Honiara made several attempts to put down fears surrounding what the deal entails, Canberra officials continue to take a hardline stance against it and called on other nations in the region such as Indonesia to stand up against the deal. To make up for the rising confidence of its opposition, Beijing will likely need to find a different approach if it wishes to achieve its goals in the region, as its surreptitious actions become more noticeable.

Similarities Between Taiwan and Ukraine: Beijing also likely learned from the actions of its counterpart in Moscow regarding its handling of Ukraine. Throughout the current Russo-Ukrainian War, Beijing officials made numerous statements regarding their decision to remain neutral throughout the conflict despite their deep ties to Moscow. However, a retired Chinese military officer tied to Beijing's nuclear program claimed Kiev's decision to turn in its nuclear weapons back in 1994 inevitably led Ukraine "into a situation" with Moscow. There does not exist much evidence as to whether Moscow intends to use nuclear weapons in the conflict, but international onlookers noted that the threat of nuclear war currently dissuades most nations from directly intervening in the conflict. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made remarks earlier this year stating the difference between the Ukraine and Taiwan situations, yet only gave the reason that he considered Taiwan as a "purely domestic affair" rather than a foreign one. The Chinese military recently began using advanced stealth fighters to patrol the South China Sea and performed military drills around Taiwan during a visit by lawmakers from the United States. In this sense, Beijing could likely shift towards a new, more aggressive strategy against Taiwan.

Outlook and Implications: The decision to dramatically increase nuclear production by Beijing likely intends to dissuade other nations from interfering in its effort to seize claims in the South China Sea, and government insiders probably used the idea of a plot to overthrow the CCP to mislead foreign powers. This may also explain why those close to the government allowed the release of statements regarding the buildup, since the CCP likely wants foreign nations to possess this information. Beijing certainly does not like nations showing solidarity against the moves it wishes to make in the region, and it could likely use the threat of nuclear weapons as an offensive measure rather than a defensive measure. If Beijing started a military conflict with Taiwan, it would likely utilize the threat of nuclear war to intimidate others from intervening in said conflict. Whilst this would certainly cause an uproar in the international community, it may allow Beijing to take its objective almost unopposed.

[Noah Steele]

SRI LANKA: Political and Economic Crisis Almost Certain to Escalate

Summary: The ongoing economic crisis will likely continue to grow, further escalating public unrest and political issues.

Development: On 18 April, Sri Lankan opposition leader Harsha de Silva announced the opposition will stage a no-confidence vote against the government but did not specify when. Widespread protests against President Gotabaya Rajapaksa calling for his resignation began in early April and continue to grow while the country's economic crisis deepens. Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte announced on 12 April the country would default on its \$51 billion debt, including a \$7 billion payment due this year, according to the Washington Post. Food and gas prices continue to rise, compounded by increasing prices globally as a result of the conflict in Ukraine. Hospitals report a lack of necessary medicine and supplies and have begun requesting donations and international support.

Analysis: The economic crisis facing Sri Lanka will almost certainly increase, fueling public unrest and opposition political groups. Calls for Rajapaksa's resignation will likely continue without widespread economic relief, and opposition groups may become increasingly aggressive in their political maneuvers. Rising prices will probably prompt the continuation of protests, which will likely grow in size and intensity. The lack of a solution may cause the protests to become violent in effort to emphasize the demands of protestors and may force the resignation of Rajapaksa. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine makes it unlikely that food prices will decrease. The combined probable growth of the economic crisis, inability to repay foreign debts, and the increasing scarcity of food, medicine, and gas will likely result in long-term negative effects in all areas of life.

[Alli McIntyre]

SOUTH AFRICA: Deadly Storm Likely to Encourage Stronger Contingency Responses

Summary: Pretoria's experience with the COVID-19 pandemic and now the effects of one of the deadliest storms on record will almost certainly result in aggressive contingency planning to prevent negative impacts of future crises.

Development: On 18 April, the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) activated 10,000 troops to help with recovery efforts after severe downpours caused flooding and mudslides. The flooding and mudslides resulted in at least 443 deaths and 63 people still missing. Damage includes destroyed roads, homes, and schools. In addition to the structural damage, most people cannot access power and clean water. Premier Sihle Zikalala stated that Pretoria learned from the mistakes made during the COVID-19 crisis and that it planned to handle this crisis differently.

Analysis: Having now dealt with two crises, Pretoria will likely take aggressive preventative measures after recovering from the current crisis. This will likely come in the form of increased assessments of flood zones and regulations on the locations of new buildings within them. Additionally, rebuilding will almost certainly take place with future crises in mind, likely resulting in structures that better withstand the forces of floodwater and water storage more immune to mudslides.

[Savannah Gallop]

UKRAINE: Moscow's Anticipated Capture of Mariupol Likely to Halt Peace Talks

Summary: The Russia-Ukraine conflict places Mariupol on the verge of total Russian control. The capture of Mariupol likely poses a threat to Ukrainian combatants within the city. If Russian forces kill Ukrainian combatants, all negotiation talks between both nations will likely halt.

Development: On 16 April, Moscow issued a “surrender or die” ultimatum to Ukrainian forces holding out within the city of Mariupol. Currently, many Ukrainian soldiers remain in siege against Moscow troops fighting from within a steel factory. Mariupol, a city largely in ruins from the ongoing conflict, lies on the coast of the Sea of Azov. Mariupol acts as a critical city to the Ukrainian economy in international trade moving through the Black Sea and in factory good production. Despite Russian forces seeking to capture the capital city of Kyiv, difficulty in capturing the city due to civilian and military resistance caused Moscow strategy to shift eastwards in strategic offensive. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned Moscow that discussions of peace would end if Russian forces killed the remaining Ukrainian fighters in Mariupol.

Analysis: Mariupol probably will fall to Moscow forces within the coming week and peace talks between Kyiv and Moscow will likely halt, due to the possible deaths of the remaining Ukrainian forces defending the city. Should Moscow gain full control of the city, Ukraine's economy would likely take a devastating hit. Moscow will have also gained a strategic victory, as Mariupol provides land access connecting the Donbas Region to Crimea likely allowing it to move westward with confidence.

[Dyanna Henriquez]

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 at the Central Intelligence Agency and Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 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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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and do not represent the position Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University or the College of Business, Security and Intelligence.

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.

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