

The China–Taiwan Weekly Update



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The China–Taiwan Weekly Update is a joint product from the Institute for the Study of War and the American Enterprise Institute. The update supports the ISW–AEI Coalition Defense of Taiwan project, which assesses Chinese campaigns against Taiwan, examines alternative strategies for the United States and its allies to deter the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) aggression, and—if necessary—defeat the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The update focuses on the Chinese Communist Party’s paths to controlling Taiwan and cross–Taiwan Strait developments.

Key Takeaways:

- **The Fujian provincial government in the PRC launched a series of economic initiatives that aim to build political support in Taiwan for cross-strait integration. Promoting economic ties between Fujian and Taiwan’s outer islands furthers the PRC’s efforts to establish greater political influence over ROC municipalities.**
- **The United States and PRC held their first bilateral government negotiations on artificial intelligence risks and governance in Geneva, Switzerland on May 14.**
- **The PRC may make an upcoming PRC-South Korea summit conditional on South Korea not sending a delegation to Taiwan President-elect Lai Ching-te’s inauguration on May 20.**
- **The PRC is increasingly asserting its claims over disputed maritime features in three areas of the South China Sea to signal its resolve amid heightened tensions with the Philippines.**
- **CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping held a series of meetings with European and Russian leaders in April and May, after which he likely concluded that the PRC could maintain and deepen economic ties with Europe while continuing to support Russia’s war against Ukraine.**

Cross-Strait Relations

Taiwan

The Fujian provincial government in the PRC launched a series of initiatives aimed at building political support in Taiwan for cross-strait integration.^[1] Among the services that the Fujian provincial government announced on April 28 is the “Fuzhou-Matsu City Pass,” a 300 RMB benefits card that facilitates the travel and settlement of Matsu residents in Fuzhou. The card offers

Matsu residents discounted rides on transportation and hotels in Fuzhou, free tours of Fuzhou's major cultural attractions, housing benefits, and dedicated hotline consultation for children's education, employment, and entrepreneurship.[2] The Fujian government also announced that it will promote the construction of transportation and industrial infrastructure, such as airports, high-speed rails, highways, and ports, to increase connectivity between Fuzhou and Matsu.

The Fujian government announced the new programs on the same day that Kuomintang (KMT) Caucus Whip Fu Kun-chi met with Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) Director Song Tao. The PRC's announcement during Fu's visit follows a pattern of showcasing cooperative policies to portray the KMT as a good faith partner that produces favorable outcomes for cross-strait relations.

Municipal offices in the Matsu Islands facilitated residents' participation in the PRC initiatives. Municipal offices in Matsu (officially Lienchiang County) began assisting in the collection of the card applicants' information in March after county Magistrate Wang Chung-ming met with Fuzhou Municipal Party Committee Secretary Lin Baojin.[3] The county Transportation and Tourism Bureau processed the information and forwarded it to the PRC for card printing.[4] Deputy Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Chan Chih-hung stated at a press conference on May 9 that the MAC initially warned the Lienchiang County government about the possible illegality of cooperating with the PRC in processing applications and highlighted the danger of transferring citizens' personal information.[5]

Promoting economic ties between Fujian and Taiwan's outer islands furthers the PRC's efforts to establish greater political influence over ROC municipalities. The purpose of intertwining the local economies and increased cross-strait interaction is to positively affect the livelihoods of residents in Taiwan's outer islands and make decoupling a politically unpopular policy. Targeting Taiwan's economically vulnerable and isolated outer islands enables the PRC to establish its influence at a local level without having to engage with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) central government, with which the PRC severed official communication in 2016.

The PRC has already made political inroads by promoting cross-strait travel links. The PRC and ROC islands of Kinmen and Matsu expanded links in transportation, trade, and postal services in 2008 after decades of lobbying by the PRC. The PRC refers to these services between the PRC and Taiwan's outer islands as the "Three Little Links." [6] The PRC's promotion of cross-strait travel has resonated with Kinmen residents, especially with whom political support for a bridge to connect the island to the mainland is strong.[7] The PRC has capitalized on that political support to promote the development of the Fujian "demonstration zone for integrated cross-strait development." [8]

The measures are part of a broader PRC program unveiled in September 2023 that seeks to cultivate Fujian province as a "demonstration zone" for cross-strait integration by promoting infrastructure linkages and economic incentives with Taiwan.[9] The sweeping initiative aims to make Fujian, a region that shares a cultural and linguistic heritage with Taiwan, into a hub for "merged development" by attracting Taiwanese people and businesses.[10] Other measures include establishing a service center to accommodate Taiwanese firms transitioning to Fujian, offering preferential loans to Taiwanese businesses, and providing professional training programs to increase employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for Taiwanese people in Fujian.[11] The initiative entails creating a "joint living circle" between Fuzhou and Matsu, which the PRC is promoting by popularizing programs such as the Fuzhou-Matsu City Pass. The Fuzhou city government announced an additional

ten policies on May 16 at the Cross-Strait Economic and Trade Fair that aim to draw in Matsu residents and enterprises.[12]

The dominant parties in Taiwan—the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Kuomintang (KMT)—voiced opposing stances on the PRC initiatives. Democratic Progressive Party Secretary-General Rosalia Wu labeled the program a tool of the PRC’s United Front political strategy to assimilate Taiwan and called on the Lienchiang County government to stop acting as an agent of the PRC’s political influence.[13] DPP legislator Lin Chu-yin questioned National Security Bureau (NSB) Deputy Director Hsu Hsi-hsiang on May 13 whether the Matsu government’s cooperation in submitting the applications constituted a violation of the Cross-Strait Act and enabled the PRC to spread its influence.[14] Hsu replied that the NSB would work with the MAC to determine whether the Matsu government’s cooperation with the program broke the law. Hsu mentioned that the program received approximately 3,000 applicants, almost a quarter of Lienchiang County’s population of 13,000. The Lienchiang County government suspended assistance in applying for the card in April.

Kuomintang (KMT) Secretary-General Hung Mong-kai stated at the same press conference that cross-strait tourism was an “olive branch” that could bring the two sides of the strait closer together. Fu announced that the KMT will propose a resolution in the Legislative Yuan to lift restrictions on cross-strait tourism and prioritize facilitating mainland tourists’ travel to Taiwan’s outer islands.[15]

The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) condemned the United States for participating in joint naval exercises with Taiwan in the Pacific in April. Reuters reported on May 14 that Taiwan and the United States conducted unpublicized drills in the Western Pacific, according to unnamed sources. ROC Ministry of National Defense spokesperson Sun Li-fang responded to the claim on May 14, stating that the Taiwanese navy carried out routine exercises with the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea, referring to a non-binding code that aims to prevent confrontations between different navies at sea.[16] The United States is a signatory to the agreement. Taiwan abides by the code even though it is not a signatory. MFA spokesperson Wang Wenbin criticized the United States in a press conference the same day, urging the US to “earnestly abide by the one-China principle and the provisions of the three Sino-U.S. joint communiqués, and stop the erroneous act of military collusion.”[17]

China

The United States and PRC held their first bilateral government negotiations on artificial intelligence (AI) risks and governance in Geneva, Switzerland on May 14. The meeting was the first under an intragovernmental dialogue on AI that US President Joe Biden and CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping agreed to launch during their meeting in San Francisco in November 2023.[18] The US delegation included officials from the White House, the State Department, and the Department of Commerce. The PRC delegation included officials from the MFA, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Cyberspace Administration of China, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and the CCP Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission. An unnamed US official told the South China Morning Post that the first round of talks was not intended to focus on deliverables but instead was an initial exchange of views about the technical risks of AI.[19]

A US readout said that the two sides “exchanged perspectives on their respective approaches to AI safety and risk management” in a “candid and constructive” discussion. The United States also raised concerns over the misuse of AI, including by the PRC.[20] The United States has made a declaration that only humans, and never AI, would make decisions about deploying nuclear weapons. It has urged the PRC to make a similar commitment.[21] The PRC has not responded to this US demand, however, and readouts from both sides of the May 14 talks did not mention military applications of AI.

A PRC readout said that the PRC supports strengthening the global governance of artificial intelligence with the United Nations as the main channel. It said it is willing to strengthen communication and coordination with the international community, including the United States, to form a global AI governance framework and standards with broad consensus. The PRC also expressed its “solemn stance” on the US restrictions and “suppression of China” in the field of AI.[22] An MFA spokesperson objected to a proposed US AI export control bill on May 10. He urged the United States not to “politicize” trade, science, and technology. He also called on the United States to stop protectionist practices, restrictions on PRC science and technology, and disruptions to the international economic order.[23]

The PRC condemned the US imposition of new tariffs on PRC goods. The US government announced on May 14 that it would further increase tariffs on PRC goods including electric vehicles, batteries, solar cells, minerals, semiconductors, steel and aluminum, cranes, and medical equipment.[24] A PRC Ministry of Commerce spokesperson claimed the United States was abusing the Section 301 tariff review process out of “domestic political considerations.” It said the tariffs violate WTO rules and US President Joe Biden’s commitment to not “seek to suppress and contain China’s development” and not to decouple from the PRC.[25] An MFA spokesperson said the United States was “compounding” its mistakes and that the tariffs would primarily hurt US consumers. Both spokespeople said the PRC would take unspecified measures to protect its interests.[26]

The PLA claimed it “expelled” the *USS Halsey* after the ship “illegally broke into” waters around the Paracel Islands. PLA Southern Theater Command spokesperson Colonel Tian Junli claimed PLA air and naval forces “monitored, warned, and expelled” the *Halsey* destroyer ship on May 10 after it “illegally” entered the “territorial waters” around the Paracel Islands without PRC permission. Tian claimed the US transit violated PRC sovereignty and security. He also claimed it was “ironclad evidence” that the United States is pursuing “navigational hegemony,” is militarizing the South China Sea, and is a “security risk creator.”[27] The US 7th Fleet said that the *Halsey* carried out a Freedom of Navigation Operation to challenge restrictions on innocent passage around the Paracel Islands by the PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and to challenge the PRC’s claim to straight baselines around the islands. It did not mention any confrontation with PLA forces.[28] The PRC administers the Paracel Islands and calls them the “Xisha Islands.” Taiwan and Vietnam also claim the islands.

The PRC claims straight archipelagic baselines around the Paracel Islands, which means it considers all the water between the islands as its territorial waters. The PRC also requires foreign ships to get permission or provide advance notification when they sail through its territorial waters. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) does not permit countries to restrict “innocent passage” through their territorial waters. “Innocent passage” is uninterrupted transit through the waters without other activities such as fishing, research, intelligence collection, or military activities. UNCLOS also only permits designated archipelagic states to draw straight-baseline claims around their islands. Non-archipelagic states, such as the PRC, can only claim waters up to 12 nautical miles from their shores as their territorial sea.[29]

The PRC framed US-UK-Australia nuclear submarine cooperation as a threat to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime at a seminar in Vienna. The PRC permanent mission in Vienna hosted a seminar on May 10 entitled “AUKUS: A Case Study about the Development of IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards.” An MFA spokesperson claimed over 100 attendees from the missions of nearly 50 countries, think tanks, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) engaged in “heated discussions” about IAEA supervision of AUKUS, the US-UK-Australia security partnership. The spokesperson claimed that the nuclear submarine cooperation within AUKUS undermines regional security, provokes arms races and “confrontation between camps,” and has triggered “widespread concerns” about nuclear proliferation. He further claimed the trilateral cooperation undermines the effectiveness of the IAEA and Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) because existing institutional safeguards and oversight mechanisms cannot effectively supervise the transfer of nuclear reactors and large amounts of weapons-grade highly enriched uranium involved in the AUKUS submarine deal. He urged the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia to stop promoting nuclear submarine cooperation.[30]

The PRC reference to “nuclear submarine cooperation” refers to the AUKUS plan to build a nuclear-powered submarine fleet for Australia, which includes at least three submarines from the United States and nuclear reactors constructed in the United Kingdom.[31] The NPT bans the transfer of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapons states, such as Australia, but permits the transfer of fissile material to non-nuclear states without IAEA inspection if the material is not for use in explosive devices.[32] The PRC has accused the United States and the United Kingdom of violating the “object and purpose” of the NPT by transferring fissile material to Australia, however.[33] The PRC seminar in Vienna came less than two weeks before an upcoming IAEA conference in Vienna from May 20-24.[34] The PRC may raise the issue of the AUKUS nuclear submarine deals at the conference or seek to include language about the issue in a joint ministerial declaration produced by ministers attending the conference.

Northeast Asia

South Korea

PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi acknowledged “difficulties and challenges” in the PRC-ROK relationship during talks with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul. The talks in Beijing on May 13 were the first bilateral foreign minister talks between the two countries since 2022. The two countries’ relations have been strained over South Korea’s increasingly close security and economic relationship with the United States.[35] The PRC readout of the meeting said Wang acknowledged the PRC-ROK relationship has faced “difficulties and challenges” lately but hoped the two countries could enhance mutual trust and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation on trade and development. Wang also urged South Korea to “abide by the one-China principle [and] properly and prudently handle Taiwan-related issues.”[36] The readout did not elaborate on the “difficulties and challenges” Wang referred to. The ROK readout of the meeting said Cho also agreed the two countries should enhance mutual trust and strengthen economic cooperation. Cho also raised concerns about North Korea’s recent “provocations” and illicit military cooperation with Russia. He called on the PRC to strengthen its constructive role for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the denuclearization of North Korea and urged the PRC not to repatriate North Korean defectors against their will.[37] The PRC readout did not mention these issues.

The PRC may condition the holding of a future PRC-ROK summit on whether South Korea sends a delegation to Taiwan President-elect Lai Ching-te's inauguration on May 20. President of the Seoul-based Korea-China Global Association Woo Su-yuen, whom Korean media described as a “longtime adviser to Chinese policymakers,” said PRC Premier Li Qiang would attend a PRC-South Korea-Japan trilateral summit at the end of May. The three countries have not announced an exact date for the summit, but media reports say it will likely take place on May 26-27. Woo also claimed top PRC State Council and CCP officials privately said during his visit to the PRC in April that Beijing would only agree to a separate bilateral PRC-ROK summit if South Korea honors its commitment not to send a delegation to the presidential inauguration of Lai Ching-te in Taiwan on May 20.[38]

Making bilateral talks contingent on South Korea's decision not to send a delegation to Lai's inauguration is consistent with the PRC's willingness to suspend dialogue to punish other countries for engaging with Taiwan. The PRC suspended military dialogue with the United States after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August 2022 and did not resume the dialogue until after the Biden-Xi meeting in November 2023.[39]

Southeast Asia

Philippines

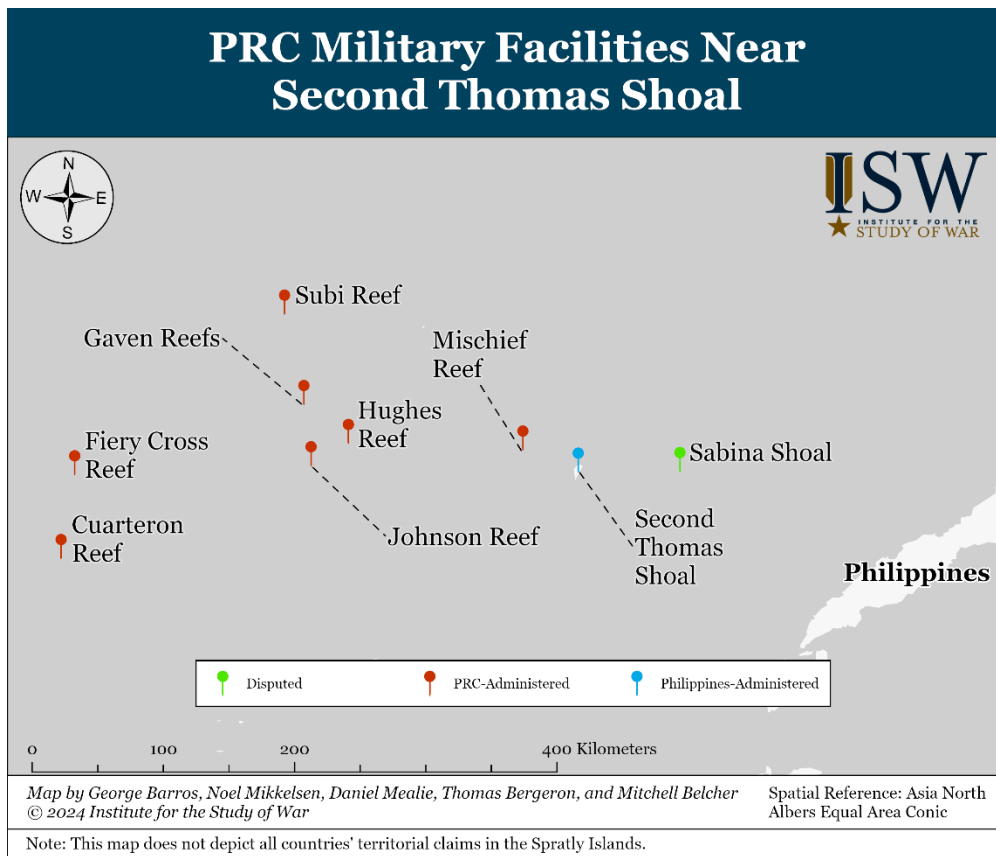
The PRC is increasingly asserting its claims over disputed maritime features in three areas of the South China Sea to signal its resolve amid heightened tensions with the Philippines. The PRC is deploying research vessels and divers to the Sabina Shoal, potentially as part of a campaign to prevent the Philippines from defending its claim to the Second Thomas Shoal. This is a change from last month when the PRC deployed the Chinese Coast Guard to block Philippine ships from reaching Second Thomas Shoal and did not conduct efforts to reclaim Sabina Shoal. The PRC also conducted its largest-ever blockade at Scarborough in an attempt to block a fleet of Philippine civilian ships from resupplying fishermen near Scarborough Shoal. The PRC asserts that the United States and the Philippines are driving tensions in the region, however, through joint exercises and by forming a coalition against the PRC.

The PRC deployed research vessels and divers to the Sabina Shoal, which may be part of a campaign to reclaim the island and prevent the Philippines from defending its claim to Second Thomas Shoal. Sabina Shoal is roughly 37 miles east of the Second Thomas Shoal and is the staging point for Philippine resupply missions to the Second Thomas Shoal. The resupply missions enabled the Philippines to maintain the *Sierra Madre*, a dilapidated World War II-era naval ship that the Philippines ran aground at Second Thomas Shoal in 1999 to serve as a military detachment.[40]

The PRC has sent an unspecified number of research vessels and divers to Sabina Shoal since early May, which prompted the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) to deploy a ship near Sabina Shoal on May 11 in response.[41] PCG Spokesman Jay Tarriela expressed concern on May 11 about the PRC dumping crushed corals at Sabina Shoal, which he warned was a preparatory step to allow the PRC the option to build structures upon the shoal as part of a reclamation effort.[42] He also stated on May 13 that the PCG's mission is to prevent the PRC from “carrying out a successful reclamation in Sabina

Shoal.”[43] PRC MFA Spokesman Wang Wenbin denied Tarriela’s assertion and accused the Philippines of misleading the international community.[44]

A PRC-controlled Sabina Shoal would extend the PRC’s territorial claims in the South China Sea and improve the PRC’s ability to assert its claim over the Second Thomas Shoal. A PRC-controlled Sabina Shoal would also provide the PRC with the opportunity to build a military facility to the east of the Second Thomas Shoal. This would surround the Second Thomas Shoal with PRC military facilities, which would enhance the difficulty of Philippine resupply missions. The Filipino troops stationed on the *Sierra Madre* as well as the ship’s structural integrity depend on Philippine resupply missions.



The malign PRC activities at the Sabina Shoal come as the PRC alleges that the Philippines has violated a series of secret and informal agreements about the Second Thomas Shoal since 2016. The PRC claims are part of a malign influence campaign to secure PRC control over the Second Thomas Shoal and frame the Philippines as the belligerent in the South China Sea. The PRC Embassy to the Philippines claimed on May 2, 2024, that Xi Jinping and then-Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte reached an unwritten “temporary special arrangement” in 2016 about the Philippines’ access to the waters near Second Thomas Shoal. The PRC alleged that they concluded the arrangement as a gentleman’s agreement with two stipulations. First, Philippine fishing vessels would have access to the waters near Second Thomas Shoal. Philippine military and police ships needed to stay at least twelve nautical miles away from the shoal, however.[45] Second, the Philippines would not transport construction materials to repair the *Sierra Madre*, a dilapidated World War II-era naval ship on Second Thomas Shoal that the Philippines deliberately ran aground in 1999 to serve as a military detachment.[46] The PRC Ministry

of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mao Ning clarified that if the Philippines needed to replenish the Sierra Madre with necessities for the personnel there, it must notify the PRC in advance, which will approve and supervise the process.[47]

PRC MFA Spokesman Lin Jian claimed on May 6, 2024, that the PRC reached another unspecified “gentleman’s agreement” in 2021 with the Philippine government under then-President Rodrigo Duterte. Lin claimed the Philippines violated this agreement in February 2023 without specifying the contents of the agreement or how the Philippines had failed to comply with it. Lin also claimed that the PRC negotiated a “new model” at “the beginning of this year [2024]” that received the approval of “all key officials in the Philippine chain of command, including the Secretary of National Defense and the National Security Advisor.”[48] Lin then stated that the Philippines carried out a resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal on February 2 before abandoning this “new model.” [49]

Philippine political leadership denies the existence of these alleged agreements. Duterte denied ever making a “gentleman’s agreement” with Xi, however, and claimed that the 2016 meeting helped keep the status quo of peace in the South China Sea. Duterte also claimed that Xi threatened to go to war if the Philippines exercised its economic rights in the South China Sea.[50] Current Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. deems the alleged agreement illegitimate since it was a “secret agreement” hidden from the public.[51] Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and National Security Advisor Eduardo Año denied agreeing to the PRC-alleged “new model” on May 5.[52] The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs also stated on May 5 that “no cabinet-level official of the administration has agreed to any Chinese proposal pertaining to Ayungin Shoal [Second Thomas Shoal].”[53]

Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) and Chinese Maritime Militia (CMM) vessels surrounding Scarborough Shoal failed to prevent a successful resupply mission to Filipino fishermen by the civilian group Atin Ito. At least 4 CCG and 26 CMM vessels are at Scarborough Shoal awaiting the Atin Ito convoy as of May 14.[54] 1 PLA Navy, 8 CCG, and 34 CMM vessels sailed to the east of Scarborough Shoal to prevent the Atin Ito convoy from reaching the shoal on May 15.[55] SeaLight Director Ray Powell noted this is the largest-ever blockade at Scarborough.[56] The Atin Ito convoy comprises 5 commercial fishing vessels and 100 small fishing boats that aim to deliver supplies such as food and fuel to the fisherman.[57] The Atin Ito convoy is independent of the Philippine government even though the *BRP Bacagay* is escorting the convoy.[58] An advance party of the Atin Ito convoy delivered 1,000 liters of fuel and 200 food packs near Scarborough Shoal on May 16.[59] The convoy leaders declared the mission accomplished on May 16 in light of this news and decided to not sail closer to Scarborough Shoal.[60]

The CCP English language propaganda outlet *Global Times* released articles and a video maligning the Philippines to portray the Philippines as irresponsible to the Atin Ito convoy. It claimed on May 13 that Atin Ito is using the fishermen as “human shields” and that the organization is a “hired gun” of the United States that has “continuously stirred up troubles” in the South China Sea.[61] *Global Times* also released an edited video showing Philippine fishermen polluting the environment by spitting, urinating, and dumping garbage at sea.[62]

A PLA Navy (PLAN) destroyer division carried out anti-missile and anti-submarine drills in the South China Sea. The PLA Southern Theater Command (STC) posted a video of the drill on May 10, the day the US-Philippine annual Balikatan military exercise in the South China Sea concluded.[63] The drill included the powerful Type 055 guided-missile destroyer *Zunyi* and other

ships including the destroyer *Haikou*, destroyer *Kunming*, and frigate *Xianning*. The STC said the ships were deployed in “sea-strike tactical formation” for training that focused on sea warfare, air defense and anti-missile warfare, and submarine warfare. The drill also included simulated nighttime strikes on onshore targets and exercises involving buoys.[64] PRC state-owned media Global Times reported that PLAN task forces led by Type 055 destroyers conducted multiple exercises around the South China Sea over the past month, including four PLAN ships that traversed the Sibutu Strait near the southern Philippines on May 2.[65]

Europe

Xi held a series of meetings with European and Russian leaders in April and May, after which he likely concluded that the PRC could maintain and deepen economic ties with Europe while continuing to support Russia’s war against Ukraine. Xi emphasized the benefits of cooperation between Europe and the PRC and rejected concerns about Sino-Russian ties and support that the PRC is providing to Russia’s war in Ukraine. Xi said during his April meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on April 16 that PRC and German industrial and supply chains are “deeply embedded” in one another and claimed this is not a “risk” but a guarantee of future relations – a possible reference to the European Union’s “de-risking” policies toward the PRC. He stressed that the two countries have “huge potential” for “win-win cooperation,” including in green development, and said both sides should be wary of protectionism. He said that the PRC hopes for a “fair, open, and non-discriminatory German market.”[66] Xi also stressed cooperation during his May 5 meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron. He said he hopes that “EU institutions... [will] formulate a positive policy towards China” and build “an industrial and supply chain partnership that is stable and mutually trustworthy.”[67] Xi’s statements aligned with a PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement on April 27 in the leadup to Xi’s trip that emphasized the necessity of avoiding “confrontation between camps” and the desire for France to push the EU to “pursue a positive and pragmatic policy towards China.”[68]

Xi’s approach during these meetings aimed to dissuade the European Union from implementing more hawkish economic policies against the PRC’s interests. The European Commission and its president Ursula von der Leyen have called EU-PRC trade “critically unbalanced,” criticized the PRC’s preferential treatment of its domestic companies and overcapacity in its production, and called for “de-risking” policies to reduce Europe’s economic dependence on the PRC.[69] The European Commission’s Economic Security Strategy released in 2023 said “de-risking” policies are meant to mitigate risks to supply chain resilience, risks to critical infrastructure, risks related to leakage of sensitive technology, and risks of economic coercion by diversifying supply chains and restricting European companies’ ability to produce sensitive technologies overseas.[70] Scholz, Macron, and von der Leyen all urged Xi to pressure Russia to end its war against Ukraine.[71]

Xi focused on shared Sino-Russian geopolitical goals during his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on May 16, however. Putin framed Russia and the PRC as both not willing to “accept Western attempts to impose an order based on lies, hypocrisy, and invented rules” in a written interview with CCP media outlet *Xinhua* on May 15.[72] Xi’s view in the aftermath of this meeting that the PRC and Russia should deepen their cooperation to produce a multi-polar world aligns with Putin’s view in the *Xinhua* interview.[73] PRC MFA Spokesman Wang Wenbin’s May 16 statements further demonstrate Xi’s view that the PRC can continue supporting Russia’s war against Ukraine with minimal consequences. He framed the US accusations of PRC support for Russia as an attempt

to shift blame for the Russia-Ukraine War onto the PRC. Wang then reiterated the PRC claim that US accusations “against China’s normal trade with Russia” are unjustified. [74]

The PRC strongly denied and condemned the United Kingdom’s espionage charges against alleged agents from Hong Kong. UK police charged three men under the National Security Act for allegedly assisting Hong Kong’s intelligence service in spying on UK-based dissidents. The charges include aiding a hostile state and forcing entry into a UK address. One of the men is the office manager at the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO) in London and an alleged former classmate of Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee. The other two are a UK Border Force official and a former Royal Marines commando.[75] The UK summoned PRC ambassador Zheng Zeguang to lodge complaints about the spying.[76] Lee, the PRC Embassy in the UK, and the MFA all strongly denied the charges. An MFA spokesperson called the allegations “malicious slander” and “political manipulation” and expressed “serious concern” about the prosecution of PRC citizens.[77] PRC Ambassador Zheng also claimed the case was a fabrication to “smear and attack” the Hong Kong government. He accused the UK of wantonly harassing and detaining PRC citizens in the UK and warned it not to meddle in Hong Kong affairs. He said the PRC is “firmly resolved in fighting anti-China elements seeking to disrupt Hong Kong” and accused the UK of “harboring wanted criminals.”[78] The UK government previously charged two British nationals with spying for the PRC in April.[79]

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

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