

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 United States approved a nearly \$2 billion US arms sale to Taiwan including three advanced surface-to-air missile systems. The PRC condemned the sale and threatened unspecified countermeasures.**
- **Taiwan’s Constitutional Court struck down most provisions of a set of controversial legislative reforms that would have imposed more checks on the presidency’s executive authority.**
- **CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping used the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia from October 24–26 to promote expanded cooperation between "Global South" countries and burnish the PRC’s reputation as a champion of developing countries’ interests. Growing interest in BRICS participation from the new partner countries signals progress towards that goal for the PRC.**
- **US intelligence officials and threat intelligence researchers are calling attention to assess that PRC information operations are targeting down-ballot candidates and members of Congress to incite divisions in a fraught US political environment. PRC influence efforts likely aim to degrade US policymaking by entangling certain candidates in controversial narratives and detracting from PRC-related issues.**
- **The PRC Type 055 destroyer CNS Xianyang made its first known deployment to the South Pacific and visited Vanuatu.**

- **PRC President Xi Jinping met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Kazan as the PRC and India work to resolve longstanding border tensions.**

Cross-Strait Relations

Taiwan

The United States approved a nearly \$2 billion US arms sale to Taiwan including three advanced surface-to-air missile systems. The PRC condemned the sale and threatened unspecified countermeasures. The United States approved a sale to Taiwan worth a total of \$1.988 billion on October 26 that includes three National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) along with AN/TPS-77 and AN/TPS-78 radar turnkey systems. It is the 17th and largest US sale to Taiwan under the Joe Biden administration.[1] An unspecified PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) spokesperson denounced the sale, saying that it seriously violated the one-China principle, seriously infringed upon the PRC's sovereignty and security interests, seriously damaged Sino-US relations, endangered peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and sent a seriously wrong signal to "'Taiwan independence' separatist forces." The spokesperson urged the United States to immediately stop arming Taiwan and said that the PRC will take "all necessary measures" to defend its sovereignty and national security.[2] Taiwan Affairs Spokesperson Zhu Fenglian made a similar statement and accused Taiwan's Lai Ching-te administration of trying to rely on the United States and to "use force" to seek independence. She warned Lai that buying weapons would only make Taiwan's situation more dangerous.[3]

The NASAMS will strengthen Taiwan's air defense capabilities against hostile aircraft and cruise missiles. They can detect aerial objects at 300 kilometers, engage targets at 40 to 60 kilometers, and include counter jamming capabilities. Retired Taiwanese air force officer Chou Yu-ping said the systems would be deployed in Taipei. Associate research fellow at Taiwan's state-funded Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR) Shu Hsiao-huang said that the NASAMS would replace the HAWK surface-to-air missile system, which covers medium-range and low-to-medium altitude objects in Taiwan's air defense.[4] The NASAMS has a shorter range than Taiwan's domestically developed Sky Bow (Tien Kung) I and II SAMS but is significantly more mobile. Tien Kung missiles are launched out of silos, while NASAMS can be deployed on trucks or rail. Taiwan also has nine mobile Patriot missile batteries, which have a range of at least 160 kilometers and have been shown to be effective against ballistic missiles. The Tien Kung system can also reportedly be used against ballistic missiles.[5]

A delegation from Taiwan's Penghu Islands met with PRC Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) Director Song Tao to negotiate the release of a Taiwanese fishing captain detained in the PRC and resuming tourism between the PRC and Penghu. Chairman of the Penghu Cross-Strait Exchange Association Chen Shuang-chuan and his son, Penghu County Speaker Chen Yu-jen, led a delegation to meet with Song in Beijing on October 24. Taiwanese media reported that the delegation was trying to secure the release of a Taiwanese fishing captain surnamed Hong whom the Chinese Coast Guard detained in July for illegally fishing in PRC waters. The PRC released Hong's vessel, the Da Jin Man 88, and four crew members in August but kept Hong detained for "further investigation." The Penghu delegation also hoped to discuss relaxations in PRC restrictions on tourism to Penghu.[6] The

PRC banned individual travel to Taiwan in 2019, citing poor cross-Strait relations. Local officials from Kinmen and Matsu, Taiwan's other major outlying islands in the Taiwan Strait, had success earlier in 2024 in securing the release of other Taiwanese fishermen and negotiating the resumption of PRC tourism to their islands.[7]

The TAO readout of the delegation's meeting with Song Tao did not mention the issue of Captain Hong's release at all. The readout said that the Chens stated that they came to Beijing to call for the reopening of PRC tourism to Penghu. Song Tao stressed that adhering to the "1992 Consensus" is the key to peaceful cross-Strait relations and criticized Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) for promoting "separatism" and severing Taiwan's historical connection to China. Chen Shuang-chuan said that people "from all walks of life in Penghu agree with the '1992 Consensus'" and hope for a return to peaceful cross-Strait relations.[8]

The 1992 Consensus is an alleged verbal agreement between semi-official representatives of the PRC and the then Kuomintang (KMT)-ruled ROC following negotiations in 1992. It states that both sides agree there is only one China, and that Taiwan is part of China. The CCP interprets this "one China" as the People's Republic of China, while the KMT interprets it as the Republic of China. The DPP does not recognize the 1992 Consensus and considers the ROC and PRC to be mutually non-subordinate. The PRC suspended exchanges with Taiwan's government in 2016 after the election of DPP president Tsai Ing-wen. It insists that the 1992 Consensus must be the common political basis for all cross-Strait negotiations.

The TAO conducts direct negotiations with KMT party officials and local politicians to legitimize the KMT as negotiating partners on behalf of Taiwan and to benefit KMT-leaning constituencies in Taiwan. Taiwan's outlying islands of Kinmen and Matsu are solidly pan-Blue (KMT-leaning) regions, while Penghu has a more varied political makeup.[9] Conducting fruitful negotiations with KMT officials while refusing to meet with DPP officials is a way in which the PRC helps the DPP's political opponents and reinforces the CCP's message that the 1992 Consensus is the critical basis for cross-Strait relations.

Taiwan's Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB) charged a Taiwanese criminal gang member and nine military officers with spying for the PRC. The criminal, Lee Huei-hsin, was a member of the "Sun Alliance" criminal organization and managed a temple in a district of New Taipei. The CIB said that she first came into contact with PRC intelligence officials during a temple-related exchange in Macau in June 2023, then used her criminal and religious connections to find recruits for a spy ring. Lee used financial leverage and payments to recruit six active and three retired Taiwanese military officers, whom she paid to collect sensitive travel and work schedules that were then sent to the PRC. The recruits had to take a picture in uniform with a PRC flag and a promise to surrender in case of war.[10]

The AEI-ISW report on PRC short-of-war coercion of Taiwan identified both the recruitment of Taiwanese military personnel and the co-optation of organized crime among the PRC's lines of effort to weaken Taiwan's will and capacity to defend itself.[11] Taiwanese authorities have uncovered numerous instances of the CCP bribing ROC military personnel to form spy rings and sign pledges to surrender. A Reuters investigation in 2023 found that at least 21 serving or retired Taiwanese military officers with

the rank of captain and above have been convicted of spying for the PRC from 2013 to 2023.[12][13] Besides cases like Lee Huei-hsin's, the CCP co-opts Taiwan's criminal underworld to directly promote pro-unification political activity. A notable example is the founder of Taiwan's China Unification Promotion Party (CUPP), Chang An-lo, who is also an organized crime figure called the "White Wolf." [14] Chang told PRC state media in 2021 that he was turning Taiwanese youth "from Green to Red." [15]

The PRC responded to Taiwan Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung's visit to Guatemala by calling on Guatemala to switch diplomatic recognition to the PRC. Lin visited Guatemala on October 24-25 to mark the 90th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Guatemala and the ROC. He met with Guatemala President Bernardo Arévalo and invited him to visit Taiwan.[16] PRC MFA spokesperson Lin Jian responded by reiterating the PRC's position that Taiwan is PRC territory. He claimed that "more and more people with vision in Guatemala" are leaning in support of establishing relations with the PRC and urged the Guatemalan government to "make the right choice at an early date." [17]

The PRC is attempting to restrict Taiwan's independent voice in international politics by "poaching" its diplomatic allies and trying to enforce an international "consensus" on the one China principle. It has increasingly argued that UN Resolution 2758, which expelled the ROC from the United Nations and gave its seat to the PRC in 1971, constitutes a "prevailing consensus" that Taiwan belongs to China and that the PRC is the sole legal government of China.[18] It refuses to have diplomatic relations with countries that recognize Taiwan and has used a variety of methods, including economic incentives and coercion, to persuade countries to recognize the PRC instead. Guatemala is one of 11 remaining countries that maintain diplomatic relations with the ROC after Beijing convinced Nauru to cut ties with Taiwan two days after Taiwan's 2024 election.[19]

Taiwan's Constitutional Court struck down most provisions of a set of controversial legislative reforms that would have imposed more checks on the presidency's executive authority. The KMT and Taiwan People's Party (TPP), which jointly hold a majority in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (LY), passed the legislation in May despite opposition from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and mass protests. The DPP immediately appealed for a constitutional review. The law would have permitted the LY to call on any public official to testify before an investigative committee, confirm political appointments, and impose fines or criminal charges for "contempt of legislature" against anyone who lies, refuses to answer questions, or talks back while testifying before the legislature. The law also required the president of Taiwan to deliver a State of the Nation address and submit to a question-and-answer session at the discretion of the LY.[20] The Constitutional Court ruled that the "contempt of legislature" law, the LY's ability to summon and question the President, and new legislative powers to investigate government officials were all unconstitutional. It directed the LY to amend the laws.[21] President Lai offered to deliver a "state of the nation" address anyway, even though he is not required to.[22]

Lai's political opposition could have used the new reforms to hinder the Lai administration's policy agenda and will continue to fight for them despite the court ruling. The KMT and TPP have argued that

the reforms are necessary checks and balances on the executive branch's power. KMT majority leader Fu Kun-chi said that the KMT legislators would not cooperate with the court's request to amend the law. He also stated that the KMT would not welcome Lai to address the LY on his own terms, calling him an "emperor."^[23] The KMT disagrees with the DPP stance on a variety of issues including defense spending and cross-strait relations, so its ability to check Lai's executive power with investigations and confirmation processes would likely have implications for Lai's military and civil defense initiatives and other programs.

China

CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping used the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia from October 24-26 to promote expanded cooperation between "Global South" countries and burnish the PRC's reputation as a champion of developing countries' interests. Growing interest in BRICS participation from new partner countries signals progress towards that goal for the PRC. The PRC is cultivating a common "Global South" identity while pursuing BRICS expansion to strengthen the credibility of its advocacy for alternative mechanisms for world governance to supersede what the PRC frames as hegemonic Western-dominated institutions. This BRICS summit featured newly admitted members Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE.^[24] Saudi Arabia was invited to join BRICS but has not yet accepted the invitation.^[25] BRICS also invited representatives from 26 other countries and UN Secretary-General António Guterres for the "BRICS+ Leaders Dialogue."^[26] Xi used the platform to advocate for the collective rise of the "Global South" and highlight the PRC's supposed contributions to solving global security crises such as the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.^[27] Xi welcomed interest from "Global South" members in BRICS cooperation and advocated for further progress toward a multilateral world order by strengthening developing countries' representation in multilateral forums.^[28]

PRC appeals to "Global South" countries during the BRICS summit characterize the organization as an inclusive platform for disenfranchised countries that strives for the realization of a more "equal and orderly multipolar world."^[29] PRC state media characterized the PRC as the "backbone of BRICS cooperation and a core member of the Global South."^[30] BRICS admitted 13 new "partner" countries in October, including Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.^[31] Azerbaijan, Malaysia, and Turkey have already applied to join BRICS as full-fledged members. Growing membership and cooperation from other countries can be interpreted by Xi and the PRC government as an indication of broader acceptance of PRC-led world governance institutions.

The PRC's attachment of the "Global South" label to its global security initiatives likely aims to legitimize them and attract wider international support. The PRC and Brazil held the inaugural meeting of the "Friends of Peace" platform on September 27, which has the stated purpose of expanding dialogue and giving Global South countries a voice to advance a "political settlement of the Ukraine issue."^[32] 13 of the 17 participating countries signed a joint communiqué that expresses support for the PRC' and Brazil's six-point peace plan for the Russia-Ukraine war—India notably did not sign the communique. The PRC has been trying to attract international support for the plan since Ukrainian leaders called for greater participation from the "Global South" in de-escalating the war in June while advancing Ukraine's own peace platform.^[33] The United States, EU, NATO, and Ukraine

have all criticized the PRC-Brazil plan due to aspects of the plan that favor Russia, such as its omission of a demand for Russia to withdraw from Ukrainian territory. Several of the non-BRICS countries that attended in summit were also signatories to the communiqué, including Indonesia and Turkey, a NATO member.[34] The PRC's persistent framing of its world governance initiatives as "Global South"-oriented contributes to the PRC information operation claiming that PRC policies represent the interest of countries that identify with the "Global South" label.

US intelligence officials and threat intelligence researchers assess that PRC information operations are targeting down-ballot candidates and members of Congress to incite divisions in a fraught US political environment. PRC influence efforts likely aim to degrade US policymaking by entangling certain candidates in controversial narratives and detracting from PRC-related issues. The US Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) called out PRC, Russian, and Iranian efforts to spread divisive narratives online before the US election in an October 21 election security report.[35] ODNI officials stated in an October 7 Department of State press briefing that the PRC was attempting to influence down-ballot races and candidates, regardless of party affiliation.[36] ODNI officials stated that the PRC's efforts focused on candidates whom Beijing perceives to threaten its core interests, especially regarding Taiwan.

The Microsoft Threat Analysis Center released an election security update on October 23 that highlighted the focus of PRC influence operations on down-ballot candidates and members of Congress.[37] Microsoft highlighted antisemitic narratives, accusations of corruption, and promotion of opposition candidates as dominating the substance of PRC operators' content.

The Washington Post attributed the recent activity to the PRC state-sponsored information operation Spamouflage, based on its analysis of more than 19,000 posts on X/Twitter from accounts that it identified using data from the US Justice Department and other threat intelligence organizations.[38] The politicians whom the Washington Post and Microsoft investigations identified as the targets of PRC influence efforts are outspoken critics of the PRC. The account operators' focus on spreading antisemitic rhetoric represents an attempt to seize on politically sensitive issues after the start of the Israel-Hamas war in October 2023 to mire US politicians in controversy.

The Washington Post's findings are consistent with findings from investigations by network analysis and social media intelligence firm Graphika, which assessed in September that Spamouflage operators posed as Americans on social media to foment political division ahead of US elections.[39] The findings also align with research from UK-based research nonprofit the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, which reported in February that suspected Spamouflage accounts focused on creating a sense of dismay in the United States by portraying the election as a high-stakes showdown and symbol of a divided United States. Themes at this time also included sowing doubt about election integrity, highlighting social problems, and featuring direct criticisms of President Biden.[40] The shifting themes of information operations reveals the opportunistic nature of PRC influence efforts, as well as their evolution to focus on sowing political division and undermining faith in the US electoral process.

Southeast Asia

Indonesia

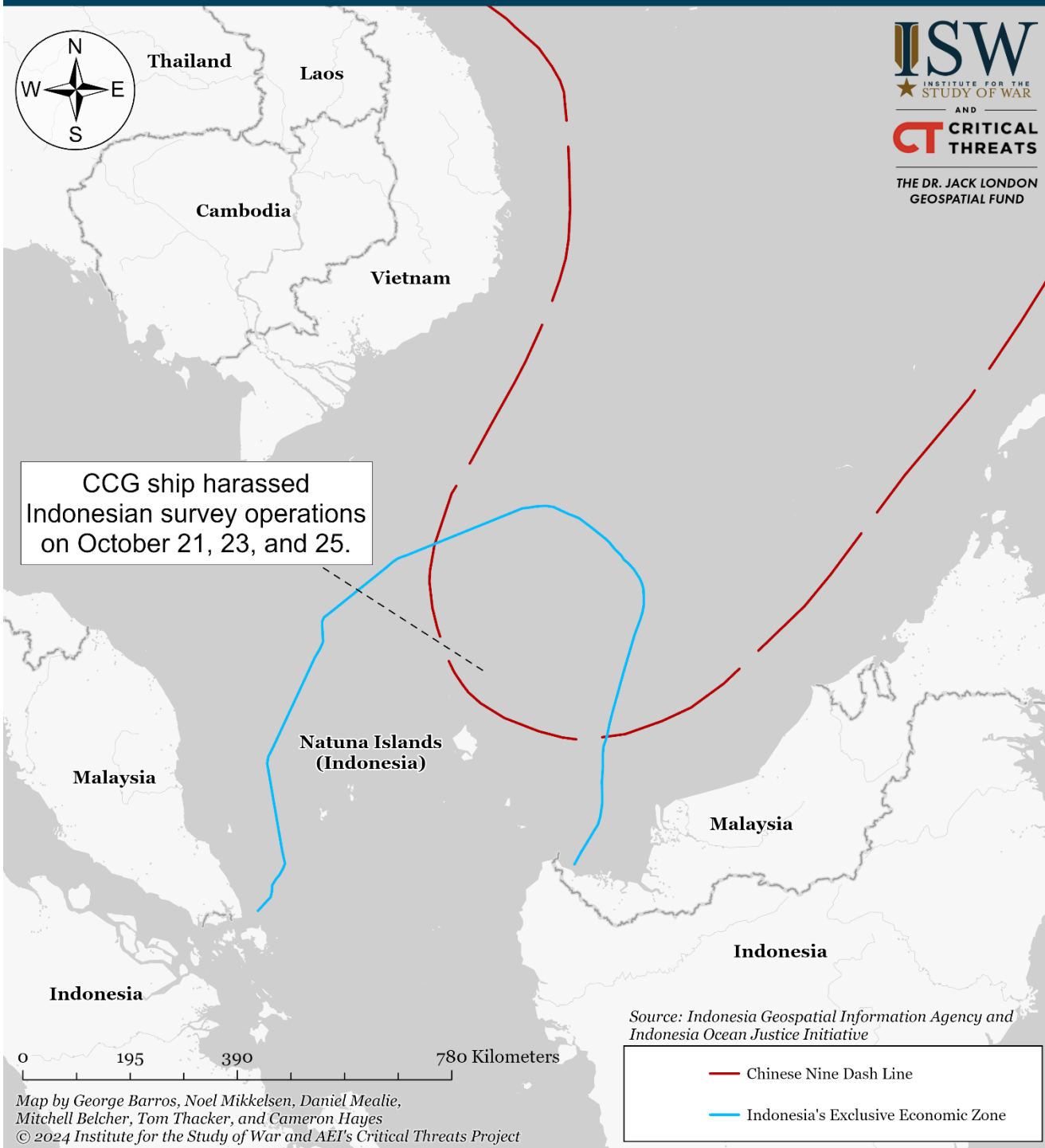
Indonesian patrol ships drove a Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) vessel away from an Indonesian vessel during three separate incidents in the North Natuna Sea. The Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (IMSA) reported that a CCG vessel had approached the Norwegian-flagged MV Geo Coral on October 21st, 23rd, and 25th, and three times interrupted the ship's ongoing seismic surveillance operations north of Indonesia's Natuna Islands, which it was conducting for the state-owned Indonesian firm PT Pertamina. The area is part of Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) but overlaps with the PRC's claims in the South China Sea based on the PRC's Nine-Dash Line.[41] PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian claimed that the CCG's movements were routine patrols in waters under PRC jurisdiction. Lin added that "China is ready to enhance communication and consultation with Indonesia through diplomatic channels and properly handle maritime differences between the two countries". [42]The IMSA announced that it would continue to conduct intensive patrols within the waters of North Natuna to ensure "its sovereign right to explore" its natural resources[43] The CCG vessel first entered the waters on October 17. Jakarta shadowed it with coastguard ships backed by maritime surveillance aircraft and a naval vessel. There was no indication of violence in the confrontations.

This incident follows similar standoffs that have occurred between the two countries over the past decade. Despite acknowledging Indonesian sovereignty over the Natuna Islands in 2015, China has continuously challenged Jakarta's rights to patrol and extract resources in the nearby waters. In 2016, a CCG operation forcibly intervened and recovered a Chinese vessel from an Indonesian coastguard ship after Indonesia had seized the boat for illegal fishing activities.[44] In 2020 and 2021, the PRC sent a series of law enforcement and maritime survey vessels into waters under Indonesian and Malaysian jurisdiction. Similar incidents occurred in 2023 as well. One incident in 2020 involved the Indonesian government sending multiple naval vessels, military jets, and over 600 troops in response to PRC incursions over Indonesia's fishing rights.[45]

The PRC has gradually normalized patrols in the exclusive economic zones of Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, which all claim different parts of the South China Sea. Its actions against Indonesia have been at a much lower intensity than those against the Philippines and Vietnam but are consistent with the PRC's efforts to enforce its maritime claims in the South China Sea and prevent other countries from resource exploitation there.

The PRC will likely attempt to avoid escalating its confrontations with Indonesia given its recent attempts to strengthen defense ties with Jakarta.[46] The CCG patrols may be meant to put regional countries into difficult situations where they must attempt to balance protecting their own interests with maintaining their vital economic relations with the PRC.[47]

CCG activities in Indonesian EEZ, October 21-25

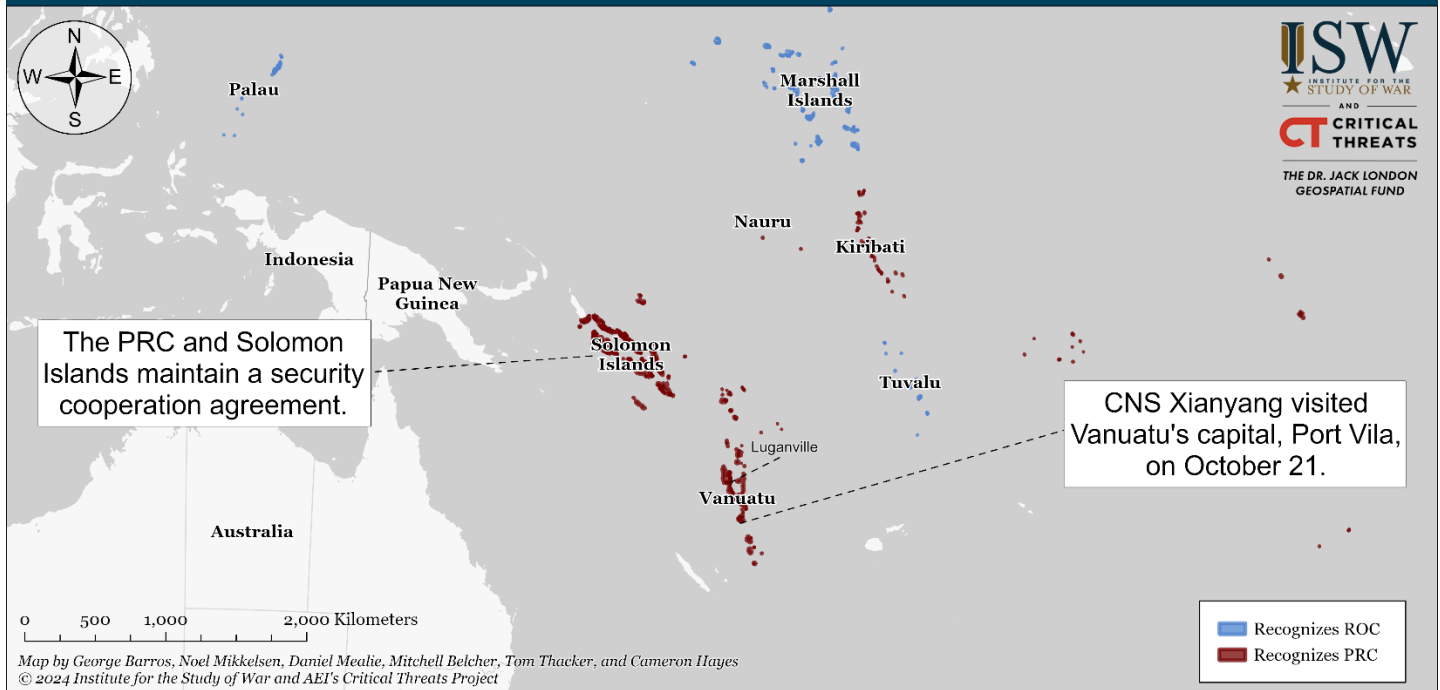


Oceania

The PRC Type 055 destroyer CNS Xianyang made its first known deployment to the South Pacific and visited Vanuatu.^[48] The Xianyang and Type 052 destroyer CNS Nanning – both part of the Southern Theater Command navy – arrived at Vanuatu’s capital, Port Vila.^[49] The PRC embassy in Vanuatu described the visit as a “technical stop” for resupply.^[50]

The Xianyang’s visit is consistent with concerted and public PRC efforts to cultivate ties with Vanuatu and with Pacific island nations more broadly. The PRC Foreign Ministry said on October 18 that the “foundation of China-Vanuatu friendship is accelerating” and that “Chinese elements can be seen everywhere on the island.”^[51] It described Vanuatu’s “development potential,” highlighting Vanuatu’s deepwater port at Luganville that “can accommodate two 10,000-ton cruise ships at the same time with the help of China.”^[52] The Type 055 destroyer displaces roughly 12,000-13,000 tons;^[53] the Type 052 is smaller. Director of the CCP International Department Liu Jianchao met with Vanuatu’s Minister of Finance Johnny Koanapo on October 16 and discussed “deepening exchanges of experience in state governance and promoting the construction of a China-Vanuatu community with a shared future in the new era.”^[54] PRC President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang met with Vanuatu Prime Minister Charlot Salwai in July 2024 during Salwai’s visit to Beijing.^[55] The PRC also donated a presidential building complex to Vanuatu in July 2024.^[56] A PRC naval hospital ship, the Peace Ark, visited Vanuatu in 2014 and 2018.^[57] Vanuatu is a Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) country, as are a number of other Pacific Island nations: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Tonga.^[58] PRC military diplomacy and outreach efforts to Vanuatu will likely continue as the PRC seeks to expand its influence and power projection in Oceania. FDI, security cooperation, and military diplomacy – including port visits and police cooperation, which the PRC has used across Oceania to varying extents^[59] – offer the PRC a means of power projection. Vanuatu could offer the PRC an especially critical foothold due to its location near Australia. Access to Vanuatu could also enhance the PRC’s access to the Solomon Islands, which maintains a security agreement with the PRC.^[60] PRC former representative to New Zealand Jie Wenji said that the PRC has rapidly improved its power projection capabilities and that the PRC navy “can be used all over the world”^[61] in reference to the Xianyang port visit.

PRC destroyer Xiangang visits Vanuatu, October 21



The PRC Commerce Ministry expressed its opposition to United States sanctions placed on PRC companies involved with the production and export of attack drones to Russia. PRC Commerce Ministry spokesperson He Yadong criticized the sanctions for being unilateral and without basis in international law and norms in an October 24 press conference.[62] He reiterated that the PRC has strict rules regarding the export of dual-use items and stated that since the beginning of the war in Ukraine the PRC has issued several notices on drone exports and forbids the export of civilian drones to be used for military purposes.[63] The provision and use of PRC dual-use goods for military purposes by the Russian Armed Forces has been widely documented.[64]

The United States Treasury Department announced on October 17 that it would be targeting two PRC firms for working with previously sanctioned Russian firms in the development of the Garpiya-series attack drone.[65] This was the first time that the United States sanctioned PRC entities for sending lethal aid to Russia for the war effort in Ukraine. Following the announcement of sanctions, PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mao Ning denied that the PRC provided lethal weapons to Russia and characterized the Treasury Department's statement as an attempt to pressure the PRC.[66]

Reports of Putin's alleged request to Elon Musk to limit Starlink access in Taiwan could signify a shift in Russian policy towards Taiwan. Russian President Vladimir Putin asked Elon Musk to avoid activating Starlink satellite internet service over Taiwan as a favor to Xi Jinping, according to an October 25 Wall Street Journal report.[67] Representatives from the PRC embassy in Washington have stated that they are unaware of the specifics of this situation, and thus unable to comment on it.[68] Musk has denied the allegations. National Security Council spokesperson John

Kirby declined to comment on the report and Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated that the only communication the Kremlin had with Musk concerned space and future technologies.[69] Overt efforts by Putin and the Russian government to aid in PRC efforts regarding Taiwan are very uncommon and typically limited to rhetorical statements echoing the PRC's stance on Taiwan's political status. A direct request such as the one Putin allegedly made to Musk would be a significant departure from previous Russian actions towards Taiwan and would signify further alignment between the PRC and Russia.

Starlink does not provide internet service in Taiwan, in part due to Taiwanese government restrictions on non-domestic satellite operations. The Taiwanese government has been working to develop a domestically produced version of Starlink as part of its Beyond 5G project.[70] This project, part of a collaboration between the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, is working to develop a low-earth orbit satellite by 2027. Taiwanese government officials have placed an emphasis on protecting and improving communications infrastructure amid constant PRC attacks that risk interrupting Taiwanese access to the internet and isolating the island.

South Asia

PRC President Xi Jinping met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Kazan as the PRC and India work to resolve longstanding border tensions. The last formal bilateral meeting between the two leaders took place in 2019, prior to the May 2020 border skirmish that killed four Chinese and 20 Indian troops.[71] PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian commented that “China is willing to work with India to adhere to the strategic height and long-term perspective to view and handle China-India relations, strengthen communication and cooperation, enhance strategic mutual trust, properly handle differences, and promote the return of bilateral relations to the track of stable development as soon as possible.”[72] PRC and Indian forces have already begun withdrawing from the contested border stand-off points and dismantling structures constructed along the border following a pre-BRICS agreement to disengage.[73]

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