

CHAPTER 3

U.S.-CHINA SECURITY, POLITICS, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SECTION 1: YEAR IN REVIEW: SECURITY, POLITICS, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Key Findings

- In 2021, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) marked the centennial of its founding by instructing Party members and the Chinese people to prepare for a decades-long confrontation with the United States and other democracies over the future of the global order. Chinese leaders grew more uncompromising in pursuing their interests as they insisted historical trends proved the inferiority of democracy to the political, economic, and normative model of their one-party rule.
- In an apparent paradox, the CCP assessed that internal and external threats facing the regime were intensifying and that its rule was becoming less secure despite the growth of Chinese power. CCP leaders vowed forceful measures against officials and Party members wavering in the face of international pressure and continued their repressive campaigns in Hong Kong and against the Uyghur people, Tibetans, and other ethnic minority groups.
- Beijing reaffirmed its intent to maintain high levels of defense spending to transform the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a powerful force able to operate in and beyond the Indo-Pacific region. Chinese leaders showed new levels of frustration with the PLA's lagging efforts to improve its training and personnel quality amid perennial concerns about the force's lack of warfighting experience. The PLA continued to commission advanced warships and field new aircraft capable of projecting force beyond China's borders. Beijing also signaled its interest in establishing additional overseas military bases, reportedly including locations on Africa's west coast.
- China's diplomats deepened their embrace of a belligerent and uncompromising approach to foreign relations. The foreign ministry's disregard for the reputational cost of its strident rhetoric reflected domestic incentives that reward efforts to raise China's global standing while discrediting the United States and other democracies. As it grew more confrontational toward democratic countries, Beijing expanded its partnerships with Russia

and Iran and attempted to cast itself as a leader of developing countries across Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

- China's aggressive tone and military coercion of its neighbors prompted deepening cooperation between Indo-Pacific countries and new efforts by the EU and others to increase their diplomatic and military presence in the region. China continued its military tensions with India, building illegal military outposts in neighboring Bhutan and launching cyberattacks that may have caused blackouts across India.
- U.S. concerns over the growing national security threat from China continue. Beijing's refusal to cooperate in investigating the origins of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and demands that the Biden Administration cease all criticism of China's human rights abuses and abandon other policies opposed by the CCP undermined Beijing's initial hopes for a reset in bilateral ties.

Introduction

In 2021, the CCP celebrated the centennial of its founding. Amid the triumphant celebrations, however, the message of senior CCP leaders was sober. Rather than evince satisfaction that China's economic development had ushered in a new era of peace and prosperity, CCP leaders instructed Party members and the Chinese people to prepare for a decades-long confrontation with the United States and other democracies over the future of the global order. Meanwhile, China's leaders made plain their ambition to present their one-party rule to the world as a superior political, economic, and moral model to democracy and capitalism.

Behind their global assertiveness, CCP leaders perceived growing internal and external threats to the survival of their regime. As the United States and other democracies took steps to defend themselves against China's influence activities, military power, and coercive economic practices, the CCP escalated attacks against the "enemy forces" at home and abroad that it described as attempting to undermine its rule. Today, the regime is both confident and paranoid, insistent on its superiority but increasingly fearful of subversion and failure. Having declared the superiority and inevitable triumph of their model, CCP leaders have proved unwilling to tolerate any domestic or foreign criticism of their actions.

Over the past year, the CCP regime rejected compromise and responded aggressively to any criticism or challenge to its interests. China stepped up its use of military coercion in the East and South China Seas, the Taiwan Strait, and along the Indian border, while attempting to coerce Australia into revising internal policies displeasing to Beijing, such as calling for an independent investigation into the origins of COVID-19. China also extended its use of coercion beyond the Indo-Pacific region, demanding Guyana cancel plans for a new Taiwan trade office and halting rail shipments to Lithuania after the country decided to open a similar representative office.¹ At the same time, Beijing attempted to cast itself as a leader of countries across the developing world, such as by trumpeting an agreement with Arab states to form a "Chinese-Arab community of common destiny."² Despite the steady coalescing of many democra-

cies within and outside the Indo-Pacific against its coercive behavior, Beijing projected confidence in its ability to expand partnerships with other countries and overcome all opposition to achieve its goals.

This section examines the key developments in China's politics, military posture, and foreign relations in 2021. It begins by examining CCP leaders' view of their position within the international system and concerns over intensifying threats to their rule. The section then assesses the Party's increasing domestic repression, the growth and continued shortfalls of the PLA, and the mixed results of Chinese foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific and globally. It concludes by examining the evolution of U.S.-China relations through the transition to and early days of the Biden Administration. This section is based on Commission hearings and briefings, discussions with outside experts, and open source research and analysis throughout the year.

Remaking the International Order

In its centennial year, the CCP forcefully asserted its ambition to replace the processes and norms of the liberal international order with those of its own making. In a speech in Tiananmen Square marking the Party's centennial celebration in July, General Secretary of the CCP Xi Jinping quoted Mao Zedong in reminding his audience of the CCP's original aim to fundamentally alter the post-World War II international order. "Through tenacious struggle," he recited, "the Party and the Chinese people showed the world that the Chinese people were capable of not only destroying the old world, but also building a new one."³ He further argued that by using Marxism the CCP had "seized the initiative in history."⁴ Using these principles, General Secretary Xi declared, the Party had not only developed China's own economy and material power but had also "created a new model for human advancement."⁵

General Secretary Xi's characterization of the global relevance of China's model followed similar arguments by CCP officials earlier in the year. Seizing upon the contested U.S. presidential election and the January 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol, CCP leaders claimed that a clear contrast had emerged between the "order of China" and the "chaos of the West."⁶ In another assessment of China's growing strength relative to the United States and other democracies, CCP leaders claimed that historical trends indicated the "East is rising and the West is in decline."^{*7} In his speech in Ti-

* Senior CCP officials have used the phrases "order of China and chaos of the West" and "the East is rising and the West is in decline" with growing frequency throughout 2021. Although Party leaders have mentioned "order of China and chaos of the West" since late 2020, Chinese media articles used the phrase as early as 2017. Chinese media introduced the phrase "the East is rising and the West is in decline" in 2019, but it was not used in authoritative CCP statements until early 2021. Sina Finance, "Chen Yixin Conveys the Spirit of the Seminar: 'The East Is Rising and the West Is Falling' Is the Trend. This Development Trend Is Beneficial to Us" (陈一新传达研讨班精神: "东升西降"是趋势 发展态势对我有利), January 15, 2021. Translation; William Zheng, "The Time for China's Rise Has Come, Security Chief Tells Law Enforcers," *South China Morning Post*, January 15, 2021; Chris Buckley, "The East Is Rising: Xi Maps Out China's Post-Covid Ascent," *New York Times*, March 3, 2021; William Zheng, "China's Officials Play Up 'Rise of the East, Decline of the West,'" *South China Morning Post*, March 9, 2021; Guo Shengkun (郭声琨), "Building a Safer China of a Higher Level (Study and Implement the Spirit of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Party)" (建设更高水平的平安中国(学习贯彻党的十九届五中全会精神), *People's Daily*, December 2, 2020. Translation; Chen Xiangyang (陈向阳), "[China Daily Online Review] Xi Jinping's Diplomatic Thought Leads the World's Changes in a Hundred Years" (【中国日报网评】习近平外交思想领航世界百年大变局), *Xinhua*, October 11, 2019. Translation; Qiushi, "The Institutional Causes of Chaos in the West and Order in China" (西方之

ananmen Square, General Secretary Xi broadcast the CCP's unwillingness to alter its governance practices or foreign policy in the face of outside pressure, declaring that the Party would not "accept sanctimonious preaching from those who feel they have the right to lecture us."⁸ Instead, he warned, anyone attempting to "bully" China would "crack their heads and spill blood on a Great Wall of steel fortified by the flesh and blood of 1.4 billion Chinese people."⁹

The CCP regime further judged it faced a unique opportunity to establish its governance model as a leading political force internationally. Central to this calculation was the Party's judgment that the international order was entering a period of "turmoil and transformation" while experiencing "great changes not seen in a century."¹⁰ Chinese leaders assessed the COVID-19 pandemic had quickened the pace of these changes and helped push the world to a "historical dividing line."¹¹ At this point, the CCP judged, great power relations were experiencing a "new round of adjustment" while the global order split up and formed new groupings.¹² In an article published in November 2020, China's top diplomat and Politburo member* Yang Jiechi asserted that China must lead the world's transformation and establish a Sinocentric "community of common human destiny."¹³ In January 2021, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi added in the Party's theoretic journal *Qiushi* (*Seeking Truth*) that General Secretary Xi had identified the "correct direction" for the global order's transformation.¹⁴ In the coming years, Party leaders argued, the CCP would therefore place an even greater emphasis on contributing a "China approach" to global governance.¹⁵

"China Cannot Compromise"

Underlying the CCP's aspiration to global leadership is its unfounded claim to speak for the international community and represent new norms of justice superseding those of the international order prior to China's rise. In a year when the United States and other countries condemned the CCP's genocide against the Uyghur people, the dismantling of Hong Kong's democracy and civil liberties, and other human rights abuses, Chinese leaders were unmoved. In his January 2021 article, Foreign Minister Wang claimed that China "stood on the side of international morality and justice" in its foreign relations and would "speak with the force of justice" against criticism of the CCP's handling of the COVID-19 outbreak; its governance system; and its actions toward Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet.¹⁶ In an interview in April, the foreign minister revealed the linkage between the CCP's increasingly harsh tone toward the United States and other countries and its moral self-justification. Referring to U.S. officials' remarks on the need for a mixture of cooperation and confrontation with China, Foreign Minister Wang responded simply, "China cannot compromise because what we ad-

乱与中国之治的制度原因), August 2, 2017. Translation; "Yuan Peng, President of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations: The U.S. Is Sick, China Is Stable, and the World Has Changed" (中国现代国际关系研究院院长袁鹏: 美国病了 中国稳了 世界变了), *China Daily* (中国日报), January 18, 2021. Translation.

*The Politburo (formally known as the Central Political Bureau) of the CCP is currently composed of 25 members. The Politburo Standing Committee, currently comprising the group's leading seven members, is mandated to conduct policy discussions and make decisions on major issues when the Politburo is not in session. In practice, the Politburo Standing Committee holds supreme authority over both the CCP and the Chinese government.

here to is the basic norms of international relations. China cannot yield because there are numerous developing as well as medium and small countries behind us.”¹⁷ For these reasons, he declared, China “certainly has the right to strike back because we must safeguard our country’s sovereignty and national dignity.”¹⁸

China depicted the United States and other developed democracies as outdated global rules-setters that the rest of the world should cast aside in favor of Beijing’s own definition of international norms. When leaders of Group of Seven countries gathering in the United Kingdom (UK) in June 2021 criticized China’s human rights abuses and market-distorting economic practices, Chinese officials questioned the authority of attendees at the summit, which also included Australia, India, and South Korea, to make these assertions. “The days when global decisions were dictated by a small group of countries are long gone,” the spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in the UK declared. “There is only one set of rules for the world, that is, the basic norms of international relations... not the so-called rules formulated by a small number of countries.”¹⁹ The spokesperson accused the summit’s communique of “wanton[ly] smearing... China” and “flagrantly violat[ing] the basic norms of international relations.”²⁰ A *People’s Daily* editorial published after the summit made a similar attempt to cast China as the true arbiter of global order. “The unilateral retrogressive acts of the United States and a few other countries will only undermine international rules and order,” it claimed. “Lies are lies, and the nature of a lie will not change because of a few vilifying remarks from rumormongers.”²¹

Fears of Growing Threats to the Regime

Despite their projection of self-assurance, Chinese leaders assessed that threats to their regime were growing and exacerbating challenges inside China. Moreover, the CCP judged that further growth of Chinese power would make the Party’s leadership more, rather than less, insecure. In October 2020, *People’s Daily* published a study guide expressing this pessimistic view following the release of the third volume of General Secretary Xi’s collection of speeches, *The Governance of China*. “It is impossible for the road ahead to be smooth sailing,” the study guide warned. “The greater our accomplishments, the more we must act with extreme caution... and forcefully respond to major risks and challenges.”²² The guide continued, “We must concentrate on the most harmful aspects of all developments,” recognizing that if the Party failed to respond forcefully, “small risks and threats will become large ones and partial risks and threats will become systemic ones.”²³ Left unaddressed, external threats would eventually become domestic threats while challenges to China’s “economy, culture, society, technology, and internet... would transform into political risks and challenges threatening the Party’s ruling position.”²⁴ The threats facing the CCP were long-term and would only grow more complex, the guide concluded, to the point of the Party encountering “unimaginably stormy seas.”²⁵

Chinese leaders viewed U.S. policies pushing back against the CCP’s growing assertiveness as central to the regime’s challenges. In January 2021, Secretary-General of the CCP’s Central Political

and Legal Affairs Commission* Chen Yixin declared “containment and suppression” by the United States to be a major threat to the CCP. Referring to Mao’s strategy for fighting Japan during World War II, Secretary-General Chen assessed the confrontation between the United States and China to have characteristics of a “protracted war.”†²⁶ In remarks on the sidelines of China’s National People’s Congress in March, State Councilor and Defense Minister Wei Fenghe described the long-term relationship between the United States and China as one of “containment versus counter-containment” and predicted U.S. containment efforts would last for decades.²⁷ He repeated his assertion from the 2020 National People’s Congress that China had entered a phase of high risk for national security and urged the country to improve its military capability to prevail over “strong enemies”—a phrase CCP leaders use to refer to the United States.²⁸

The CCP judged that ideological threats to the regime were at least as severe as traditional national security challenges. In December 2020, Politburo member and head of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission Guo Shengkun claimed that both traditional and nontraditional threats were increasing and becoming more interconnected against the “great backdrop of the strategic contest between China and the United States.”²⁹ If left unchecked, he warned, these threats could easily grow into “systemic risks.”³⁰ CCP leaders argued that underlying these threats was the hostile intent of “outside enemy forces” advocating for principles such as democracy and the rule of law and questioning the Party’s right to rule.³¹ In its study guide on *The Governance of China*, the *People’s Daily* provided more detail on the paranoia gripping the highest ranks of the CCP. “Every kind of enemy force has never stopped their plots to ‘Westernize’ and divide China, nor have they stopped their activities to topple and destroy the Communist Party’s leader-

*The Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission is an important body coordinating the CCP’s “security maintenance” work, coded language for managing social unrest to protect the regime, including through the use of force. In this capacity, it has direct oversight over China’s law and order bodies, including the Supreme People’s Court, Ministry of Public Security, and Ministry of State Security. The Commission’s head, titled the secretary, reports directly to General Secretary Xi through the National Security Commission, which Xi chairs. The secretary-general of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission is responsible for drafting documents representing the commission’s views and implementing its decisions. The commission’s secretary typically exercises control over organizational decisions by working closely with the secretary-general to draft policy details. Wen-Hsuan Tsai and Wang Zhou, “Integrated Fragmentation and the Role of Leading Small Groups in Chinese Politics,” *China Journal* 82 (July 1, 2019): 1–22, 14–15; Dali L. Yang, “China’s Troubled Quest for Order: Leadership, Organization and the Contradictions of the Stability Maintenance Regime,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 26:103 (January 2017) 35–53, 36, 42, 50.

†Chinese official discussions of “protracted war” refer to Mao’s famous 1938 essay “On Protracted War,” in which he advocated for a long-term strategy to prevail over Japan during World War II. Mao used the essay to urge CCP members to resist both the allure of a quick victory and of defeatism, arguing instead for a “long and ruthless war” to defeat its more powerful adversary. By being more willing to tolerate casualties, economic damage, and other costs of conflict, Mao envisioned China forcing a “strategic stalemate” from which it would gradually rise to a superior position and launch a decisive counteroffensive. He expected conditions for this victory to be set in part by the powerful adversary suffering heavy casualties, discontent among its population and troops, economic losses, and condemnation by world opinion. Chinese official statements have used the phrase more in recent years, such as in a July 2020 Politburo meeting statement that China’s economic challenges “must be understood from the perspective of protracted war.” *Xinhua*, “General Secretary Xi Jinping Presides over a Central Committee Politburo Meeting, Where It Decided to Hold the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CCP Central Committee and Where It Analyzed and Studied the Current Economic Situation and Economic Work” (中共中央政治局召开会议 决定召开十九届五中全会 分析研究当前经济形势和经济工作 中共中央总书记习近平主持会议), July 30, 2020. Translation; Mao Zedong, “On Protracted War” (论持久战), *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung Vol. II*, 1967, 113–194.

ship and China's socialist system," the paper warned.³² "They have plotted all along to attempt a 'color revolution' in China."³³

Vows of a Forceful Response

CCP leaders declared their intent to fight back forcefully against these perceived threats, focusing particular attention on combating ideological threats. In its study guide, *People's Daily* called on the Party to use "offensive moves" in a "war of strategic initiative" to guard against risks and neutralize challenges.³⁴ Identifying political security as the CCP's foremost security concern, it urged the Party to implement its "democratic people's dictatorship" to "severely strike enemy forces' activities to infiltrate, destroy, topple, and split apart" the CCP.³⁵ According to the paper, of particular concern to Party leaders were systemic risks with the potential to "delay or cut short" China's rejuvenation.³⁶ In his December 2020 article, Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission head Guo issued a similar instruction to strike back against enemy forces attempting to destroy the CCP and called on officials to protect the security of the Party's ruling position and ideology.³⁷

In a rare but clear indication that individuals or factions within the CCP still oppose the Party's main line, CCP leaders singled out for special criticism Party members whose resolution and belief had been shaken by these perceived "hostile forces."³⁸ In a February 2021 speech to members of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, Chen Yixin expressed General Secretary Xi's view that in the face of mounting external pressures, "every kind of mistaken thinking would seize the opportunity to surface" within the CCP.³⁹ In what was likely an understatement of the extent of the problem, Chen warned of the threat from a "tiny minority of Party members and officials" whose belief in the CCP's legitimacy and mission had "faded from their memories."⁴⁰ (For more on CCP leaders' concerns over Party members opposing or lacking commitment to the policies of the central leadership, see Chapter 1, Section 1, "The Chinese Communist Party's Ambitions and Challenges at Its Centennial.")

The Party's Tightening Grip

In its campaign to eradicate perceived harmful influences, over the past year the CCP expanded efforts to control all aspects of Chinese society and culture it viewed as threatening to its rule. In April 2021, the Ministry of State Security promulgated new rules for organizations and enterprises in China responding to "intensified infiltration" by "overseas espionage and intelligence agencies and hostile forces."⁴¹ The new rules require regular counterespionage education and training for personnel who routinely interact with foreigners, rather than only for those who work on secret matters, reflecting the CCP's view that any interaction with foreign entities is inherently a security risk.⁴² The regulations detail the responsibilities of Party and state organs, social groups, enterprises, and public institutions to actively prevent espionage within their units and require state security organs to train these entities in counterespionage.⁴³

The CCP's efforts at control extended even to the domains of archaeology and Chinese history.⁴⁴ In a speech published in November 2020 but given several months earlier at a Politburo study session,

General Secretary Xi asserted that historical and cultural “struggles... will exist for a long time” and that the Party must use archaeological studies to counter “distortions and slanders” on China’s history.⁴⁵ Acting on Mao’s dictum that “the past should serve the present,” he connected the development of what is now China to the Party’s mission of “developing and upholding socialism with Chinese characteristics... in the correct historical direction.”⁴⁶ By emphasizing the primacy of “telling a good story of China’s history,” General Secretary Xi promoted a view of Chinese history that distorts facts to argue for the superiority of the Party’s leadership.⁴⁷

Extending the Party’s Influence at Home and Abroad

In January 2021, the CCP’s United Front Work Department issued updated regulations cementing General Secretary Xi’s ideology in the Party’s central bureaucracy for guiding domestic and overseas influence operations. The new regulations, updating trial regulations issued in 2015, show that United Front work has grown both broader in scope and more focused on discrete groups.⁴⁸ For example, the new regulations explain in detail the importance of “guiding” overseas and returned Chinese, including overseas Chinese students and their families in China. They also define for the first time the United Front’s focus on “new social classes,” which include knowledge workers and other skilled Chinese employees of foreign-invested enterprises, social organizations, and media organizations.⁴⁹

The CCP moved to further entrench its ideology in the Chinese court system and extend the international influence of its “rule by law” system where authorities use the law as a means of suppressing political opposition. In November 2020, the CCP held its first ever central-level work conference on law-based governance and established “Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law” as the main guide of China’s legal system. In January 2021, the CCP Central Committee issued a plan calling for a “socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics” to take shape by 2025 and be “basically formed” by 2035, with the aim of bringing about the “convergence and coordination of internal Party regulations and national laws.”⁵⁰ The goal of this legal system, according to Zhu Zheng, assistant professor at China University of Political Science and Law, is “entrenching the Party’s leadership on political power and ideology more deeply than before.”⁵¹ Other goals of the Central Committee’s plan are for China to “active[ly] participate in the formulation of international rules,” “accelerate the construction of a legal system applicable outside China’s jurisdiction,” and promote its view internationally that the rule of law* should serve the Party’s interests.⁵² State media praised the “socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics” concept as a contribution to advancing the world’s understanding of the rule of law.⁵³

* Chinese discussion of legal systems often interchangeably uses “rule of law,” under which laws constrain political leaders, and “rule by law,” under which political leaders use the legal system to protect their own power. The two phrases sound the same in Chinese, and legal experts have argued official Chinese sources sometimes use the former translation when they mean the latter to give the impression that the meaning of “rule of law” is the same in China as it is in democratic countries. Cheng Li, “Chinese Politics, Economy, and Rule of Law,” *Brookings Institution*, September 20, 2016; *China Focus*, “Laying Down the Law: Jerome Cohen on the Rule of Law in China Pt. 2,” August 12, 2015; Josh Chin, “Rule of Law or ‘Rule by Law’? In China, a Preposition Makes All the Difference,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 20, 2014.

Continued Repression of Ethnic Minorities

CCP repression of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia continued to devastate communities in these frontier regions. Evidence emerged in late 2020 that the Chinese government had built factories inside Xinjiang detention camps and that for years it had forced detained Muslims to work as part of a “labor transfer program” that is tainting global supply chains with forced labor.⁵⁴ The U.S. government responded to reports of forced labor-derived cotton, tomato, and silica products from Xinjiang by issuing six new orders in fiscal year 2021 to prohibit the import of relevant goods.* Based on reports of authorities’ forced sterilizations, coerced abortions, and other human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minorities in Xinjiang, the United States in 2021 formally determined the Chinese government to be committing ongoing crimes against humanity and genocide in Xinjiang.⁵⁵

The CCP continued its campaign to “sinicize” Tibetan Buddhism, tightening its political control over the religion. The Chinese government issued new rules in January 2021 requiring religious professionals to “love the motherland, support the leadership of the CCP, and support the socialist system,” forcing them to subordinate their religious views to the Party and the Chinese state.⁵⁶ In June, a Tibetan monk surrounded by security cameras and government observers told a closely monitored group of foreign journalists in Tibet that his “spiritual leader” was General Secretary Xi.⁵⁷ After the Chinese government implemented policies in 2020 to phase out Mongolian-language education in Inner Mongolia, Chinese officials reportedly began warning students from Inner Mongolia in Japan not to talk about the ongoing Chinese government suppression of Mongolian culture.⁵⁸ In response, in April 2021 a group of Japanese legislators created a parliamentary caucus to protect Mongolian culture from assimilation.⁵⁹

Toward a Global People’s Liberation Army

Over the past year, the CCP signaled its ambition to transform the PLA into a global force able to operate both within and beyond the Indo-Pacific region. In his speech celebrating the CCP’s centennial in July, General Secretary Xi described the PLA as “a powerful force for protecting peace in our region and beyond.”⁶⁰ Central Military Commission Vice Chairman General Xu Qiliang similarly linked the PLA to China’s global leadership ambitions, noting in a November 2020 article the force would “contribute its strength” to building a “community of common human destiny” and carry out duties “commensurate with China’s international status.”⁶¹ In a further reflection of top leaders’ vision for the PLA’s global role, he added that the force would work to establish a “security guarantee” for China’s overseas interests.⁶²

*U.S. Customs and Border Protection may issue an order to withhold release of any goods from its custody that are suspected of having been produced with forced labor. In 2021, these orders also targeted widespread use of forced labor in an entire commercial fishing fleet based in eastern China. As of June 2021, according to a White House fact sheet, 35 of 49 active withhold release orders were on goods from China, and 11 were on goods originating in Xinjiang. White House, *FACT SHEET: New U.S. Government Actions on Forced Labor in Xinjiang*, June 24, 2021; U.S. Customs and Border Protection, *Forced Labor Enforcement, Withhold Release Orders, Findings, and Detention Procedures*, August 2016.

The CCP continued to support its ambitious goals for force development with high levels of defense spending. In 2021, the PLA's official budget* grew by 6.8 percent, which is a slightly higher growth rate than the 6.6 percent increase it maintained in 2020 despite slowing economic growth and pandemic conditions.⁶³ Meanwhile, the PLA continued producing sophisticated weapons and ships that further extend its power projection capabilities. In April 2021, the PLA Navy commissioned its first Type 075 (YUSHEN) amphibious assault ship, third Type 055 (RENHAI) destroyer,† and sixth Type 094 (JIN) nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine.⁶⁴ China's Type 075 ships support what one analyst considers to be "an amphibious capability that is second only to the United States," and they likely serve as the prototype for an even newer class of amphibious assault vessels capable of launching fixed-wing aircraft.⁶⁵ The PLA typically keeps its Type 094 submarines from public view, so their inclusion in a public commissioning ceremony with China's newest amphibious assault ship and premier destroyer likely served propaganda purposes by stoking nationalist pride.⁶⁶ In March, China launched three additional Yaogan-31 surveillance satellites, joining a constellation likely to provide the PLA with real-time targeting of distant maritime targets such as U.S. aircraft carriers.⁶⁷

China further advanced its power projection capabilities by fielding the Y-20U aerial refueling tanker aircraft, while reports indicated Beijing may be exploring opportunities for stationing troops abroad. With the Y-20U entering service this year, the PLA will be more capable of extending the flight range and duration of its J-20 fighter, H-6 bomber, and KJ-500A early warning and control aircraft.⁶⁸ Reuters reported China may also be expanding the number of facilities that PLA aircraft can use, notably with a secret agreement to upgrade an airstrip on an island in Kiribati.⁶⁹ This agreement could position Chinese facilities astride important sea lanes and flight paths between the United States and Oceania.⁷⁰ In May 2021, commander of U.S. Africa Command General Stephen Townsend stated in an interview that China was actively seeking to develop a naval base on Africa's western coast and had recently approached countries from Mauritania to Namibia in hopes of securing an agreement.⁷¹ He assessed that China sought to construct a port facility for rearming and repairing naval vessels, which would be capable of hosting Chinese submarines or aircraft carriers.⁷²

The PLA also hardened and extended the range of its border defenses this year. In May, the PLA Army tested new long-range rockets able to strike targets 100 miles (160 kilometers) away, which is a sufficient distance to hit targets in Taiwan from firing positions in the Chinese mainland.⁷³ Along the China-India border, the PLA Army established a joint air defense system that uses advanced PLA Army anti-aircraft systems to enhance the early warning and rapid deployment capabilities of the PLA Air Force.⁷⁴

*China's government does not report all defense spending in its official budget. Its official figures are inconsistent and cannot be verified. *Jane's* experts assessed that in 2021, China's defense spending was 25 percent higher than officially reported. Jon Grevatt and Andrew MacDonald, "China Announces 6.8% Increase in 2021 Defence Budget," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, March 5, 2021.

†The RENHAI-class destroyer has tonnage and capabilities that exceed those of ships that were previously designated as cruisers. For a discussion on the distinction between destroyers and cruisers, see U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2020 Annual Report to Congress*, December 1, 2020, 342.

Continued Frustration over Shortfalls in Personnel Quality and Leadership

Despite the PLA's success in fielding advanced weapons systems, China's civilian and military leaders showed signs of impatience with the PLA's meager gains in its longstanding efforts to overcome weaknesses in training and personnel quality. China's leaders have long criticized the PLA as suffering from a "peace disease," which is a term highlighting the concerns of civilian and military leaders over the PLA's lack of combat experience and preparedness for war.⁷⁵ In 2021, General Secretary Xi escalated this criticism by taking the unusual step of convening a conference on improving combat-realistic military exercises and by modifying his annual training mobilization order to express the need for the PLA to "build a new military training system."⁷⁶ General Xu also reflected dissatisfaction with the PLA's competence in his November 2020 article, urging the force to continue elevating personnel quality.⁷⁷ He further instructed the PLA to enhance its focus on warfighting, warning that "forgetting how to fight spells danger and neglecting to prepare for battles to come guarantees defeat."⁷⁸

The PLA refocused efforts to remediate its lack of wartime experience by practicing unit-level decision-making. PLA exercises in 2021 placed a greater focus on giving units the autonomy to make decisions in the field.⁷⁹ The PLA Air Force improved officer autonomy this year by significantly increasing "unrestrained air combat training," an approach in which pilots are permitted to make their own decisions in combat.⁸⁰ PLA Navy pilots from the Northern, Eastern, and Southern Theater Commands held a major cross-regional exercise this year also focused on unrestrained air combat training.⁸¹ Despite these efforts, state media reported that PLA units continued to struggle with autonomous decision-making, such as deputy commanders for some units being unprepared to take over command when exercises simulated injuries to their senior officers.⁸²

Political Work May Conceal Insecurities about Loyalty

The PLA continued to ramp up its emphasis on political work, potentially revealing insecurities about troop loyalty. In one example, the 2020 edition of the *Science of Military Strategy*, an authoritative textbook for PLA officers published by the PLA's National Defense University, included a new chapter on wartime political work that anticipates modern warfare will include a "hidden front" that involves "inciting defections."⁸³ In his November 2020 article, General Xu indirectly expressed concern over political reliability in the ranks, demanding that soldiers be "absolutely loyal, clean, and reliable" and allow "absolutely no wavering or deviation... on the fundamental issue" of Party loyalty.⁸⁴ In December 2020, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defense announced that PLA servicemembers would receive further political training through a dedicated app called "Study the Strong Military."⁸⁵ State media described some challenges facing the PLA's political education efforts. For instance, some brigade leaders reported concerns that their younger enlisted members were "ideologically active with distinct personalities," euphemistically describing individualism resistant to indoctrination.⁸⁶

Conscription in the PLA

Chinese citizens may volunteer for military service or be involuntarily conscripted for two years, after which they may choose to continue service or be demobilized.⁸⁷ China does not publish data on how many of its recruits are conscripts rather than volunteers, and PLA recruitment practices may further blur the lines between voluntary and forced recruitment. Since 2009, the PLA has sought to conscript or recruit at least 100,000 college-educated enlistees each year.⁸⁸ The PLA appears to struggle to meet this goal, however, having repeatedly lowered its physical standards for conscription to recruit college-educated enlistees.⁸⁹ Moreover, college-educated recruits may not be of the quality the PLA needs to modernize its force. For example, one 2017 report found PLA college-educated recruits included “basically no graduates” of China’s top 100 civilian educational institutions.⁹⁰ Some PLA research also reveals concerns that college-educated conscripts are not inclined to continue their military service after their initial two-year term.⁹¹

New Leaps for China’s Space Program

China’s dual-use space and rocketry programs met important milestones in 2021, including successfully landing a probe on Mars and launching the first module of its long-term space station. The successful landing and deployment in May of the Zhurong Mars rover for a 93-day mission was notable both for being China’s first time landing a probe on another planet and for being the first time any space agency had succeeded on its first try at the notoriously difficult Mars landing, nicknamed the “seven minutes of terror.”⁹² The Chinese government also added sophisticated new ground infrastructure to support space exploration missions. The Tianwen-1 orbiter, which carries additional instruments to study Mars’s surface and atmosphere, will relay data through a new, specially constructed 70-meter steerable radio telescope, which is the largest in Asia.⁹³

China launched the Tianhe core module of its long-term low-Earth orbit space station in April 2021, celebrating the project as the culmination of a 30-year plan to master human spaceflight and test technologies for long-term space habitation.⁹⁴ The first team of three taikonauts launched in June to carry out a three-month tour, which is China’s longest crewed space mission ever.⁹⁵ The launch was the third of a total of 11 required to complete the station’s construction between 2021 and 2022.⁹⁶ China intends to use the station to further international scientific coordination, including joint missions between taikonauts and foreign astronauts, according to the military agency overseeing China’s human spaceflight program.⁹⁷

The Chinese government’s apparent indifference to the international downrange risk from its rockets marred the diplomatic victory of lofting its first space station module.* Debris from launches in China’s interior has long threatened areas within China, but the new Long March-5B (LM-5B) rocket, which was used to launch the

*The United States and Russia lofted their first modules for the International Space Station in 1998. ISS National Laboratory, “History and Timeline of the ISS.”

Tianhe module in April, now spreads this risk to the international community.⁹⁸ Its design eschews boosters designed to provide maneuverability after launching its payload, causing the entire rocket to achieve orbit and then fall back to earth unpredictably.*⁹⁹ According to Harvard astronomer Jonathan McDowell, in designing the LM-5B this way the Chinese government is “deliberately just not caring and leaving it to reenter.”¹⁰⁰ Plans to launch two additional space station modules on LM-5Bs in 2022 will risk the safety of people in downrange countries each time.¹⁰¹

Leading experts and official policy continued to signal that the space sector would remain an important focus in China’s national ambitions. The 14th Five Year Plan (2021–2025), approved in March 2021, stressed the importance of breakthroughs in seven science and technology frontier sectors, including deep space.¹⁰² That month, Liu Zhirang, National People’s Congress delegate and Party Secretary of the China Academy of Aerospace Propulsion Technology, said China’s rocketry program would strive to reach “world-class” level during the next five years.¹⁰³ Jiang Jie, an expert at the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, said that during this period China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation would work on a new heavy-lift rocket and another new rocket for crewed launches.¹⁰⁴ Former Chinese National Space Administration head Luan Enjie also confirmed in March that the feasibility study for the super-heavy-lift LM-9, expected to take taikonauts to the moon in the 2030s, had “basically concluded,” allowing research to begin in earnest.¹⁰⁵

Escalation of “Wolf Warrior” Tactics

In 2021, Chinese diplomats matched the uncompromising tone set by CCP leadership, deepening their embrace of “wolf warrior” behavior distinctive for its confrontational and belligerent style. This year, China’s diplomats abandoned much of their remaining decorum as they levied sensationalist accusations and used disinformation against other countries.† In February 2021, top diplomat Yang Jiechi demonstrated China’s uncompromising approach by laying out a list of policy changes he demanded the new Biden Administration make to improve the U.S.-China relationship.¹⁰⁶ In his speech, Yang defined a “constructive relationship” between the United States and China as one that required the United States government to abandon competition against China; cease its efforts to curb Chinese foreign influence operations within the United States; and remain

*There is no international requirement to design rockets to reenter under control, but experts view it as a best practice. The initial LM-5B flight in 2020 was the first intentionally uncontrolled reentry of an object exceeding 10 metric tons since 1990. Jonathan McDowell (@planet4589), “Before the CZ-5B started flying there were NO ‘by design’ uncontrolled reentries above 10 tonnes since 1990. DOS-6 (Salyut-7), STS-107 and Fobos-Grunt were all failures,” Twitter, May 2, 2021, 8:53 p.m.

†For example, China’s “wolf warrior” diplomats accused the Canadian government of “Western egotism and white supremacy” for urging an end to the Chinese government’s arbitrary detention of two Canadian citizens. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Zhao Lijian spread disinformation against the United States and Australia over Twitter by suggesting the COVID-19 pandemic was spread by the U.S. military and by sharing an image digitally altered to show an Australian soldier holding a knife to the throat of an Afghan child. *Associated Press*, “COVID Conspiracy Shows Vast Reach of Chinese Disinformation,” February 15, 2021; Kirsty Needham, “China Tweet That Enraged Australia Propelled by ‘Unusual’ Accounts, Say Experts,” *Reuters*, December 4, 2020; Raymond Zhong, “China’s Ambassador to Canada Blames ‘White Supremacy’ in Feud over Arrests,” *New York Times*, January 10, 2019.

silent on the Chinese government's destabilizing behavior toward Taiwan and human rights violations in Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang.¹⁰⁷ Yang's framing suggests China no longer seeks to cooperate or find common ground but rather is now dictating that the United States must submit to all of China's preferences. In a June 2021 interview, China's ambassador to France Lu Shaye summarized China's diplomacy in plainer terms. "We're doing things differently now," he boasted. "Get used to it."¹⁰⁸

At times, Chinese aggressive "wolf warrior" behavior appeared intentionally designed to provoke outrage. In April 2021, the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission's social media account posted an image juxtaposing a recent Chinese space launch with pictures of cremation pyres and hazmat suits in India, apparently mocking India's COVID-19 crisis.¹⁰⁹ In July, the Chinese consul general in Rio de Janeiro mocked a deadly building collapse in Surfside, Florida, on Twitter by juxtaposing a picture of U.S. President Joe Biden with the collapsed building and appending the caption, "America is coming back! But none of the people buried in the ruins has come back!!!"¹¹⁰ Referencing this pattern of behavior, a senior German official explained, "Dialogue is now conditional on us not criticizing China."¹¹¹ Notably, Beijing's provocative rhetoric is most frequently targeted at the United States, Japan, Taiwan, and issues pertaining to China's sovereignty claims.¹¹² Still, China's diplomats have also turned their "wolf warrior" tactics against developing countries.†

China's leaders appeared aware of, though unconcerned with, the negative global reception to their "wolf warrior" diplomats. Instead, they continued projecting confidence in what China Media Project Director David Bandurski described as the "unshakable premise that China's system is superior in terms of its performance," leading them to dismiss any criticism as "strong ideological bias and cultural prejudice."¹¹³ CCP leaders have actively sold this message to Chinese citizens. According to Steve Tsang, director of the University of London's China Institute, China's belligerent diplomatic rhetoric stems from "a revamp of the Communist Party's social contract with the Chinese people" emphasizing legitimacy drawn from the promise of a powerful China that commands global respect.¹¹⁴ As such, CCP leaders have directed and sustained their diplomats' aggressive posture.

*The belligerent turn by China's diplomats draws upon longstanding tendencies in the diplomacy of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Peter Martin, author of the book *China's Civilian Army* on China's diplomatic history, assesses that since the PRC's founding, China's diplomats have consistently shown "they were more concerned about looking weak in front of domestic audiences than truly improving China's reputation." Chinese leaders temporarily restrained some of these tendencies during much of the country's reform era to align with former leader Deng Xiaoping's dictum to "hide your strength and bide your time." After General Secretary Xi took office, China's diplomats responded to his encouragement of a more hawkish foreign policy by gradually dialing up their aggressive behavior. In 2019, this trend escalated sharply after Zhao Lijian's promotion from minister counsellor in Islamabad to foreign ministry spokesperson demonstrated that CCP leaders would reward "wolf warrior" behavior. Peter Martin, *China's Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy*, Oxford University Press, 2021, 195, 216–218, 224.

†China's diplomats have resorted to bullying and even violent criminal behavior targeting developing countries. For example, at the 2018 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, Chinese diplomats physically forced their way into the hosting Papua New Guinea foreign minister's office to demand diplomatic concessions. In October 2020, Chinese diplomats physically beat a Taiwan trade office librarian in Fiji, leaving the victim concussed and hospitalized, amid their concern that Fiji might switch diplomatic recognition from Mainland China to Taiwan. Peter Martin, *China's Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy*, Oxford University Press, 2021, 1–2, 223.

At a May 2021 Politburo group study session, General Secretary Xi appeared to acknowledge China's poor international image by calling on its diplomats to create a "trustworthy, lovable, and venerable" image of China amid a global "struggle" over public opinion.¹¹⁵ The speech was more likely an emphasis on the stakes of China's international propaganda, however, rather than a criticism of its diplomats' aggressive style. As Zhang Weiwei, director of Fudan University's Institute for Chinese Studies, explained about the speech, any adverse international reaction to "telling China's story well" is "mainly a problem on the part of the 'West'" and not the fault of Chinese diplomats.¹¹⁶ Ambassador Lu Shaye further clarified the future direction of Chinese diplomacy several weeks after General Secretary Xi's remarks, claiming in an interview that China's aggressive approach was justified and would continue.¹¹⁷ The "fundamental reasons behind changes in China's diplomatic style," he explained, "are changes in the international situation and in China's power."¹¹⁸

Using Vaccine Diplomacy to Build a Sphere of Influence

Meanwhile, China attempted to cast itself as a leader of developing countries and the only source of readily available COVID-19 vaccines for much of the world. In a speech at the Global Health Summit in May 2021, General Secretary Xi emphasized the need to provide more COVID-19 vaccines to developing countries and presented China as a model in this effort.¹¹⁹ While the United States has donated more than 175 million COVID-19 vaccine doses worldwide and contributed to the international COVAX initiative to distribute vaccines, however, China has primarily sold rather than donated vaccine doses to other countries, including many in Africa and Latin America.¹²⁰ China's vaccines have also proved less effective in preventing infections from COVID-19, with many countries that paid for China's vaccines continuing to face outbreaks despite high vaccination rates.¹²¹

At times, China suggested that its vaccine exports were part of a zero-sum competition with the United States and other countries. In many developing countries, China capitalized on sometimes slower deliveries by U.S. and European vaccine manufacturers to claim it was the only provider of vaccines.¹²² In a June 2021 visit to Indonesia, for instance, Foreign Minister Wang reportedly accused a "handful of developed countries" of having "hoarded vaccines."¹²³ The foreign minister's message carried an air of triumphalism in Indonesia, where Chinese Sinovac vaccines comprised 89 percent of the 95 million doses the country received in the first half of 2021.¹²⁴

China also used vaccine exports as a diplomatic cudgel by treating them as leverage over recipient countries. In October 2020, China announced it would give Malaysia priority access to its vaccines, after which Malaysia promptly released 60 Chinese sailors who had been detained for trespassing in its territorial waters.¹²⁵ After receiving Chinese vaccines, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte ordered his ministers to refrain from publicly criticizing China for incursions by hundreds of Chinese fishing vessels in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ).¹²⁶ In another instance, Ukraine withdrew from a UN Human Rights Council statement calling for an independent investigation of human rights abuses in Xinjiang

after China threatened to block a planned vaccine shipment to the country.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, China's efforts to extract a political price for its vaccines were not uniformly successful. When Paraguay suffered soaring COVID-19 infection rates in early 2021, China's diplomats saw an opportunity to pressure the country into severing diplomatic ties with Taiwan.¹²⁸ Paraguay refused to respond to China's inducements, however, with President Mario Benitez explicitly stating Paraguay would not "accept any kind of blackmail for vaccine purchases."¹²⁹ He added that the country remained open to engaging with Chinese vaccine producers "without any type of conditions involving our diplomatic relations."¹³⁰

Questions Mount over Chinese Transparency on Vaccines and COVID-19 Origins

Already faced with poor results from Chinese vaccines in combating earlier strains of COVID-19, Chinese officials have also been unable to demonstrate that their vaccines are effective against the COVID-19 Delta variant. China's National Health Commission has declined to comment on the efficacy of Chinese vaccines in preventing infections from the Delta variant.¹³¹ Rather than providing data on vaccine efficacy, Chinese officials have encouraged containment measures such as distancing and avoiding gatherings to curb Delta variant transmission, likely reflecting their doubts about Chinese vaccines.¹³² Chinese officials have also suppressed efforts to access information on the efficacy of Chinese vaccines. In one instance, a *People's Daily* reporter was disciplined for requesting information on how many new COVID-19 infections in China are among vaccinated people, which health authorities did not provide.¹³³ Facing this lack of data, countries in Southeast Asia that previously relied heavily on Sinovac vaccine doses purchased from China began supplementing these inoculations with the Pfizer and BioNTech, Moderna, and AstraZeneca vaccines, including millions of doses donated by the United States.¹³⁴

Confrontation over Calls for Greater Transparency in COVID-19 Investigations

China's resistance to a full, transparent international investigation into the origins of COVID-19 reinforced questions about a lab leak being a possible origin of the pandemic.¹³⁵ In May 2021, President Biden called for a 90-day intelligence review to allow the U.S. government to "redouble their efforts" to further study the origins of the virus.¹³⁶ After U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said China could face international isolation if it did not allow proper investigations into the origins of the virus, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson called the statement a "blatant threat."¹³⁷ The intelligence assessment, delivered to President Biden in August 2021, did not offer a definitive conclusion on the origins of the virus.¹³⁸ The assessment noted "China's cooperation most likely would be needed to reach a conclusive assessment" on the virus' origins, but that Chinese officials hindered the investigation, preventing U.S. officials from reaching a definitive conclusion.¹³⁹

New Evidence of Strength and Constraints in China-Russia Entente

China and Russia continued to deepen ties throughout 2021 as they celebrated the 20th anniversary of a pact that laid the basis for their multifaceted cooperation today.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, Russia's independent diplomatic engagements with India and the United States underscored the opportunistic nature of the Sino-Russian relationship.

Sino-Russian defense cooperation over the past year signaled to Washington the two countries' closeness. Military exercises improved their ability to operate together in ways that could allow them to simultaneously contest U.S. interests. Chinese troops and equipment from the PLA's Western Theater Command participated in Russia's large-scale Kavkaz-2020 strategic military exercise over five days in the fall of 2020, practicing joint live fire-strike, mobile defense, and battlefield situation control.¹⁴¹ Chinese troops and wheeled equipment traveled to Russia on several Y-20 transport aircraft, marking the first time China had sent Y-20 transport aircraft with military cargo beyond its borders.¹⁴² In December 2020, Russian and Chinese bombers flew a second joint patrol mission over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea after their first ever joint aerial patrol in 2019.¹⁴³ The Russian Defense Ministry claimed the joint mission was intended to "increase the level of cooperation between the two militaries, expand their ability for joint action and strengthen strategic stability."¹⁴⁴ Both activities reinforce the trend in recent years toward Sino-Russian exercises that are increasingly frequent, geographically varied, and complex, raising concerns the two could coordinate their military capabilities to challenge U.S. interests abroad.¹⁴⁵ Even so, some observers argue the exercises remain superficial and do not yet meaningfully improve the two countries' interoperability.¹⁴⁶

Concern among some observers also grew over the potential combined threat posed by the two countries in the nuclear domain. China's significant expansion of its nuclear arsenal prompted Admiral Charles A. Richard, commander of U.S. Strategic Command, to express concern about the potentially "additive" nuclear threat posed by the two countries, particularly if they choose to work together. (For more, see Chapter 3, Section 2: "China's Nuclear Forces: Moving beyond a Minimal Deterrent.")¹⁴⁷

China and Russia continued to take complementary positions on key diplomatic issues and to expand joint scientific initiatives. In March 2021, both countries blocked a UN Security Council resolution to condemn the military coup in Burma (Myanmar).¹⁴⁸ The two countries also made progress toward their goal of building a joint research base on the moon. The heads of the Chinese and Russian space agencies signed a memorandum of understanding on the planned lunar base in March and formally invited other countries and international organizations to join the project in April.^{*149} The moves came just months after Russia's space agency Roscosmos condemned U.S. plans for a lunar Gateway, part of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Artemis lunar exploration

*As of August 2021, no countries or international organizations had formally joined the project.

program, as too “U.S.-centric” and indicated it could withdraw from the International Space Station partnership in 2025.¹⁵⁰ According to a promotional video released by Roscosmos, the Sino-Russian lunar base will develop in three phases: reconnaissance with probes until 2025, construction from 2026 to 2035, and utilization from 2036.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, Russia and India for the first time held a “two plus two” meeting of their foreign and defense ministers in April 2021 that one former Indian official argued was Russia’s way of signaling that close relations with China would not limit its strategic autonomy or arms sales to India.¹⁵² After a telephone call in April 2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin also met with President Biden at a summit in Geneva in June.¹⁵³ Some observers speculated that Chinese leaders were anxiously watching the aftermath of the phone call and summit for any signs that Russia could be aligning itself more closely with the United States.¹⁵⁴ Chinese commentators argued the meeting was intended to drive a wedge between Russia and China.¹⁵⁵

Chinese Sanctions Dash Hopes for Using European Countries as Counterweight

Sanctions China levied against the UK and EU undermined Beijing’s hopes to use ties with European countries as a strategic counterweight against growing tensions with the United States. In January 2021, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang described the year ahead as a critical “turning point” for China-EU relations and called for deepening trust and coordination with the EU amid what he described as the “most severe situation” in U.S.-China relations in over 40 years.¹⁵⁶ He further trumpeted the then-recently signed EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment as a symbol of the two sides’ deepening ties.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Beijing jeopardized the agreement two months later by sanctioning members of the European Parliament as well as European academics after the UK and EU governments joined the United States and Canada in sanctioning Chinese officials over their human rights abuses in Xinjiang.*¹⁵⁸

Beijing’s countersanctions turned European opinion sharply against it and created political pressure against approving the investment agreement.¹⁵⁹ The heads of 37 European research institutions cosigned a statement in response to the sanctions, expressing concerns that “targeting independent researchers and civil society institutions undermines practical and constructive engagement” and harms Europe-China relations more broadly.¹⁶⁰ The European Parliament reported in April that before it would consider approving the investment deal, China must first not only lift the sanctions it

*China’s retaliatory sanctions, which were not authorized by any specific Chinese law, prohibit sanctioned individuals and their families from entering China, including Hong Kong and Macau, and any companies and institutions affiliated with the individuals from doing business with China. China’s sanctions against Europe followed an earlier round of sanctions in January aimed at just-departed officials from the Trump Administration, which China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused of acting against China’s interests out of “bias and hatred.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Announces Sanctions on Relevant EU Entities and Personnel*, March 22, 2021; Gerry Shih, “China Fires Parting Sanctions at Trump Officials, Seeks ‘Better Angels’ in Biden Team,” *Washington Post*, January 21, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying’s Regular Press Conference on January 21, 2021*, January 21, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Announces Sanctions on Pompeo and Others*, January 20, 2021.

imposed on EU entities and individuals but also present a timetable for ratifying and implementing the International Labor Organization's forced labor conventions and recommit to upholding its commitments to Hong Kong.¹⁶¹ The European Parliament overwhelmingly voted to "freeze" discussion of the deal in May, making clear it would not approve abandoning what they saw as European values for the purpose of increased trade.¹⁶²

Europe pushed back against concerning Chinese actions in other ways over the past year. The EU's new foreign investment screening framework, inspired by the need to block predatory acquisitions from Chinese entities, became fully operational in October 2020. The framework sets minimum standards for EU member states' investment screening regimes, though it does not harmonize national-level screening mechanisms or require member states to introduce any such screening.¹⁶³ In November 2020, the European Parliament suspended an EU-China Friendship Group of lawmakers advocating for closer ties with China over concern the group was too close to the Chinese government.¹⁶⁴ In April 2021, the Council of the European Union released its first ever Indo-Pacific strategy, recognizing the EU's need to actively engage with partners in the region to maintain its rules-based order in the face of China's challenges to that order.¹⁶⁵

Notable National-Level Policy Shifts

Amid the debate in Brussels regarding EU policy toward China, some of Europe's leading governments signaled their own policy shifts.¹⁶⁶ In June 2021, the powerful Federation of German Industries, which is often seen as a bellwether for Berlin's largely trade-driven foreign policy, criticized China's new anti-sanctions law as creating uncertainty and harming the business environment.¹⁶⁷ In July, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered a national security review of a Chinese-owned firm's purchase of the UK's largest semiconductor producer.¹⁶⁸ Although the transaction ultimately proceeded in August, a UK government spokesperson stated that the UK's National Security Advisor "will continue to monitor the situation closely" and "will not hesitate to take further action if needed."¹⁶⁹ Throughout 2021 the UK government also continued seeking to restrict the involvement of Chinese state-owned nuclear energy company China General Nuclear Power Group (CGN) in nuclear power plant projects in the country.*¹⁷⁰

Cracks began to emerge in China's influence over Central and Eastern European countries, many of which had previously been open to Chinese investment and trade. Some European leaders skipped a meeting of the Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries forum, or the 17+1, which the Chi-

*The U.S. Department of Commerce added CGN to the Entity List in 2019. CGN is already heavily invested in financing two French-led nuclear power plant projects in the UK, Hinkley and Sizewell, and it seeks to build an additional plant at Bradwell that would feature its own nuclear reactor technology. In August 2020, members of the UK parliament began exploring measures to prevent CGN from participating in the Bradwell project. According to reports from July and September of 2021, the UK government is moving toward a deal that could end CGN's involvement in the Sizewell project. *Reuters*, "UK Looking at Deal to Remove China from Nuclear Project—Report," September 25, 2021; *Reuters*, "UK Looks to Remove China's CGN from Nuclear Power Projects—FT," July 26, 2021; Jonathan Ford, Jim Packard, and Nathalie Thomas, "China Tensions Raise Doubts over UK Nuclear Projects," *Financial Times*, August 5, 2020.

nese government set up in 2012 to directly influence the policies of individual European countries against the interests of the broader EU.¹⁷¹ When General Secretary Xi chaired a long-delayed 17+1 summit in February 2021, six member countries sent ministers instead of national leaders. The downgraded delegations showed some participants were frustrated enough by the lack of follow-through on promised Chinese investment to snub Beijing despite the high-level attention General Secretary Xi attempted to place on the meeting.¹⁷² In May, Lithuania became the first member of the group to quit the forum entirely.¹⁷³ Lithuania then agreed to open a new “Taiwanese Representative Office” in Vilnius, the first representative office Taiwan has established in Europe since 2003 and its first in any European country to bear the name “Taiwan” rather than “Taipei.”¹⁷⁴ In response, the Chinese government expelled Lithuania’s ambassador and recalled its own ambassador before escalating tensions by suspending a rail link to Lithuania.¹⁷⁵

Expanding Influence in the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia

While it grew increasingly confrontational toward European and other democracies, China made concerted efforts to deepen its influence in developing countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia. In the Middle East, Beijing demonstrated an increased appetite for involvement and its interest in using ties to Middle Eastern countries to globally promote its alternative definition of human rights.¹⁷⁶ In March 2021, Foreign Minister Wang visited Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Oman.¹⁷⁷

China and Iran made headlines when the two nations inked a \$400 billion economic and security cooperation agreement in March 2021 after five years of negotiations.¹⁷⁸ The wide-ranging deal, which many experts consider a political maneuver against the United States, seeks to boost Chinese investment in Iran’s infrastructure over 25 years in exchange for discounted access to Iranian oil and gas.¹⁷⁹ The pact also calls for strengthened political and defense ties between the two countries. Despite the deal’s ambitious investment goal, questions remain whether the agreement truly signals a sustainable intensification of China-Iran economic ties, with a growing number of China-Middle East experts surmising that the “terms, significance, and price of the agreement have all been greatly exaggerated.”* China is also likely to carefully calibrate deepening its ties with Iran due to its fear of antagonizing other close partners in the region such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE.¹⁸⁰

*For instance, according to Chinese customs data, China-Iran bilateral trade stood at \$14.9 billion in 2020. This figure was a marked decrease from its already relatively low \$23 billion in 2019. In contrast, China’s trade with Saudi Arabia and the UAE in 2020 was valued at \$67.2 billion and \$49.3 billion, respectively. Will Green and Taylore Roth, “China-Iran Relations: A Limited but Enduring Strategic Partnership,” *U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, June 28, 2021, 6; Kabir Taneja, “Iran under Ebrahim Raisi: The View from India,” *Observer Research Foundation*, August 2021; William Figueroa, “A Fact Check of the 25-Year Iran China Agreement,” *Al Sharq Strategic Institute*, April 8, 2021; Lucille Greer and Esfandyar Batmanghelidj, “China and Iran Announced a New Economic and Security Partnership. That’s Not as Alarming as It Sounds,” *Washington Post*, April 1, 2021; Jacopo Scita, “No, China Isn’t Giving Iran \$400 Billion,” *Bourse & Bazaar Foundation*, September 20, 2021; Jonathan Fulton, “Slender Beijing-Tehran Agreement: More Is Less, despite Hype,” *Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, April 1, 2021.

Foreign Minister Wang also sought to deepen China's ties to Arab states, emphasizing China's agreement with Arab countries to build a "China-Arab community of common destiny."¹⁸¹ Speaking at the end of the trip, he attempted to frame China's ties with the Middle East as representing an alternative view of international norms, announcing that China and the Middle Eastern countries he visited "believe that the view of human rights in some 'Western' countries does not represent the international view on human rights."¹⁸² Building on the momentum from these state visits to the region, China managed to garner widespread support later in the year from the Arab world concerning its treatment of Uyghur Muslims, with a majority of the Arab Gulf states publicly praising China's "counter-terrorism and deradicalization measures in Xinjiang."^{*}

In May 2021, Chinese diplomats made further attempts to promote China as an alternative leader in the region and criticize the United States, accusing Washington of "standing on the opposite side of international justice" in its position on the 11-day conflict between Israel and Hamas.¹⁸³ The violence in Gaza also generated tensions in China's generally warm relations with Israel, prompting Chinese authorities to call on "all parties, especially Israel... [to] exercise restraint and stop hostilities immediately."¹⁸⁴ China's relations with Israel faced additional strain when an August 2021 report revealed that Chinese operatives, posing as Iranian hackers, carried out a series of coordinated cyberattacks "against Israeli government institutions, IT providers, and telecommunications entities" between 2019 and 2020.¹⁸⁵

Finally, China continued using COVID-19 diplomacy in an attempt to increase its influence in the region. China's most important Middle Eastern partners in COVID-19 diplomacy are the UAE and Bahrain, both of which participated in phase III trials of the Sinopharm vaccine and were among the earliest adopters worldwide of the vaccine in 2020.¹⁸⁶ In March 2021, Sinopharm entered into a joint venture with an Abu Dhabi-based technology company, allowing the UAE to become the first country to produce the Sinopharm vaccine outside of China.¹⁸⁷ The joint venture also includes plans for a research and development center for life sciences and

^{*}Despite mounting international pressure over China's systemic campaign of oppression against Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups in the far western region, support for China's actions remains strong in much of the Arab world. To date, nearly every country in the Middle East has expressed support for China's policies on issues related to Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Tibet in one capacity or another, citing opposition to "interference in China's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights." Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE have also reportedly collaborated with Chinese authorities to arrest and deport Uyghur Muslims seeking refuge in the Middle East. In October 2020, a number of leaders from Middle Eastern countries signed onto a joint statement during the General Debate at the Third Committee of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, praising China for its efforts in combating the "threats of terrorism and extremism" within its borders. In June 2021, 10 Middle Eastern nations were among 69 countries that issued a joint statement at the 47th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, criticizing countries for interfering in China's internal affairs "under the pretext of human rights." Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, "Cuba Made a Joint Statement on Behalf of 45 Countries in Firm Support of China's Counter-Terrorism and Deradicalization Measures in Xinjiang," October 6, 2020; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, "Joint Statement of 69 Countries at the Interactive Dialogue on High Commissioner's Annual Report at the 47th Session of the Human Rights Council," June 22, 2021; Jonathan Hoffman, "Why Do Some Muslim-Majority Countries Support China's Crackdown on Muslims?" *Washington Post*, May 4, 2021; Jomana Karadshah and Gul Tuysuz, "Uyghurs Are Being Deported from Muslim Countries, Raising Concerns about China's Growing Reach," *CNN*, June 8, 2021; Middle East Monitor, "UAE, Saudi, Egypt Deporting Uyghurs to China, Report Says," June 9, 2021.

biotechnology, indicating China's interest in using the pandemic to establish a permanent foothold in the region's biomedical sector.¹⁸⁸

Continued Promotion of a China Model in Africa

The CCP stepped up its promotion of China's political and developmental model to Africa over the past year. In a December 2020 online briefing for African political party leaders, CCP International Liaison Department head Song Tao described to his African interlocutors "enlightenments acquired by the Party throughout the years of its development" and asserted "the Chinese system... can serve as a reference to all developing countries including African countries in their pursuit of independent progress."¹⁸⁹ He further encouraged African party leaders to increase exchanges between their parties and the CCP on the topic of governance and to support more people-to-people interactions between their countries and China.¹⁹⁰

China undertook a flurry of diplomatic activity in Africa throughout early 2021 to prepare for the upcoming Forum for China-Africa Cooperation, held once every three years. In early January 2021, Foreign Minister Wang visited Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Botswana, Tanzania, and Seychelles, continuing a 31-year tradition prioritizing Africa for the Chinese foreign minister's first overseas visit of the year.¹⁹¹ During the trip, Botswana and the DRC signed memoranda of understanding to officially join China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), bringing the total number of participating African countries to 46.¹⁹² While in the DRC, Foreign Minister Wang agreed to cancel approximately \$28 million in interest-free loans from the Chinese government to the DRC government that had matured in 2020.¹⁹³ He also agreed to provide \$17 million in additional financial support to the DRC* and to fund the refurbishment of the DRC's foreign ministry headquarters.¹⁹⁴ In April 2021, China agreed to construct an annex to Ghana's foreign ministry building,† while the Kenyan government revealed in May 2021 that China had agreed to fund construction of a new building for Kenya's foreign ministry.¹⁹⁵ After concluding agreements with China earlier in the year, DRC President Felix Tshisekedi nonetheless demonstrated a willingness to push for a more equitable relationship with Beijing by calling for the renegotiation of mining contracts with foreign companies operating in the DRC, the great majority of which are Chinese.¹⁹⁶

Strengthening Ties in Central Asia

In Central Asia, China's diplomacy in 2021 centered on improving its strategic position amid the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and expanding China-led mechanisms for regional coopera-

*According to Foreign Minister Wang, \$15 million of the total \$17 million will be used to support development projects in the DRC, while the remaining \$2 million will be used to support the DRC in its leadership of the African Union in 2021. February 22, 2021, "President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo Elected Chair of the AU for the Year 2021—Five Member Bureau Elected to Support the Work of the Assembly," February 22, 2021; Jevans Nyabiage, "China Cancels Democratic Republic of Congo Loans as It Joins Belt and Road," *South China Morning Post*, January 7, 2021.

† Chinese contractors originally constructed Ghana's foreign ministry headquarters building in 2013. Citi Newsroom, "Ghana, China Sign Agreement for Construction of Foreign Ministry Annex Building," April 11, 2021; Daily Guide Network, "Agreement Signed for Implementation of China-Aid Foreign Ministry's Annex Building Project," April 9, 2021; *Ghana Business News*, "Chinese Contractor Completes Ghana's New Foreign Affairs Building," March 18, 2013.

tion. Against the backdrop of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Wang hosted a nine-member delegation of senior Taliban officials in late July led by the Taliban's chief negotiator and cofounder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Tianjin, signaling "warming ties" between China and the Islamist militant group.¹⁹⁷ Beijing's motives for strengthening relations with the Taliban have largely been driven by its fears that Afghanistan could become a potential hub for Uyghur militants from Xinjiang and other insurgent groups operating near the China-Afghan border, as well as by its desire to secure its economic assets in the region.¹⁹⁸

Beijing has pledged support for the Taliban in the form of economic support and investment for Afghanistan's reconstruction, with Chinese authorities urging the Taliban to "make a clean break with terrorist forces," including the East Turkestan Islamic Movement.¹⁹⁹ Despite having historical connections with Xinjiang's Uyghur militant groups affiliated with al Qaeda, the Taliban agreed it would prevent Uyghur separatist fighters, some of whom had previously sought refuge in Afghanistan, from entering and operating in Afghanistan. In early September 2021, the new Taliban government claimed China as its "most important partner" because of Beijing's readiness to invest in Afghanistan following the group's forcible takeover of the country.²⁰⁰ Also in September, China's foreign ministry spokesperson praised the Taliban's formation of an interim government as a "necessary step for Afghanistan to restore domestic order and pursue post-war reconstruction."²⁰¹ Despite these overtures, many experts have assessed China's cooperation with the Taliban to be reluctant at best, particularly given China's campaign against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. At the same time, the Taliban will likely seek to "assuage China's concerns" and are "eager to secure Beijing's acquiescence to their rule" in an effort to obtain greater international legitimacy.²⁰²

China also maintained positive relations with neighboring Pakistan. In June 2021, Foreign Minister Wang announced that China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan had agreed to support the "substantial expansion" of BRI in Afghanistan and expressed interest in extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor into the country.²⁰³ In July, Prime Minister Imran Khan supported the Chinese government's actions in Xinjiang and lauded the CCP for providing the world a "better alternate governance model" superior to the democratic system of "Western" countries.²⁰⁴

China also expanded its diplomatic engagement with other Central Asian countries. On May 12, Foreign Minister Wang hosted foreign ministers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan for the second Foreign Ministers Meeting of a new China-led grouping called "China + Central Asia" (C+C5).^{*} The

^{*}The first C+C5 Foreign Ministers Meeting convened by videoconference in July 2020. The membership of the C+C5 grouping overlaps considerably with the original membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, an organization founded between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in 2001. China initially used the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a framework to deepen cooperation with Central Asian states without arousing a defensive reaction from Russia, which considered post-Soviet states its sphere of influence. In contrast, the C+C5 grouping is notable for Russia not being a member. China Foreign Ministry, *Wang Yi Talks about Eight-Point Consensus and Ten Outcomes of "China + Central Asia" Foreign Ministers' Meeting*, May 12, 2021; Casey Michel, "It's Official: India and Pakistan Join Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Diplomat*, June 12, 2017; *China Daily*, "History of Development of SCO," June 12, 2006; Edward Lemon, Research Assistant Professor, Texas A&M

group released statements outlining plans for increased cooperation in the economic and security domains and pledged mutual support of each other's "core interests," likely reflecting China's desire to prevent Central Asian states from criticizing it on issues it considers sensitive, such as Taiwan and Xinjiang.²⁰⁵ The countries also discussed increasing security cooperation under the framework of BRI, creating a new initiative under the project they termed the "Safe Silk Road."* In particular, they pledged to increase counterterrorism efforts in light of the evolving situation in Afghanistan.²⁰⁶

Chinese Coercion Prompts Indo-Pacific Countries to Strengthen Ties with the United States

China's increasing use of coercion in the Indo-Pacific prompted enhanced efforts by countries in the region to balance against China's aggressive tactics. A key country leading these efforts was Japan, whose relationship with China continued to deteriorate over the past year. In February 2021, Japan's government canceled an anticipated state visit by General Secretary Xi, which would have been the first official visit by a CCP general secretary to Japan since 2008.²⁰⁷ Japan's government had already postponed a visit in 2020 due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁰⁸ At that time, Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party urged the government to cancel the visit altogether given "grave concerns" about "the principles of freedom, human rights, [and] democracy."²⁰⁹ Some Japanese lawmakers continued to politically oppose the state visit in 2021.²¹⁰ While Japan's government did not announce that General Secretary Xi's visit was cancelled for these reasons, the announcement that he would not visit Japan in 2021 was nonetheless a high-profile sign of tensions in the China-Japan relationship.

Meanwhile, China continued escalating its military coercion in Japanese airspace and waters. In 2021, Chinese government ships set the longest recorded streak of 112 consecutive days sailing in the contiguous zone† of the Japan-administered Senkaku Islands.²¹¹ In

University, interview with Commission staff, August 6, 2020; Michael Yahuda, "China's Relations with Asia, Continuity amid Change," in David Shambaugh, ed., *China and the World*, Oxford University Press, January 30, 2020, 283; Zhao Huasheng, "China's View of and Expectations from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Asian Survey* 53:3 (2013): 436–460, 436–437; China Foreign Ministry, *Wang Yi Talks about Eight-Point Consensus and Ten Outcomes of "China + Central Asia" Foreign Ministers' Meeting*, May 12, 2021; China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on July 17, 2020*, July 17, 2020.

*Creating a "Safe Silk Road," according to Foreign Minister Wang, would entail cooperation between China and Central Asian nations to address a number of security challenges, including transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, and cybersecurity, in addition to protecting "large-scale activities... projects... personnel and facilities." China's ambitions to step up security cooperation with Central Asian countries stem from concerns of a resurgence of terrorism in Afghanistan amid the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the potential threat to regional projects that are part of the BRI. China Foreign Ministry, *Wang Yi Hosts "China + Central Asia" Foreign Ministers' Meeting*, May 12, 2021; Rachel Zhang, "China Seeks to Expand Belt and Road to Afghanistan in Name of Security as US Withdraws Troops," *South China Morning Post*, June 4, 2021; Rachel Zhang, "China Looks to Central Asia on Security to Create 'Safe Silk Road,'" *South China Morning Post*, May 14, 2021; *Economic Times*, "China Foresees Threat to BRI Projects amid US Drawdown from Afghanistan," May 16, 2021.

†Under international law, coastal states are entitled to territorial seas, which extend up to 12 nautical miles from their baseline, such as a continental shelf, and a contiguous zone, which extends up to 24 nautical miles from that baseline. Within their contiguous zones, states may exercise control needed to prevent infringement of laws within their territorial seas. The 2021 record of days Chinese government ships stayed in Japan's contiguous zone exceeds the record set in 2020 by a single day, demonstrating China's trend of setting, then exceeding, such records on an annual basis since 2019. Prior to 2019, the record for the longest streak of consecutive days Chinese government ships sailed around the Senkaku Islands was in 2013. U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, *Maritime Zones and Boundaries*, July 7, 2021; *Japan Times*,

March, the PLA Navy sent a Type 055 (RENHAI) warship through the Sea of Japan for the first time, which a *Global Times* article suggested was in response to a U.S.-Japan joint statement that “seriously provoked China” by emphasizing the importance of stability in the Taiwan Strait.²¹² One month later, the PLA Navy sailed its *Liaoning* carrier group through the Miyako Strait, leading some experts to assess that the PLA is signaling to Japan its ability to “punch through” the First Island Chain.²¹³

Japan also grew more vocal in its support for Taiwan. In addition to referring to the importance of stability in the Taiwan Strait during a summit between President Biden and then Japanese Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide in April 2021, Japan for the first time stated the same in a joint statement with the EU and in its annual defense white paper.²¹⁴ In June, the *Financial Times* reported that in 2020 U.S. and Japanese military officials “began serious planning for a possible conflict” against China over Taiwan.²¹⁵ In July, Japan’s Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso was even more explicit in describing the importance of Taiwan to Japan, stating that an attack on Taiwan may also be a “threat to Japan’s survival,” in which case “Japan and the U.S. must defend Taiwan together.”²¹⁶ In August, Japan’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party announced plans to initiate a security dialogue with Taiwan’s ruling Democratic Progressive Party, noting the talks were requested by the Japanese side.²¹⁷ (For more on Japan’s growing engagement with Taiwan, see Chapter 4, “A Dangerous Period for Cross-Strait Deterrence: Chinese Military Capabilities and Decision-Making for a War over Taiwan.”)

Japanese Policy and Public Opinion Harden against China

Japan’s government suggested it was preparing to take historic steps to increase defense spending in the face of mounting pressure from China. In May 2021, the Liberal Democratic Party proposed that Japan “drastically increase” its defense budget in response to China’s coercive behavior in the region.²¹⁸ In June, Japan’s Ministry of Defense announced it had shed its self-imposed cap of spending no more than one percent of Japan’s gross domestic product on defense.²¹⁹ Following Prime Minister Suga’s resignation from office in September, Japan’s Ministry of Defense announced it would review the country’s core national security guidelines, citing the fact that the security and technological environment in the region had “changed significantly” since Japan formulated its first national security strategy in 2013.²²⁰ Fumio Kishida, who took office as Japanese prime minister in October, has supported Japan’s shift toward a more proactive foreign and defense policy. During his campaign, Prime Minister Kishida called for Japan to stand up for universal values and human rights “in the face of the expansion of authoritarian regimes like China” and to develop the capability to strike Chinese missile bases in response to a hypothetical PLA attack.²²¹

Japan’s policy changes align with the Japanese public’s growing support for a more proactive foreign and defense policy. A *Nikkei* poll taken in April 2021 found that 74 percent of Japan’s public sup-

²¹²“Chinese Ships Sail near Senkakus for Record 112 Straight Days,” June 5, 2021; Shun Niekawa, “Chinese Ships Set 65-Day Record for Closing in on Senkaku Waters,” *Asahi Shimbun*, June 17, 2020; Caitlin Doornbos and Hana Kusumoto, “Japan Reports a Record Number of Chinese Ships near Contested Senkaku Islands,” *Stripes*, December 3, 2019.

ports the government taking an active role in cultivating stability in the Taiwan Strait.²²² Similarly, a Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs poll taken in March found that 69 percent of respondents wanted Japan's government to take a "strong stance" against China Coast Guard ships entering Japan's waters.*²²³

The Quad Takes New Steps

Other counterbalancing efforts were led by countries comprising the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad (the United States, Australia, India, and Japan) and included other participants from the region. In a historical first, the Quad countries' heads of government met in March 2021, producing a joint statement affirming their commitment to "a free, open rules-based order, rooted in international law" that will "counter threats to [security and prosperity] in the Indo-Pacific and beyond."²²⁴ The leaders further committed to regular senior level meetings and held their first in-person summit at the White House in September, releasing a joint statement recommitting to a vision of a rules-based order "undaunted by coercion."²²⁵ The Quad countries maintained a regular dialogue with vice foreign ministers of New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam, a grouping outside observers called the "Quad-plus," meeting 15 times between March 20, 2020, and March 19, 2021.²²⁶

The Quad partnership addressed a broad range of issues. The joint statement following the Quad summit in March noted that future objectives for the group included delivering COVID-19 vaccines, collaborating on international standards for technology, and leading efforts to address climate change.²²⁷ Following their summit in September, Quad leaders additionally committed to advance secure and transparent 5G and "beyond-5G" networks and to secure supply chains of critical technologies and materials such as semiconductors.²²⁸ Quad countries also stepped up cooperation between their space programs. In October 2020, a U.S.-India joint statement announced the two countries would begin sharing space situational awareness information.²²⁹ In early 2021, the India Space Research Organization also signed agreements with the Australian Space Agency and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency to increase cooperation on space-related issues.²³⁰

Chinese leaders and scholars were critical of the Quad's growth. Immediately after the March summit, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian described the grouping as an "exclusive clique" that he warned "will neither receive a welcome nor have its way."²³¹ In May 2021, China's ambassador to Bangladesh warned his host country's officials that any future collaboration with the Quad would "substantially damage" the China-Bangladesh relationship.²³² In June, President Biden mentioned that General Secretary Xi had urged him previously to refrain from working with Quad countries.²³³ In response to the Quad's cooperation, China indicated it might seek to deepen its own security relationships in the region.

*In one illustration of Japan's changing approach to China, the cover of the Ministry of Defense's annual defense white paper depicted an armored samurai mounted on a charging horse. In contrast, in 2020 the defense white paper's cover had depicted an idyllic scene of Mount Fuji. Ken Moriyasu, "A Tale of Two Covers: Japan's Message on Taiwan Draws US Notice," *Nikkei Asia*, July 21, 2021.

In a May 2021 interview, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi hinted at one such possibility, suggesting decisions on plans for a PLA Navy base in Pakistan "depends on how the Quad turns out."²³⁴

Problems Linger from China's Deadly Clash with India

Unresolved tensions from the deadly 2020 clash between the PLA and the Indian Armed Forces continued to shape both countries' policies in 2021. The fatal border clash and following standoff were, according to a former Indian security official, a "very fundamental change" that drove revisions in India's "whole policy and discourse around China."²³⁵ In a February 2021 interview, Indian Army Lieutenant General Y K Joshi said India was "absolutely on the brink" with the PLA in August 2020.²³⁶ Satellite imagery showed Indian and PLA tanks fewer than 500 feet apart at that time.²³⁷ In an April 2021 speech to Chinese and Indian scholars, Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Misri noted an "inadvisable" tendency among Chinese diplomats "to sweep [the border conflict] under the carpet and characterize it as just a minor issue," which he warned was "tantamount to running away from the problem."²³⁸ In the same speech, the ambassador said sustained dialogue and "complete disengagement in all friction areas" would be a necessary first step toward "restoring trust and confidence in the relationship... that was damaged through last year's actions."²³⁹

Chinese and Indian forces disengaged at two of four standoff locations along their disputed border in 2021, but limited discussions on troop withdrawal make further disengagement uncertain.²⁴⁰ In August, an unusually large patrol of over 100 PLA troops entered disputed territory in the Indian state of Uttarakhand, emerging from multiple locations to venture several miles into territory administered by India before departing after three hours.²⁴¹ Both militaries are hardening their positions along the disputed border beyond the existing standoff locations. China has taken a new step in building "militarized village[s]" that position electronic warfare and air defense stations close to India.²⁴² It constructed several of these villages in neighboring Bhutan, which researcher Robert Barnett describes as part of an effort to "force the Bhutanese government to cede territory that China wants elsewhere in Bhutan to give Beijing a military advantage in its struggle with New Delhi."²⁴³ The militarized villages are part of China's "Plan for the Construction of Moderately Well-Off Villages in the Border Area of the Tibet Autonomous Region," which describes building 628 such villages near the contested border between 2017 and 2020 under the guise of "poverty alleviation."²⁴⁴

Shortly after the 2020 border dispute and continuing through 2021, PLA cyberespionage and other Chinese state-sponsored organizations significantly increased their attacks on targets in India. One Chinese group, using techniques and resources similar to those of hackers affiliated with the PLA and Ministry of State Security, launched a "concerted campaign against India's critical infrastructure," targeting at least ten regionally important nodes in India's

power grid and two sea ports with cyberattacks.*²⁴⁵ These attacks may have caused blackouts throughout India, including a blackout on October 13, 2020, in Mumbai that stopped trains and forced hospitals to rely on generators.²⁴⁶ At the time, local Indian media reported the cyber department in Maharashtra, the Indian state in which Mumbai is located, discovered malware that may have caused the power outage.²⁴⁷ Analysts at U.S. cybersecurity company Recorded Future also uncovered evidence suggesting a coordinated cyber-attack took place against India's power grid at the time of the power failure.²⁴⁸ Responding to the Recorded Future report, in March 2021 India's Ministry of Power denied any power disruption "due to the referred threat" in a statement that declined to mention the Mumbai outage.²⁴⁹ In the first six months of 2021, another group closely affiliated with PLA cyberespionage units heavily targeted Indian aerospace companies, defense contractors, and telecommunications providers.²⁵⁰

New Steps toward Decoupling from Chinese Technology

In 2021, India also expanded its 2020 policies to selectively restrict Chinese companies' access to the country's 5G and data markets. India's Ministry of Communications did not include any Chinese companies in its May 2021 announcement listing participants selected to join trials to extend 5G network coverage in India.²⁵¹ In addition, India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology announced the government's previously temporary ban on 59 Chinese smartphone applications was now permanent, citing privacy concerns.²⁵²

Australia Rebuffs China's Demands for Policy Changes

China unsuccessfully sought to compel Australia to make key policy concessions on more than a dozen matters ranging from Australia's domestic freedom of expression to its international advocacy for an independent COVID-19 investigation, leading Australian perceptions of China to crater.²⁵³ The Chinese Embassy attempted to pressure Canberra in November 2020 by leaking an official list of 14 grievances Beijing told Canberra were "poisoning" Australia-China relations.²⁵⁴ The list claimed the bilateral relationship could be improved only if Australia changed its stance on many internal policy matters, such as by repealing Australia's antifoign interference laws, effectively demanding Canberra make it easier for agents of foreign influence to subvert its politics.[†]²⁵⁵

Peter Jennings, executive director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, which Beijing also criticized in its list of complaints, testified to the Commission in January 2021 that China "seems to have dispensed with any pretense toward friendly relations" with

*These attacks may have been partially enabled by information Chinese hackers stole through Microsoft Exchange. Since 2017, Chinese hackers have been targeting foreign ministries and energy companies, including India's Hindustan Petroleum Corp., accumulating five gigabytes of stolen data consistent with what Chinese state-sponsored hackers have previously targeted. The same trove of stolen data also includes information from Malaysia's Petronas Nasional Berhad energy company and documents from the foreign ministries of Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, and Turkey. Kartikay Mehrotra, "Microsoft Exchange Used to Hack Diplomats before 2021 Breach," *Bloomberg*, August 4, 2021.

† For details on the anti-foreign interference laws, see U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2018 Annual Report to Congress*, November 2018, 325–326.

Australia.²⁵⁶ Negative perceptions of China among Australians have increased fivefold in just three years as General Secretary Xi's treatment of Australia has "lost the Australian heart and mind for a generation," according to Mr. Jennings.²⁵⁷ An annual poll by Australia's Lowy Institute found in 2021 that 63 percent of Australians now see China as "more of a security threat to Australia" than an economic partner, which is up from 41 percent in 2020 and 12 percent in 2018.²⁵⁸ Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said in June 2021 that his government is ready to resume constructive dialogue with Beijing to resolve the "completely unconscionable" Chinese trade sanctions on Australian goods, but Beijing has not responded to overtures.²⁵⁹

Canberra used new powers in 2021 to prevent Victoria State from pursuing its own agreements with China, completing a saga begun when Victoria signed its own BRI memorandum of understanding in 2018. Following criticism of the 2018 BRI memorandum and a subsequent 2019 framework agreement, the Australian Parliament in December 2020 approved a bill giving the foreign minister veto power over state and local agreements with foreign countries to ensure such agreements do not harm Australia's interests.²⁶⁰ When Foreign Minister Marise Payne then canceled Victoria's BRI agreements along with two other unrelated deals* in April 2021, the Chinese Embassy voiced "strong displeasure and opposition" even though a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had earlier called the legislation an "internal affair" for Australia.²⁶¹ Australia's creation and use of this new oversight tool marked a significant setback for the CCP's strategy of using subnational diplomacy to bypass national governments by directly incentivizing local governments to adopt policies favorable to China's interests. (For more on the CCP's strategy of subnational diplomacy, see Chapter 1, Section 2, "China's Influence in Latin America and the Caribbean.")²⁶²

Australia, the United States, and the UK also jointly announced a trilateral security pact in September 2021 that most observers perceived as a move to counterbalance China.²⁶³ Under the pact, known as AUKUS, the United States and the UK agreed to help Australia acquire a nuclear-powered submarine fleet by sharing advanced technology for nuclear propulsion.²⁶⁴ Such a fleet will enhance the three countries' interoperability and efforts to counter Chinese military expansion across the Indo-Pacific.²⁶⁵ The pact will also strengthen U.S., UK, and Australian technological cooperation in cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and other underseas capabilities.²⁶⁶

Cracks Widen between China and Southeast Asia

In 2021, China's diplomatic achievements fell short of its ambitions in Southeast Asia. This year marked the 30th anniversary of the China-ASEAN relationship. In anticipation of the anniversary, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced two major diplomatic

*The four Victoria State agreements canceled under the Foreign Arrangements Scheme were a 2004 memorandum of understanding on technical and vocational training with the Islamic Republic of Iran, a 1999 scientific cooperation agreement with the Syrian Arab Republic, a 2018 Belt and Road Initiative Memorandum of Understanding with China's National Development and Reform Commission, and a 2019 Belt and Road Initiative Framework Agreement with the National Development and Reform Commission. Senator the Hon Marise Payne, *Decisions under Australia's Foreign Arrangements Scheme*, April 21, 2021.

goals. First, it sought to elevate what it called the China-ASEAN “strategic partnership” to a “comprehensive strategic partnership,” a higher level of cooperation in China’s diplomatic parlance.²⁶⁷ Second, it wanted to complete long-ongoing negotiations over a South China Sea Code of Conduct.*²⁶⁸ Alexander Vuving, a researcher with the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Pacific Studies, noted that China’s diplomatic corps exerted “maximum pressure” on Southeast Asian countries to meet this 2021 goal.²⁶⁹

China’s diplomats did not achieve either objective. The joint statement concluding the June 7 Foreign Minister’s Meeting only reaffirmed the China-ASEAN “strategic partnership” and made no mention of the Code of Conduct despite the 2020 joint statement’s acknowledgment of progress in Code of Conduct negotiations.²⁷⁰ Following the 2021 meeting, an ASEAN diplomat reportedly said China’s target for completing the Code of Conduct “has become more flexible” and that negotiations will extend into 2022.²⁷¹ China’s diplomatic shortcomings with ASEAN are likely related to a simultaneous recognition and growing distrust of Chinese power in Southeast Asian countries. An annual survey of Southeast Asian policymakers and civic leaders found that 76 percent of respondents considered China to have the most economic influence in the region, but of these, 72 percent said it was a worrying development rather than a welcome one.²⁷² Similarly, 49 percent of respondents said China had the most strategic-political influence in Southeast Asia, but of these, 89 percent said that was a worrying development.²⁷³

New Chinese Provocations Elicit Opposition in the South China Sea

Throughout 2021, Chinese military and paramilitary forces continued to assert illegal maritime claims over much of the South China Sea. Among these incidents, China regularly singled out Malaysia and the Philippines, souring China’s relationship with both countries.† In November 2020, China Coast Guard ships began harassing a drilling rig and accompanying ships operating in Malay-

*Chinese leaders consider the Code of Conduct a significant opportunity to set rules defining permissible activities in the South China Sea. Other South China Sea claimants, including Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, support the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea’s (UNCLOS) authority on permissible activities and for settling international disputes. Many South China Sea disputes not involving China do not rise to the level of international tribunals. In 2021 alone, Malaysia signed maritime cooperation agreements with Vietnam and Brunei, coordinating rather than competing in their overlapping claims. A Code of Conduct negotiated aside from UNCLOS would support China’s ambitions to selectively ignore international agreements. *Malay Mail*, “Malaysia, Vietnam Expected to Ink MoU on Maritime Security This Year, Says MMEA D-G,” April 5, 2021; Dawn Chan, “Malaysia, Brunei Agree to Jointly Develop Oilfields Straddling Common Maritime Border,” *New Straits Times*, April 5, 2021; Viet Hoang, “The Code of Conduct for the South China Sea: A Long and Bumpy Road,” *Diplomat*, September 28, 2020.

† Both Malaysia and the Philippines have recently taken steps against China’s illegal maritime claims in the South China Sea. In December 2019, Malaysia submitted information to the UN about the limits of its continental shelf, claiming an expanded EEZ within the South China Sea pursuant to UNCLOS. In 2016, the Philippines won a unanimous award before an international tribunal declaring that China’s expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea has no basis. In March 2020, the Philippines cited the ruling to declare China’s expansive maritime claims illegitimate. China’s coercive behavior is driven by its desire for the maritime resources within its unlawful claims and as a means of deterring countries from appealing to international law. Darryl John Esguerra, “On 4th Anniversary of Arbitral Win vs. China, PH Insists Award ‘Non-Negotiable,’” *Inquirer*, July 12, 2020; United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, “Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) Outer Limits of the Continental Shelf beyond 200 Nautical Miles from the Baselines: Submissions to the Commission: Partial Submission by Malaysia in the South China Sea,” June 19, 2020; United Nations, “Malaysia Partial Submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf Pursuant to Article 76, Paragraph 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 in the South China Sea,” December 12, 2019.

sia's EEZ only 44 nautical miles off Malaysia's coast, the closest to shore such harassment had been recorded and escalating a pattern of harassment of Malaysian ships that began in late 2019.²⁷⁴ In June 2021, 16 PLA IL-76 and Y-20 transport aircraft, sufficient military airlift to carry an airborne battalion with its combat equipment,* flew within 60 nautical miles of Luconia Shoals, a feature Malaysia administers but China includes within its illegal maritime claims.²⁷⁵ Malaysia reported the PLA aircraft flew in "tactical formation" and were unresponsive to repeated requests for contact from regional air traffic control, which conveyed a clear threat regardless of whether any PLA troops were actually embarked.²⁷⁶ The PLA flight occurred shortly after Malaysia's state-owned oil and gas company finished transporting materials to build a drilling platform in the same location.²⁷⁷

The unusually provocative nature of the flight appeared to drive Malaysia to adopt new policies pushing back against China.²⁷⁸ Malaysian Foreign Minister Hishammuddin Hussein, who earlier in 2021 said to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang "you will always be my elder brother," called the event a "breach" of "Malaysian airspace and sovereignty."²⁷⁹ Two days after the event, Malaysia requested bids for a long-range air surveillance radar that would improve its aerial detection and tracking capabilities.²⁸⁰ On July 1, Malaysia announced it would partner with Ericsson to develop its 5G network despite appearing to favor China's Huawei in 2020.†²⁸¹

China's aggressive maritime activity also pushed the Philippines to adopt a more confrontational approach to China in 2021. On March 20, the Philippines' National Task Force for monitoring South China Sea activities reported that approximately 220 Chinese fishing vessels, later confirmed to be maritime militia,‡ were moored within the Philippines' EEZ at Whitsun Reef.²⁸² Over the following week, the Philippines ordered navy patrols around Whitsun Reef and filed a diplomatic protest, while Australia, Canada, Japan, the UK, the United States, and Vietnam each voiced support.²⁸³ Shortly thereafter, much of China's maritime militia dispersed to other areas within or just outside the Philippines EEZ, leaving a much smaller contingent of vessels behind.²⁸⁴

Meanwhile, China's maritime forces escalated their harassment activities near other features both China and the Philippines claim.

*According to Air University China Aerospace Studies Institute Director of Research Roderick Lee, 16 IL-76 and Y-20 aircraft would be able to deliver an airborne battalion, two artillery companies, and over one dozen lightly armored infantry transport vehicles. Roderick Lee (@roderick_s_lee), "Some context about what "16 aircraft" translates into (assuming they're all Y-20s/IL-76s): That's enough to deliver a full PLAAF Airborne light combined arms battalion, a howitzer company, rocket artillery company, 12–15 Mengshis as prime movers, and associated supplies." Twitter, June 1, 2021, 2:12 p.m.

†Speaking in 2019, then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said Huawei "can spy as much as they like because we have no secrets." Tashny Sukumaran, "Malaysia's Mahathir Backs Huawei, Snubbing US Blacklist of Chinese Telecoms Giant," *South China Morning Post*, May 30, 2019.

‡In addition to its navy and coast guard, China operates the People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia, a paramilitary force composed of armed civilians and their vessels, most of which are fishing boats. According to Naval War College professor Andrew Erickson and research associate Conor Kennedy, China's maritime militia is a "state-organized, -developed, and -controlled force operating under a direct military chain of command to conduct Chinese state-sponsored activities," which are typically provocations and skirmishes with sailors from other countries in the South China Sea. Conor M. Kennedy and Andrew S. Erickson, "China's Third Sea Force, the People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia: Tethered to the PLA," *China Maritime Studies Institute*, March 2017, 2.

On April 9, PLA Navy Type 022 (HOUBEI) fast attack craft repelled Philippines reporters approaching Second Thomas Shoal, which is a feature the Philippines administers.²⁸⁵ Later that month, the Philippines Coast Guard accused China Coast Guard boats of “shadowing, blocking, dangerous maneuver, and radio challenges” near Scarborough Shoal.²⁸⁶ In May, the Philippines reported incursions by 287 Chinese maritime militia vessels in its EEZ.²⁸⁷ Philippines President Duterte publicly declared that China’s actions are psychological operations intended “just to show the Filipino that no matter how many times we go back there, nothing will happen because we are not in possession of the sea, it’s with them.”²⁸⁸ Rejecting China’s false narrative, the Philippines responded to China’s escalations by dispatching at least 13 vessels to conduct 57 patrols in the South China Sea from March through May 2021, escalating from three vessels conducting seven patrols across the ten months prior.²⁸⁹ In July, President Duterte reversed his 2020 decision to terminate the Philippines’ Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States, which authorizes the rotational deployment of thousands of U.S. forces into the Philippines.²⁹⁰

U.S. Partners Grow their Military Presence in the South China Sea

This year, Southeast Asian countries hedged against China’s rising power by continuing to build defenses in the South China Sea and by increasing military engagements with countries like India, Japan, and Australia in addition to the United States. The Philippines began building a logistics base and improving its maritime monitoring facilities on Thitu Island, which is only 12.4 nautical miles from China’s military base on Subi Reef.*²⁹¹ Vietnam continued its own artificial island-building in the Spratlys, developing coastal defense installations able to host anti-air missiles and the country’s EXTRA artillery system (a precision-guided rocket system with the range to strike all of China’s bases in the Spratlys).²⁹² Indonesia collaborated with the United States to build a maritime training center at the entrance to the Malacca Strait where the Indonesian Coast Guard will operate the center alongside U.S. agencies, including U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.²⁹³ Several Southeast Asian countries also increased their defense industry coordination with Quad countries. In 2021, Indonesia and India signed an agreement to jointly develop new naval vessels and technologies, replicating an agreement India already has with Malaysia and Vietnam.²⁹⁴ Vietnam also signed a defense agreement with Japan to acquire Japanese naval radar and surveillance equipment.²⁹⁵

U.S. security partners also began increasing their naval activity in the South China Sea. In February 2021, France deployed a nuclear attack submarine to patrol the South China Sea.²⁹⁶ French Defense Minister Florence Parly called the patrol “extraordinary” and “striking proof of our French navy to deploy far away and for a long

*In recent years, the Philippines had generally avoided repairs and upgrades to its facilities on Thitu Island due to Chinese pressure. The most visible expression of that pressure has been the presence of Chinese maritime militia vessels in the area. From December 2018 to March 2020, dozens of Chinese maritime militia vessels surrounded Thitu Island, tacitly threatening Philippine leaders against developing the feature further. Likely as a result, Philippines leaders often delayed ongoing construction projects. Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, “The Long Patrol: Stare-down at Thitu Island Enters Its Sixteenth Month,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, March 5, 2020.

time, together with our Australian, American and Japanese strategic partners.”²⁹⁷ In April, the UK deployed a carrier strike group to join exercises with countries in Southeast Asia as it transited the South China Sea.²⁹⁸ In May 2021, the UK First Sea Lord announced that two offshore patrol vessels will be permanently stationed in the Indo-Pacific, with frigates to join in the future.²⁹⁹ India and Germany both followed suit in August 2021, with Germany sending a frigate into the South China Sea for the first time since 2002 and India sending a destroyer, a frigate, and two other ships.³⁰⁰ When asked by a Chinese reporter about the UK deployment, Wu Shicun, president of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-affiliated National Institute for South China Sea Studies, suggested firing warning shots at the British ships, citing reports that Russian forces had fired in the path of a UK destroyer in the Black Sea in June.³⁰¹

China Undermines International Response to the Military Coup in Burma

On February 1, 2021, Burma’s military launched a coup d’état and detained President Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, and other senior government officials while launching sweeping crackdowns across the country.³⁰² As of October 6, security forces have arrested 8,770 Burmese citizens and foreign advisors and killed 1,158 people.³⁰³ Hostilities in Burma may escalate further after some ousted civilian officials assembled to form a National Unity Government, which on September 7, 2021, announced a “defensive war” calling on armed civilians to target Burma’s military and its assets.³⁰⁴

Chinese leaders continue to hedge between Burma’s military and the country’s ousted civilian government. Undermining international efforts to restore Burma’s civilian government, Chinese state media characterized the February coup as a “major cabinet reshuffle,” and China and Russia blocked a UN Security Council statement condemning the coup before later signing on to a statement condemning “violence against peaceful protestors.”³⁰⁵ As violence in Burma raged on, however, China closed its 1,320-mile border with Burma in July 2021 and agreed with the United States in September to block Burma’s military government from addressing the UN General Assembly that month.³⁰⁶ Meanwhile, Chinese officials have maintained relations with Burma’s ousted civilian leaders. In August 2021, Chinese officials reportedly told Burma’s military government that the former civilian government should continue to exist as a political party, which Chinese leaders reinforced by inviting the ousted leaders and three Burmese political parties to an online summit to discuss economic development.³⁰⁷

Developments on the Korean Peninsula

China worked to enhance its diplomatic ties with North Korea following a decrease in bilateral engagement since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In celebration of the founding of the Korean Workers Party in October 2020, General Secretary Xi sent a mes-

sage to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un applauding his “strong leadership” and emphasizing China’s willingness to strengthen bilateral ties.³⁰⁸ In April 2021, China appointed senior diplomat Liu Xiaoming, a former ambassador to the UK known for his outspoken views on U.S.-China relations, as its special representative on Korean Peninsula affairs, where he will oversee Beijing’s relationship with both Pyongyang and Seoul.³⁰⁹ According to one analyst, his appointment reflected Chinese leaders’ view of the growing importance of North Korea and the broader Korean Peninsula in the context of an increasingly competitive U.S.-China relationship.³¹⁰ The two countries’ leaders also exchanged messages to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the China-North Korea Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in July 2021.^{*311}

China has also made efforts to strengthen bilateral relations with South Korea amid concerns over developments in the U.S.-South Korea alliance. In January 2021, President Moon Jae-in announced his intention to elevate bilateral ties to “a new height” and expressed his hopes to host General Secretary Xi in Seoul sometime this year.³¹² Nevertheless, an October 2020 Pew poll showing 75 percent of South Koreans had either somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable views of Beijing reflected the limits of China’s influence in South Korea.^{†313} China also expressed concerns over South Korea potentially joining the Quad, with one *Global Times* article warning that South Korea joining the group would “inevitably damage the just restored strategic mutual trust between China and South Korea.... If Seoul joins the Quad, it will destroy such mutual trust.”³¹⁴ In May 2021, the U.S. terminated an agreement limiting the range of South Korea’s ballistic missiles, prompting Chinese concerns that the extension would now allow South Korean missiles to reach Beijing.^{‡315}

An Increasingly Adversarial U.S.-China Relationship

Tensions between the United States and China continued through the change in U.S. presidential administrations in 2021. China’s coercion against U.S. allies and partners like Australia and Taiwan,

*The China-North Korea Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance was signed in 1961 and formally stipulates the two countries’ defense obligations to each other. The treaty is up for renewal every 20 years, with the two sides last renewing the treaty in 2001. In July 2021, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin stated the treaty “remains in force unless agreement is reached on its amendment or termination.” Although Kim Jong-un has pledged to further strengthen relations with China, the North Korean government has not yet publicly reaffirmed the treaty. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin’s Regular Press Conference on July 7, 2021*, July 7, 2021; *Global Times*, “China-North Korea Friendship Treaty ‘Remains in Effect’ All the Time: FM Spokesperson,” *Global Times*, July 7, 2021; Jagannath Panda, “How ‘Eternal’ Is the Sino-DPRK Alliance?” *38North*, June 30, 2021.

†A June 2021 joint survey from polling company Hankook Research and news magazine *Sisa IN* showed similar results. According to the poll, South Koreans now view China more unfavorably than they view Japan, and they prefer the United States over China by a margin of six to one. Over 58 percent of respondents called China “close to evil,” while only 4.5 percent said China was “close to good.” Choe Sang-Hun, “South Koreans Now Dislike China More Than They Dislike Japan,” *New York Times*, August 20, 2021.

‡The United States and South Korea signed a memorandum of understanding in October 1979 that restricted the maximum range and payload of South Korea’s ballistic missiles. The two countries had previously renegotiated these guidelines on multiple occasions to increase the range and payload cap of South Korea’s missiles. Prior to its termination in May 2021, the agreement had limited South Korean missiles to a range of approximately 500 miles. Yonhap News Agency, “Chronology of major events leading to abolishment of S. Korea-U.S. missile guidelines,” May 22, 2021; *Korea Times*, “What South Korea is Facing with the New Missile Guideline,” September 7, 2020, 5.

repression in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and lack of transparency over the origins of COVID-19 all drove new U.S. response measures.

In the final months of the Trump Administration, U.S. government agencies and high-level officials made statements that signaled significant shifts in U.S. policy toward China. In a December 2020 op-ed, then Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe called China the “greatest threat to democracy and freedom worldwide since World War II.”³¹⁶ In January 2021, the U.S. Department of State declared the CCP to be committing acts of genocide against the Uyghur people and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. China’s response was vitriolic, with Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying accusing then Secretary of State Michael Pompeo of being a “notorious liar” and making himself into a “doomed clown.”³¹⁷ Immediately after President Biden’s inauguration, the Chinese government issued sanctions targeting U.S. officials purported to have “seriously violated China’s sovereignty,” including former Secretary of State Pompeo and former National Security Advisor Robert O’Brien.³¹⁸ Also in January, the State Department announced it would lift restrictions on official contacts between the United States and Taiwan.*³¹⁹

Tensions Continue in the Biden Administration

Concerns over the growing national security threat from China remained after the U.S. presidential transition. Chinese officials initially hoped for a reset in U.S.-China relations, with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang stating in January 2021 that bilateral ties had “come to a new crossroads” and that “a window of hope” was opening.³²⁰ Ministry of National Defense Spokesperson Senior Colonel Wu Qian similarly described the two countries’ military-to-military relationships as being “at a new historical starting point.”³²¹

Chinese officials’ hopes were diminished within the first few months of the Biden Administration. In February 2021, the U.S. Department of Defense announced it would be conducting a four-month task force review to assess the department’s current policies and programs related to China.† In a March 2021 speech, Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the U.S. relationship with China “the

*The State Department under the Biden Administration issued new guidelines for interactions between U.S. officials and their Taiwan counterparts in April 2021. The guidelines encourage working-level meetings with Taiwan counterparts in U.S. federal buildings and at Taiwan’s offices in the United States such as the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office. They also allow U.S. officials under certain conditions to attend events at the Twin Oaks estate in Washington, DC (the former residence of China’s ambassador to the United States between 1937 and 1979, retained by Taiwan after the U.S. change in diplomatic recognition). Meanwhile, the guidelines restore some restrictions that were lifted during the Trump Administration, such as restricting the display of the Republic of China flag during meetings between U.S. officials and Taiwan’s representatives while in the United States. U.S. Department of State, *New Guidelines for U.S. Government Interactions with Taiwan Counterparts*, April 9, 2021; Matthew Lee, “US Unveils New Rules for Government Contacts with Taiwan,” *AP News*, April 9, 2021; Robert Delaney, “US Announces New Policy Encouraging Government Ties with Taiwan Officials,” *South China Morning Post*, April 10, 2021; Nick Wadhams, “U.S. Ease Limits on Taiwan Contacts as China Tensions Climb,” *Bloomberg*, April 9, 2021; Demetri Sevastopulo, “US to Erase Restrictions on Meeting Taiwanese Officials,” *Financial Times*, April 9, 2021; *Reuters* and David Brunnstrom, “U.S. Issues Guidelines to Deepen Relations with Taiwan,” *Reuters*, April 9, 2021.

†Final recommendations from the task force were submitted to Secretary of Defense Austin in June 2021. It has since been reported that as result of the review, the Pentagon is considering creating a permanent naval task force in the Pacific to better address the threat from China in the region. Jim Garamone, “Biden Announces DOD China Task Force,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, February 10, 2021; U.S. Department of Defense, *Secretary of Defense Directive on China Task Force Recommendations*, June 9, 2021; Lara Seligman, “Pentagon Considering Permanent Naval Task Force to Counter China in the Pacific,” *Politico*, June 15, 2021.

biggest geopolitical test of the 21st century.”³²² Continuing tensions were also on display during the two countries’ initial high-level engagement in Anchorage, Alaska, later that month.* While the U.S. delegation criticized China’s use of economic coercion and human rights abuses in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, top diplomat Yang Jiechi attacked the United States’ “Cold War mentality” and domestic political issues.³²³ Yang’s remarks, which ran for over fifteen minutes, led to a senior U.S. official stating that the Chinese delegation “seem[ed] to have arrived intent on grandstanding, focused on public theatrics and dramatics over substance.”³²⁴

Open displays of U.S.-China frictions continued after the Anchorage Summit. Also in March, the Biden Administration reaffirmed the previous administration’s May 2020 determination that Hong Kong is no longer autonomous and does not deserve special treatment from the U.S. government.³²⁵ The State Department’s annual human rights report reaffirmed that China’s actions against the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang constituted genocide.³²⁶ In April 2021, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence announced it would create the Foreign Malign Influence Center to coordinate findings on foreign influence activities from countries, including China and Russia.³²⁷ Chinese leaders undermined their own efforts to improve bilateral military ties by denying Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin’s requests to meet with General Xu, his counterpart within the PLA hierarchy as executive vice chairman of the Central Military Commission.†³²⁸ Pentagon officials in the Biden Administration and the PLA did not hold official talks until August 2021, when Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for China Michael Chase spoke with PLA Major General Huang Xueping using the U.S.-PRC Defense Telephone Link.‡³²⁹

In June 2021, the U.S. Senate’s passage of the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act prompted the Chinese Foreign Ministry to retort that the bill “distorts facts and slanders China’s development path and its domestic and foreign policies.”³³⁰ Prior to Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R. Sherman’s July 2021 meeting with Chinese officials in Tianjin, Foreign Minister Wang warned that the Chinese government would give the United States a “tutorial” on how to treat China equitably.³³¹ In a move reminiscent of Beijing’s imposi-

*The two sides disagreed on how to label the discussion. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian called the event a “high-level strategic dialogue,” whereas the U.S. side declined to use the strategic dialogue terminology. See Tsuyoshi Nagasawa and Tsukasa Hadano, “US and China Play Mind Games over How to Frame Alaska Meeting,” *Nikkei Asia*, March 12, 2021.

†As the executive vice chairman on the Central Military Commission, Xu Qiliang is the PLA’s top military officer and undertakes most duties that belong to the secretary of defense in the United States. In his role as Central Military Commission chairman, General Secretary Xi has the official responsibilities of commander-in-chief. By contrast, the Chinese Minister of National Defense has little formal responsibility over the PLA and instead primarily interacts with foreign defense ministers. You Ji, “How Xi Jinping Dominates Elite Party Politics: A Case Study of Civil-Military Leadership Formation,” *China Journal* 84, July 2020; Michael D. Swaine, “The PLA Role in China’s Foreign Policy and Crisis Behavior,” in Phillip C. Saunders and Andrew Scobell, eds., *PLA Influence on China’s National Security Policymaking*, Stanford Security Studies, 2015, 144.

‡The U.S.-PRC Defense Telephone Link is a secure military crisis notification mechanism established between the United States and China in 2008. The goals of this agreement include “prevent[ing] destabilizing escalation in times of crisis or tension.” The Defense Telephone Link was used only four times between 2008 and 2014 until its use was regularized in 2016. U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2016*, April 16, 2016, 96; U.S. Department of Defense, “Military Crisis Notification Mechanism for Use of the Defense Telephone Link,” September 24, 2015; Robert Pape, “A Hotline to Cool Asian Crises,” *Washington Post*, April 29, 2014.

tions on Australia in late 2020, Chinese interlocutors proceeded to issue twin lists of demands during the meeting, including for the United States to lift visa restrictions for Chinese students and sanctions on CCP officials.³³²

In September 2021, following Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou's admission of wrongdoing in U.S. court and permission to return to China, Beijing immediately released Canadian citizens Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, whom it had detained shortly after Ms. Meng's arrest in 2018 and imprisoned for over 1,000 days.³³³ Beijing also released U.S. citizens Victor and Cynthia Liu, whom it had prevented from leaving China for over three years.³³⁴ While the Chinese government had previously claimed there was no link between Ms. Meng's arrest and its detention of Canadian citizens or use of exit bans against U.S. citizens, Beijing's actions clearly demonstrated this linkage and its willingness to use hostage diplomacy against the United States.

ENDNOTES FOR SECTION 1

1. *AP News*, “Taiwan Says Trade Office with Guyana Now Off, Blaming China,” February 5, 2021; Finbarr Bermingham, “China Halts Rail Freight to Lithuania as Feud Deepens over Taiwan,” *South China Morning Post*, August 18, 2021.

2. *Xinhua*, “(International) State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Is Interviewed by Media after Concluding Visit to Six Middle Eastern Countries -- China Is Permanent and Reliable Strategic Partner of Middle Eastern Countries,” March 30, 2021.

3. *Xinhua*, “Xi Jinping: Speech at the Celebration of the Centenary of the Founding of the Chinese Communist Party” (习近平: 在庆祝中国共产党成立一百周年大会上的讲话), July 1, 2021. Translation.

4. *Xinhua*, Xi Jinping: Speech at the Celebration of the Centenary of the Founding of the Chinese Communist Party” (习近平: 在庆祝中国共产党成立一百周年大会上的讲话), July 1, 2021. Translation.

5. *Xinhua*, Xi Jinping: Speech at the Celebration of the Centenary of the Founding of the Chinese Communist Party” (习近平: 在庆祝中国共产党成立一百周年大会上的讲话), July 1, 2021. Translation.

6. Chen Yixin (陈一新), “Chen Yixin: Party History Is the Best Textbook for Strengthening the Party, Governing, and Educating People” (陈一新: 党史是强党资政育人的最好教科书), *China Changan*, February 23, 2021; *Sohu*, “Where Is the New Stage of Development New? Chen Yixin Explains from Eight Aspects” (新发展阶段新在哪里? 陈一新从八个方面进行阐释), January 15, 2021. Translation; Guo Shengkun (郭声琨), “Building a Safer China of a Higher Level (Study and Implement the Spirit of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Party)” (建设更高水平的平安中国 (学习贯彻党的十九届五中全会精神), *People's Daily*, December 2, 2020. Translation.

7. *Sohu*, “Where Is the New Stage of Development New? Chen Yixin Explains from Eight Aspects” (新发展阶段新在哪里? 陈一新从八个方面进行阐释), January 15, 2021. Translation.

8. *Xinhua*, “Xi Jinping: Speech at the Celebration of the Centenary of the Founding of the Chinese Communist Party” (习近平: 在庆祝中国共产党成立一百周年大会上的讲话), July 1, 2021. Translation.

9. *Xinhua*, “Xi Jinping: Speech at the Celebration of the Centenary of the Founding of the Chinese Communist Party” (习近平: 在庆祝中国共产党成立一百周年大会上的讲话), July 1, 2021. Translation; Steven Lee Myers and Amy Qin, “To China, Trump Was Bad. Biden Seems Even Worse,” *New York Times*, July 20, 2021.

10. Wang Yi (王毅), “Facing Difficulties, Acting for the Country, Striving to Embark on a New Journey of Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, (迎难而上 为国担当 奋力开启中国特色大国外交新征程), *Qiushi*, January 19, 2021. Translation; *People's Daily*, “Yang Jiechi: Actively Build a Good External Environment” (杨洁篪: 积极营造良好外部环境), November 30, 2020; *People's Daily*, “A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南 (深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

11. Wang Yi (王毅), “Facing Difficulties, Acting for the Country, Striving to Embark on a New Journey of Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, (迎难而上 为国担当 奋力开启中国特色大国外交新征程), *Qiushi*, January 19, 2021. Translation; *People's Daily*, “A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南 (深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

12. *People's Daily*, “Yang Jiechi: Actively Build a Good External Environment” (杨洁篪: 积极营造良好外部环境), November 30, 2020. Translation.

13. *People's Daily*, “Yang Jiechi: Actively Build a Good External Environment” (杨洁篪: 积极营造良好外部环境), November 30, 2020. Translation.

14. Wang Yi (王毅), “Facing Difficulties, Acting for the Country, Striving to Embark on a New Journey of Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, (迎难而上 为国担当 奋力开启中国特色大国外交新征程); *Qiushi*, January 19, 2021. Translation.

15. *Sohu*, “Where Is the New Stage of Development New? Chen Yixin Explains from Eight Aspects” (新发展阶段新在哪里? 陈一新从八个方面进行阐释), January 15, 2021. Translation.

16. Wang Yi (王毅), “Facing Difficulties, Acting for the Country, Striving to Embark on a New Journey of Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, (迎难而上 为国担当 奋力开启中国特色大国外交新征程); *Qiushi*, January 19, 2021. Translation.

17. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi Accepts Media Interviews after Receiving Foreign Ministers from Five Peripheral Countries in China* (王毅国务委员兼外长 接待周边五国外长访华后接受媒体采访), April 5, 2021.

18. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi Accepts Media Interviews after Receiving Foreign Ministers from Five Peripheral Countries in China* (王毅国务委员兼外长 接待周边五国外长访华后接受媒体采访), April 5, 2021.

19. Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, *Embassy Spokesperson's Remarks on the So-Called "Rules-Based International System" Advocated at the G7 Summit*, June 12, 2021.

20. Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, "Embassy Spokesperson Answers Questions Regarding Contents Related to China in G7 Summit Communiqué," June 14, 2021.

21. Zhong Sheng (钟声), "Forming 'Small Circles,' Engaging in 'Clique Politics' Go Against Trend (Zhong Sheng)" (搞“小圈子”和“集团政治”是逆流而动(钟声), *People's Daily*, June 17, 2021. Translation.

22. *People's Daily*, "A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)" (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南(深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

23. *People's Daily*, "A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)" (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南(深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

24. *People's Daily*, "A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)" (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南(深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

25. *People's Daily*, "A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)" (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南(深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

26. *Sohu*, "Where Is the New Stage of Development New? Chen Yixin Explains from Eight Aspects" (新发展阶段新在哪里? 陈一新从八个方面进行阐释), January 15, 2021. Translation.

27. Jun Mai, "'China's Military Must Spend More' to Meet US War Threat," *South China Morning Post*, March 8, 2021; Catherine Wong, "Xi Jinping Tells China's Military 'Be Prepared to Respond' in Unstable Times," *South China Morning Post*, March 9, 2021.

28. Catherine Wong, "Xi Jinping Tells China's Military 'Be Prepared to Respond' in Unstable Times," *South China Morning Post*, March 9, 2021; Jun Mai, "Two Sessions 2020: China-US Rivalry in 'High-Risk Period,' Chinese Defence Minister Says," *South China Morning Post*, May 27, 2020.

29. Guo Shengkun (郭声琨), "Building a Safer China of a Higher Level (Study and Implement the Spirit of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Party)" (建设更高水平的平安中国(学习贯彻党的十九届五中全会精神), *People's Daily*, December 2, 2020. Translation.

30. Guo Shengkun (郭声琨), "Building a Safer China of a Higher Level (Study and Implement the Spirit of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Party)" (建设更高水平的平安中国(学习贯彻党的十九届五中全会精神), *People's Daily*, December 2, 2020. Translation.

31. Chen Yixin (陈一新), "Chen Yixin: Party History Is the Best Textbook for Strengthening the Party, Governing, and Educating People" (陈一新: 党史是强党资政育人的最好教科书), *China Changan*, February 23, 2021. Translation; *People's Daily*, "A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)" (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南(深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

32. *People's Daily*, "A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)" (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南(深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

33. *People's Daily*, "A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with

Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南 (深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

34. *People's Daily*, “A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)” (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南 (深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

35. *People's Daily*, “A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)” (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南 (深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

36. *People's Daily*, “A Scientific Guide for Preventing and Resolving Risks and Challenges (Thoroughly Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era)” (防范化解风险挑战的科学指南 (深入学习贯彻习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)), October 27, 2020. Translation.

37. Guo Shengkun (郭声琨), “Building a Safer China of a Higher Level (Study and Implement the Spirit of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Party)” (建设更高水平的平安中国 (学习贯彻党的十九届五中全会精神), *People's Daily*, December 2, 2020. Translation.

38. Chen Yixin (陈一新), “Chen Yixin: Party History Is the Best Textbook for Strengthening the Party, Governing, and Educating People” (陈一新: 党史是强党资政育人的最好教科书), *China Changan*, February 23, 2021. Translation.

39. Chen Yixin (陈一新), “Chen Yixin: Party History Is the Best Textbook for Strengthening the Party, Governing, and Educating People” (陈一新: 党史是强党资政育人的最好教科书), *China Changan*, February 23, 2021. Translation.

40. Chen Yixin (陈一新), “Chen Yixin: Party History Is the Best Textbook for Strengthening the Party, Governing, and Educating People” (陈一新: 党史是强党资政育人的最好教科书), *China Changan*, February 23, 2021. Translation.

41. *Xinhua*, “China Releases Counter-Espionage Regulations,” April 26, 2021.

42. Ministry of State Security of the People's Republic of China, *Regulations on Counter-Espionage Security Work* (反间谍安全防范工作规定), April 26, 2021. Translation.

43. Ministry of State Security of the People's Republic of China, *Regulations on Counter-Espionage Security Work* (反间谍安全防范工作规定), April 26, 2021. Translation.

44. *Xinhua*, “Xi Focus: Xi Stresses Better Understanding Chinese Civilization through Archaeology,” September 29, 2020; *China Daily*, “Xi Calls on Historians to Improve Research,” January 4, 2019; Ian Johnson, “China's Memory Manipulators,” *Guardian*, June 8, 2016.

45. Xi Jinping, “Construct an Archaeology with Chinese Characteristics, a Chinese Style, and a Chinese Manner to Better Understand the Ancient and Profound Chinese Civilization” (建设中国特色中国风格中国气派的考古学 更好认识源远流长博大精深的中华文明), *Seeking Truth*, November 30, 2020. Translation; Ouyang Xuemei, “We Cannot Write Off Mao Zedong's Contributions to Building the Culture of New China” (毛泽东对新中国文化建设的贡献不能抹杀), *Chinese Social Science News*, January 13, 2014.

46. Xi Jinping, “Construct an Archaeology with Chinese Characteristics, a Chinese Style, and a Chinese Manner to Better Understand the Ancient and Profound Chinese Civilization” (建设中国特色中国风格中国气派的考古学 更好认识源远流长博大精深的中华文明), *Seeking Truth*, November 30, 2020. Translation; Ouyang Xuemei, “We Cannot Write Off Mao Zedong's Contributions to Building the Culture of New China” (毛泽东对新中国文化建设的贡献不能抹杀), *Chinese Social Science News*, January 13, 2014.

47. Scott Harold, “What Xi Jinping's Communist Party Valedictory Speech Can Tell Us about His Conception of China and Its Role in the World,” *The Hill*, July 7, 2021; Xi Jinping, “Construct an Archaeology with Chinese Characteristics, a Chinese Style, and a Chinese Manner to Better Understand the Ancient and Profound Chinese Civilization” (建设中国特色中国风格中国气派的考古学 更好认识源远流长博大精深的中华文明), *Seeking Truth*, November 30, 2020. Translation.

48. *Xinhua*, “The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Issues ‘Regulations on United Front Work of the Communist Party of China’” (中共中央印发《中国共产党统一战线工作条例》), January 5, 2021. Translation.

49. *Xinhua*, “The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Issues ‘Regulations on United Front Work of the Communist Party of China’” (中共中央印发《中国共产党统一战线工作条例》), January 5, 2021. Translation; Alex Joske, “The Party Speaks for You: Foreign Interference and the Chinese Communist Party's United Front System,” *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*, June 9, 2020; Takashi Suzuki, “China's United Front Work in the Xi Jinping Era—Institutional Developments and Activities,” *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 8:1 (2019).

50. *Xinhua*, “Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Issues ‘Plan for the Construction of Rule of Law in China (2020–2025)’” (中共中央印发《法治中国建设规划(2020–2025年)》), January 10, 2021. Translation.

51. *Xinhua*, “Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Issues ‘Plan for the Construction of Rule of Law in China (2020–2025)’” (中共中央印发《法治中国建设规划(2020–2025年)》), January 10, 2021. Translation; Zhu Zheng, “Understanding Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law,” *China Global Television Network*, November 21, 2020.

52. Moritz Rudolf, “Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law,” *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, 28 (April 2021): 6; *Xinhua*, “Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Issues ‘Plan for the Construction of Rule of Law in China (2020–2025)’” (中共中央印发《法治中国建设规划(2020–2025年)》), January 10, 2021. Translation.

53. *Xinhua*, “Xi Focus: Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law Guides Law-Based Governance in China,” December 10, 2020.

54. Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, “The Scope of Forced Labor in Xinjiang Is Bigger than We Knew,” *Axios*, January 5, 2021.

55. U.S. Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: China (Includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet)*, March 30, 2021; Michael R. Pompeo, *Determination of the Secretary of State on Atrocities in Xinjiang*, January 19, 2021.

56. State Council of the People’s Republic of China, *Measures for Management of Religious Professionals* (宗教教职人员管理办法), January 18, 2021. Translation.

57. Martin Pollard, “‘Xi Jinping Is My Spiritual Leader’: China’s Education Drive in Tibet,” *Reuters*, June 11, 2021.

58. Shimpei Okuhara, “Inner Mongolians Urge Japan to Help Tackle Persecution by China,” *Japan Forward*, May 31, 2021.

59. Qiao Long, “Japanese Lawmakers Form Alliance in Support of Mongolians in China,” *Radio Free Asia*, April 21, 2021; Jiji, “Council to Support Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region: China’s ‘Oppression’ in Question - LDP Volunteers” (内モンゴル自治区支援へ議連 中国「弾圧」問題視—自民有志), April 21, 2021. Translation.

60. *Nikkei*, “Full Text of Xi Jinping’s Speech on the CCP’s 100th Anniversary,” July 1, 2021.

61. Xu Qiliang (许其亮), “Accelerate the Modernization of National Defense and the Military” (加快国防和军队现代化), *People’s Daily*, November 26, 2020. Translation.

62. Xu Qiliang (许其亮), “Accelerate the Modernization of National Defense and the Military” (加快国防和军队现代化), *People’s Daily*, November 26, 2020. Translation.

63. Matthew P. Funaiolo et al., “Understanding China’s 2021 Defense Budget,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, March 5, 2021.

64. Andrew Tate, “China Commissions Three Major Naval Vessels on PLAN’s 72nd anniversary,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, April 27, 2021.

65. Ronald O’Rourke, “China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Naval Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress,” *Congressional Research Service* RL33153 (July 1, 2021): 31; Tyler Rogoway, “China’s New Amphibious Assault Ship Is a Monster,” *Drive*, August 22, 2019.

66. Andrew Tate, “China Commissions Three Major Naval Vessels on PLAN’s 72nd Anniversary,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, April 27, 2021.

67. Andrew Tate, “China Deploys More Surveillance Satellites,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, March 15, 2021; Mike Yeo, “Satellite Images Suggest China’s New Tanker Aircraft Is under Production,” *DefenseNews*, February 18, 2021.

68. Andreas Rupprecht and Alessandra Giovanzanti, “Update: Image Suggests Y-20U Aerial Tanker Is in PLAAF Service,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, June 9, 2021; Alessandra Giovanzanti, “Milestones: XAC Y-20 Kunpeng Strategic Transport Aircraft,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, July 2, 2021.

69. Jonathan Barrett, “China Plans to Revive Strategic Pacific Airstrip, Kiribati Lawmaker Says,” *Reuters*, May 5, 2021.

70. CDR Salamander, “Why Kiribati and Kanton Matter,” May 10, 2021; Jonathan Barrett, “China Plans to Revive Strategic Pacific Airstrip, Kiribati Lawmaker Says,” *Reuters*, May 5, 2021; Steve Raaymakers, “China Expands Its Island-Building Strategy into the Pacific,” *Strategist*, September 11, 2020.

71. Lolita C. Baldor, “General: China’s Africa Outreach Poses Threat from Atlantic,” *Associated Press*, May 6, 2021.

72. Lolita C. Baldor, “General: China’s Africa Outreach Poses Threat from Atlantic,” *Associated Press*, May 6, 2021.

73. Gabriel Dominguez and Mark Cazalet, “Chinese Army Trains Engaging Targets at Sea Using MRLs, ATGMs,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, June 2, 2021.

74. Yang Jin, “PLA Army Anti-Aircraft Defenses Enter PLA Air Force Chain of Command” (陆军防空力量进入空军指挥链条), *PLA Daily*, April 27, 2021. Translation;

Liu Xuanzun, "China's Western Airspace More Secure with PLA Army, Air Force Integration," *Global Times*, January 26, 2021.

75. Hong Wenjun and Zhang Shuo, "Notes from the Two Sessions: Chairman Xi Again Raises Eliminating 'Peace Disease,' Gives Warning" (两会闻思录: 习主席再提消除“和平病”, 给人警示), *PLA Daily*, March 19, 2018. Translation.

76. *Xinhua*, "Xi Jinping Signs First Central Military Commission Order of 2021, Issues Training Mobilization Order to the Entire Military" (习近平签署中央军委2021年1号命令 向全军发布开训动员令), January 4, 2021. Translation; *Xinhua*, "At Central Military Commission Conference on Training Exercises, Xi Jinping Emphasizes Comprehensively Strengthening Combat-Realistic Military Exercises, Comprehensively Improving Training Standards, and Improving the PLA's Ability to Win" (习近平在中央军委军事训练会议上强调 全面加强实战化军事训练 全面提高训练水平和打赢能力), November 25, 2020. Translation.

77. Xu Qiliang (许其亮), "Accelerate the Modernization of National Defense and the Military" (加快国防和军队现代化) *People's Daily*, November 26, 2020. Translation.

78. Xu Qiliang (许其亮), "Accelerate the Modernization of National Defense and the Military" (加快国防和军队现代化) *People's Daily*, November 26, 2020. Translation.

79. CCTV, "Cliff Climbing, Jungle Infiltration... PLA Army Scouts Launch Armed Assault Exercise" (崖壁攀登、丛林渗透... 陆军侦察兵开展武装破袭演练), February 20, 2021. Translation.

80. Zhang He, "'Strong Confrontation' Taps Hidden Combat Potential" ("强强对决" 深挖战斗潜能), *PLA Daily*, March 20, 2021. Translation.

81. CCTV, "Noon National Defense and Military: Intense Frontline Exercises, Three Theater Command Navies Gather to Train Their Troops" ([正午国防军事] 直击演训一线 三大战区海军密集练兵), March 14, 2021. Translation; Tian Jianmin, Liu Kun, and Li Hengjiang, "Confrontation in the Clouds: Unrestrained Air Combat" (云端对决自由空战), *PLA Daily*, March 14, 2021. Translation; *PLA TV*, "73rd Group Army: Flying across Day and Night with Many Difficulties to Inspect 'Real Skills'" (第73集团军: 跨昼夜飞行 多难点检验 "真功夫"), March 12, 2021. Translation; Yang Songsong, "Time Will Not Wait to Launch a Confrontation Air Battle" (时不我待展开对抗空战), *PLA Daily*, March 1, 2021. Translation.

82. Zhang Guangxuan and Song Zixun, "Confrontation Exercise Requires Sudden Change of Commanders" (对抗演练突遭“临阵换将”), *PLA Daily*, April 2, 2021. Translation.

83. Joel Wuthnow, "What I Learned from the PLA's Latest Strategy Textbook," *China Brief*, May 25, 2021.

84. Xu Qiliang (许其亮), "Accelerate the Modernization of National Defense and the Military" (加快国防和军队现代化), *People's Daily*, November 26, 2020. Translation.

85. China Ministry of National Defense, *December 2020 Ministry of National Defense Routine Press Conference Transcript* (2020年12月国防部例行记者会文字实录), December 31, 2020. Translation.

86. Dong Shengbo, "Theme Activities Promote Camaraderie between Comrades in Arms" (主题活动增进战友情谊), *PLA Daily*, March 17, 2021. Translation.

87. Marcus Clay and Dennis J. Blasko, "People Win Wars: The PLA Enlisted Force, and Other Related Matters," *War on the Rocks*, July 31, 2020.

88. Brian Waidelich and Bernard D. Cole, "The People's Liberation Army in 2018: Education and People's War," in Roy Kamphausen, ed., *The People of the PLA 2.0*, Strategic Studies Institute, July 2021, 134.

89. Wang Shumei, "The PLA and Student Recruits; Reforming China's Conscription System," *Institute for Security & Development Policy*, January 2015, 13–14.

90. Brian Waidelich and Bernard D. Cole, "The People's Liberation Army in 2018: Education and People's War," in Roy Kamphausen, ed., *The People of the PLA 2.0*, Strategic Studies Institute, July 2021, 134.

91. Brian Waidelich and Bernard D. Cole, "The People's Liberation Army in 2018: Education and People's War," in Roy Kamphausen, ed., *The People of the PLA 2.0*, Strategic Studies Institute, July 2021, 162.

92. *Xinhua*, "China Succeeds in First Mars Landing," May 15, 2021; Tobias Corbett, "China Succeeds on Country's First Mars Landing Attempt with Tianwen-1," *NASA Spaceflight*, May 14, 2021; *Xinhua*, "Update: China Focus: China's First Mars Rover Named Zhurong," April 24, 2021; NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, *Curiosity's Seven Minutes of Terror*, June 22, 2012.

93. *Xinhua*, "China Builds Asia's Largest Steerable Radio Telescope for Mars Mission," April 27, 2020.

94. *Xinhua*, "China Launches Space Station Core Module Tianhe," April 29, 2021.

95. *Agence France-Presse*, "China Prepares to Send Astronauts to New Space Station," June 15, 2021.

96. Mike Wall, "China to Launch 3 Astronauts to Space Station Tonight," *Space*, June 16, 2021.

97. *Xinhua*, "China to Expand Int'l Cooperation on Space Station," June 16, 2021.

98. Andrew Jones, "Chinese Rocket Booster Appears to Crash near School during Gaofen 11 Satellite Launch," *Space*, September 7, 2020; Andrew Jones, "Heads Up! Chinese Rocket Debris Crashes Back to Earth after Recent Launch," *Space*, March 23, 2020; Andrew Jones, "Rocket Booster Smashes Home Following Chinese Long March 3B launch," November 24, 2019.

99. *Inverse*, "Uncontrolled Reentry: Why China 'Just Not Caring' Is a Huge Problem for Space," May 3, 2021.

100. *Inverse*, "Uncontrolled Reentry: Why China 'Just Not Caring' Is a Huge Problem for Space," May 3, 2021.

101. Kyle Mizokami, "A Chinese Rocket Is Wildly Careening toward Earth This Weekend," *Popular Mechanics*, May 7, 2021.

102. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Economics and Trade Bulletin*, April 30, 2021, 6-7.

103. Fu Yifei, "Delegate Liu Zhirang: In the 14th Five-Year Plan, China's Rocket Power Will Strive to Be World-Class" (刘志让代表: "十四五" 我国火箭动力力争达到世界一流), *Science and Technology Daily*, March 11, 2021. Translation.

104. Fu Yifei, "During the '14th Five-Year Plan,' China Will Continue to Promote the Development of Two 'Heavyweight' Rockets" ("十四五" 我国将继续推进两型 "重量级" 火箭研制), *Science and Technology Daily*, March 2, 2021.

105. Deng Xiaoci, "China's Super-Heavy Lift Rocket Awaits State Approval, to Serve in Lunar Manned Mission around 2030: Experts," *Global Times*, March 1, 2021.

106. Yang Jiechi, "Dialogue with National Committee on U.S.-China Relations," *China Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, February 2, 2021.

107. Yang Jiechi, "Dialogue with National Committee on U.S.-China Relations," *China Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, February 2, 2021.

108. *Guancha*, "Zheng Ruolin Interviews French Ambassador Lu Shaye: 'Our Diplomatic Style Has Changed, You Need to Get Used to It'" (郑若麟对话驻法大使卢沙野: "我们现在外交风格变了, 你们要适应我们的新风格"), June 16, 2021. Translation.

109. Nectar Gan and James Griffiths, "A Chinese Communist Party-Linked Account Mocked India's Covid Crisis on Social Media. It Backfired," *CNN*, May 3, 2021.

110. Jimmy Quinn, "A Chinese Diplomat Mocks the Surfside Tragedy," *National Review*, July 6, 2021; Elliott Zaagman (@ElliottZaagman), "Remember when everyone thought China was gonna scale back the wolf warrior stuff?" Twitter, July 6, 2021, 9:58 a.m.

111. Noah Barkin, "Watching China in Europe - June 2021," *German Marshall Fund of the United States*, June 2, 2021.

112. Yaoyao Dai and Luwei Luqiu, "China's Wolf Warrior Diplomacy and Xi Jinping's Grand Diplomatic Strategy," March 29, 2021, 26.

113. David Bandurski, "Powers of Persuasion," *China Media Project*, June 2, 2021.

114. Melinda Liu, "Is China's New U.S. Ambassador a 'Wolf Warrior'—or a Fox?" *Foreign Policy*, August 10, 2021.

115. *Xinhua*, "At the Politburo's 13th Group Study, Xi Jinping Emphasized Strengthening and Improving International Propaganda Work to Present China in an Accurate, Three-Dimensional, and Comprehensive Way" (习近平在中共中央政治局第三十次集体学习时强调 加强和改进国际传播工作 展示真实立体全面的中国), June 1, 2021. Translation.

116. David Bandurski, "Powers of Persuasion," *China Media Project*, June 2, 2021.

117. *Guancha*, "Zheng Ruolin Interviews French Ambassador Lu Shaye: 'Our Diplomatic Style Has Changed, You Need to Get Used to It'" (郑若麟对话驻法大使卢沙野: "我们现在外交风格变了, 你们要适应我们的新风格"), June 16, 2021. Translation.

118. *Guancha*, "Zheng Ruolin Interviews French Ambassador Lu Shaye: 'Our Diplomatic Style Has Changed, You Need to Get Used to It'" (郑若麟对话驻法大使卢沙野: "我们现在外交风格变了, 你们要适应我们的新风格"), June 16, 2021. Translation.

119. China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Xi Jinping Attends and Delivers an Important Speech at the Global Health Summit*, May 21, 2021.

120. U.S. Department of State, "COVID-19 Vaccine Donations"; *Bridge*, "China COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker," October 4, 2021; Dan De Luce, "China is Using Vaccines to Push Its Agenda in Latin America, and the U.S. is behind the Curve, Experts Say," *NBC News*, May 23, 2021; Huizhong Wu and Kristen Gelineau, "Chinese Vaccines Sweep Much of the World, despite Concerns," *Associated Press*, March 2, 2021.

121. Sui-Lee Wee and Steven Lee Myers, "As Chinese Vaccines Stumble, U.S. Finds New Opening in Asia," *New York Times*, August 20, 2021; Sui-Lee Wee, "They Relied on Chinese Vaccines. Now They're Battling Outbreaks," *New York Times*, August 6, 2021.

122. Huizhong Wu and Kristen Gelineau, "Chinese Vaccines Sweep Much of the World, despite Concerns," *Associated Press*, March 2, 2021.

123. Niharika Mandhana and Sha Hua, "China Steps into Covid-19 Vaccine Void in Asia's Developing Nations," *Wall Street Journal*, June 16, 2021.

124. Niharika Mandhana and Sha Hua, "China Steps into Covid-19 Vaccine Void in Asia's Developing Nations," *Wall Street Journal*, June 16, 2021.

125. *Radio Free Asia*, "Source: Malaysia Releases Crew of Chinese Boats It Detained for Trespassing," October 22, 2020; *Channel News Asia*, "Malaysia to Be on Priority List for China-Produced COVID-19 Vaccine: Foreign Minister," October 13, 2020.

126. *Al Jazeera*, "Duterte 'Reluctant' to Confront China over South China Sea Row," April 29, 2021; Neil Morales, "Philippines' Duterte Issues Gag Order over South China Sea," *Reuters*, May 17, 2021.

127. Jamey Keaton, "Diplomats Say China Puts Squeeze on Ukraine," *Associated Press*, June 25, 2021.

128. Ernesto Londoño, "Paraguay's 'Life and Death' Covid Crisis Gives China Diplomatic Opening," *New York Times*, April 16, 2021.

129. Micah McCartney, "Taiwan Ally Paraguay Rejects 'Blackmail' Following Chinese Attempt at Vaccine Diplomacy," *Taiwan News*, April 21, 2021.

130. Micah McCartney, "Taiwan Ally Paraguay Rejects 'Blackmail' Following Chinese Attempt at Vaccine Diplomacy," *Taiwan News*, April 21, 2021.

131. Chao Deng, "As Delta Variant Spreads, China Lacks Data on Its Covid-19 Vaccines," *Wall Street Journal*, July 9, 2021.

132. Linda Lew, "Coronavirus: China Sticks to 'Zero Tolerance' Stand on Delta Variant," *South China Morning Post*, August 6, 2021.

133. Christian Shepherd and Primrose Riordan, "Delta Outbreak Piles Pressure on China's Homegrown Vaccines," *Financial Times*, August 9, 2021.

134. Jon Emont, "Hit Hard by Covid-19, Southeast Asian Countries Turn to Western Vaccines," *Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 2021.

135. Annie Linskey et al., "Biden Asks Intelligence Community to Redouble Efforts to Determine Definitive Origin of the Coronavirus," *Washington Post*, May 26, 2021; John Ruwitch, "Theory that COVID Came from a Chinese Lab Takes On New Life in Wake of WHO Report," *NPR*, March 31, 2021; Jeremy Page, Betsy McKay, and Drew Hinshaw, "How the WHO's Hunt for Covid's Origins Stumbled in China," *Wall Street Journal*, March 17, 2021.

136. See White House, "Statement by President Joe Biden on the Investigation into the Origins of COVID-19," May 26, 2021; Julian E. Barnes and David E. Sanger, "U.S. Is Said to Have Unexamined Intelligence to Pore Over on Virus Origins," *New York Times*, May 27, 2021.

137. Yueqi Yang and Claire Ballentine, "China Risks Isolation in Quest for Virus Origin, Biden Aide Says," *Bloomberg*, June 20, 2021; *Global Times*, "Sullivan's 'International Isolation' Remark a Blatant Threat: Chinese FM," June 21, 2021.

138. Michael R. Gordon and Warren P. Strobel, "New U.S. Intelligence Report Doesn't Provide Definitive Conclusion on Covid-19 Origins," *Wall Street Journal*, August 24, 2021.

139. *CNN*, "READ: Summary of US Intelligence Community Probe into the Origin of Covid-19," August 27, 2021.

140. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Chinese and Russian Foreign Ministers Deliver Video Speeches to China-Russia High-level Think Tank Forum*, June 1, 2021.

141. Dave Makichuk, "Chinese Troops to Take Part in Russia's Kavkaz-2020," *Asia Times*, September 11, 2020.

142. Luo Shunyu, Yang Xiaobo, and Li Hui, "Chinese Troops for Kavkaz-2020 Strategic Exercise Arrive in Russia," *China Military Online*, September 15, 2020; *Global Times*, "China's Y-20 Cargo Planes Hone Strategic Power Projection Capability in Russian Drills," September 15, 2020.

143. *Associated Press*, "Russian and Chinese Bombers Fly Joint Patrol over Pacific," December 22, 2020.

144. *Associated Press*, "Russian and Chinese Bombers Fly Joint Patrol over Pacific," December 22, 2020.

145. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, April 9, 2021, 6, 9; Andrea Kendall-Taylor and David Shullman, "Navigating the Deepening Russia-China Partnership," *Center for a New American Security*, January 2021, 6–9.

146. Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky, "Chinese-Russian Defense Cooperation Is More Flash than Bang," June 17, 2021; Michael Kofman, "The Emperor's League: Understanding Sino-Russian Defense Cooperation," August 6, 2020.

147. U.S. Strategic Command, *Collaboration between China, Russia Compounds Threat, Stratcom Commander Says*, August 30, 2021.

148. *Reuters*, “China, Russia Block UN Security Council Condemnation of Myanmar Coup,” March 2, 2021.

149. Andrew Jones, “China, Russia Open Moon Base Project to International Partners, Early Details Emerge,” *Space News*, April 26, 2021; Andrew Jones, “China, Russia Enter MoU on International Lunar Research Station,” *Space News*, March 9, 2021.

150. Andrew Jones, “China, Russia Open Moon Base Project to International Partners, Early Details Emerge,” *Space News*, April 26, 2021; Jeff Foust, “Russia Skeptical about Participating in Lunar Gateway,” *Space News*, October 12, 2020.

151. Roscosmos, “Video concept of the creation of the International Scientific Lunar Station. After the presentation, you will be able to read the Roadmap and Guidelines for Participation in the #MNLS project on the official websites of Roscosmos and CNSA,” (“Видеоконцепция создания Международной научной лунной станции После презентации ознакомиться с Дорожной картой и Руководством по участию в проекте #МНЛС можно будет на официальных сайтах Роскосмоса и КНКА”), Twitter, June 16, 2021. Translation.

152. Pranay Sharma, “A Message for US and China as India and Russia Put Two and Two Together,” *South China Morning Post*, April 30, 2021.

153. Vladimir Soldatkin and Steve Holland, “Far Apart at First Summit, Biden and Putin Agree to Steps on Cybersecurity, Arms Control,” *Reuters*, June 16, 2021.

154. Daniel R. DePetris, “Biden-Putin Summit Comes as U.S. and Russia Share Something In Common: A Fear of China,” *NBC News*, June 16, 2021; C. Raja Mohan, “Asia’s Stakes in the Biden-Putin Summit,” *Foreign Policy*, June 11, 2021; Katsuji Nakazawa, “Analysis: Biden’s Call to Putin Puts Xi on the Defensive,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, April 22, 2021.

155. Dai Lun, “Interview with Shi Yinhong: Biden’s Goal Is to ‘Win China.’ Where Is the Sino-Russian Alliance?” (专访时殷弘 | 拜登目标是“完胜中国”中俄同盟走到哪步了?), *U.S.-China Perception Monitor*, June 30, 2021. Translation; *The Paper*, “Biden Visits Europe for the First Time, but Is Europe Still the Focus of US Foreign Strategy?” (前瞻 | 拜登首访欧洲, 但欧洲还是美国的对外战略重心吗?), June 9, 2021. Translation.

156. Wang Yi (王毅), “Facing Difficulties, Acting for the Country, Striving to Embark on a New Journey of Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, (迎难而上 为国担当 奋力开启中国特色大国外交新征程); *Qiushi*, January 19, 2021. Translation.

157. Wang Yi (王毅), “Facing Difficulties, Acting for the Country, Striving to Embark on a New Journey of Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics, (迎难而上 为国担当 奋力开启中国特色大国外交新征程); *Qiushi*, January 19, 2021. Translation.

158. Vincent Ni, “EU Parliament ‘Freezes’ China Trade Deal over Sanctions,” *Guardian*, May 20, 2021; European Parliament, “MEPs Refuse Any Agreement with China whilst Sanctions Are in Place,” May 20, 2021; Robin Emmott and David Brunstrom, “West Sanctions China over Xinjiang Abuses, Beijing Hits Back at EU,” *Reuters*, March 22, 2021.

159. Vincent Ni, “EU Parliament ‘Freezes’ China Trade Deal over Sanctions,” *Guardian*, May 20, 2021; European Parliament, “MEPs Refuse Any Agreement with China Whilst Sanctions Are in Place,” May 20, 2021; Robin Emmott and David Brunstrom, “West Sanctions China over Xinjiang Abuses, Beijing Hits Back at EU,” *Reuters*, March 22, 2021.

160. Mika Aaltola et al., “Statement by European Research Institute Directors,” March 22, 2021.

161. European Parliament, “Draft Report on a New EU-China Strategy,” April 30, 2021, 4.

162. Vincent Ni, “EU Parliament ‘Freezes’ China Trade Deal over Sanctions,” *Guardian*, May 20, 2021; European Parliament, “MEPs Refuse Any Agreement with China Whilst Sanctions Are in Place,” May 20, 2021.

163. DLA Piper, “Multi-Jurisdiction Guide for Screening Foreign Investments,” May 2021, 71; European Commission, “EU Foreign Investment Screening Mechanism Becomes Fully Operational,” October 9, 2020.

164. Laurens Cerulus, “EU-China ‘Friendship Group’ Suspended, Its Chair Says,” *Politico*, January 25, 2021.

165. European External Action Service, “EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific,” April 19, 2021; Council of the European Union, “EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific—Council Conclusions,” April 16, 2021.

166. Noah Barkin, “Rethinking German Policy towards China,” *Chatham House*, May 26, 2021; Thomas des Garets Geddes, “UK-China Relations: From Gold to Dust,” *Diplomat*, October 2, 2020.

167. *Reuters*, “German Industry Group Criticises China over New Sanctions Law,” June 16, 2021.

168. Jasper Jolly, “UK to Review Purchase of Semiconductor Producer by Chinese-Owned Firm,” *Guardian*, July 7, 2021; Anna Isaac and Esther Webber, “Boris Johnson Pulled in Two Directions on China at G7 Summit,” *Politico*, June 12, 2021.

169. Zach Marzouk, “Nexperia Completes Takeover of UK’s Largest Semiconductor Firm,” *IT Pro*, August 17, 2021; Lauly Li and Cheng Ting-Fang, “China Smartphone Maker Says UK Chip Plant Purchase ‘Complete,’” *Nikkei Asia*, August 16, 2021.

170. *Reuters*, “UK Looking at Deal to Remove China from Nuclear Project—Report,” September 25, 2021; *Reuters*, “UK Looks to Remove China’s CGN from Nuclear Power Projects—FT,” July 26, 2021; Jonathan Ford, Jim Packard, and Nathalie Thomas, “China Tensions Raise Doubts over UK Nuclear Projects,” *Financial Times*, August 5, 2020; U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Industry and Security, “Addition of Certain Entities to the Entity List, Revision of Entries on the Entity List, and Removal of Entities from the Entity List,” *Federal Register* 84:157 (August 14, 2019).

171. Benas Gerdžiūnas, “Lithuanian FM: ‘17+1’ Format with China Divides Europe,” *Euractiv*, March 3, 2021; U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2018 Annual Report to Congress*, November 2018, 310–311.

172. Stuart Lau, “Lithuania Pulls Out of China’s ‘17+1’ Bloc in Eastern Europe,” *Politico*, May 21, 2021; Reid Standish, “Chinese Summit Gets Chilly Reception from Central, Eastern European Countries,” *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, February 9, 2021; Thomas Wright, “Europe Changes Its Mind on China,” July 2020, 2; Andrew Small, “Why Europe Is Getting Tough on China,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 3, 2019.

173. Stuart Lau, “Lithuania Pulls Out of China’s ‘17+1’ Bloc in Eastern Europe,” *Politico*, May 21, 2021; Reid Standish, “Chinese Summit Gets Chilly Reception from Central, Eastern European Countries,” *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, February 9, 2021; Thomas Wright, “Europe Changes Its Mind on China,” July 2020, 2.

174. *Associated Press*, “China Recalls Lithuania Ambassador in Row over Taiwan Office,” August 10, 2021.

175. John Feng, “China Cuts Railway Trade Link with Lithuania amid Taiwan Row, Report Says,” *Newsweek*, August 18, 2021; Maria Siow, “Why Europe’s Baltic States Can Brush Off China,” *South China Morning Post*, July 17, 2021.

176. Shi Jiangtao, “Israel-Gaza Crisis an Opportunity for China to Position Itself as Peace Broker,” *South China Morning Post*, May 22, 2021; Shannon Tiezzi, “China’s Foreign Minister Heads to the Middle East,” *Diplomat*, March 25, 2021.

177. *CGTN*, “Wang Yi: China Is a Long-Term, Reliable Strategic Partner of Middle East Countries,” March 30, 2021; Shannon Tiezzi, “China’s Foreign Minister Heads to the Middle East,” *Diplomat*, March 25, 2021.

178. Will Green and Taylore Roth, “China-Iran Relations: A Limited but Enduring Strategic Partnership,” *U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, June 28, 2021, 6; *Reuters*, “Iran and China Sign 25-Year Cooperation Agreement,” March 27, 2021.

179. Farnaz Fassihi and Steven Lee Myers, “China, with \$400 Billion Iran Deal, Could Deepen Influence in Mideast,” *New York Times*, March 27, 2021; Ariel Cohen, “China-Iran \$400 Billion Accord: A Power Shift Threatens Western Energy,” *Forbes*, April 5, 2021.

180. Will Green and Taylore Roth, “China-Iran Relations: A Limited but Enduring Strategic Partnership,” *U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, June 28, 2021, 6; China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on March 29, 2021*, March 29, 2021; Farnaz Fassihi and Steven Lee Myers, “China, with \$400 Billion Iran Deal, Could Deepen Influence in Mideast,” *New York Times*, March 27, 2021; Jonathan Fulton, written testimony for U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Hearing on U.S.-China Relations in 2020: Enduring Problems and Emerging Challenges*, September 9, 2020, 3–4; Jonathan Fulton, “Iran Isn’t the Only Middle Eastern Country in a Unique Partnership with China,” *Atlantic Council*, July 15, 2020; Golnaz Esfandiari, “Explainer: Why Are Iranians Angry over a Long-Term Deal with China?” *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, July 13, 2020; Bourse and Bazaar, “Despite Public Outcry, Consensus Builds for China-Iran Deal,” August 11, 2020; Farnaz Fassihi and Steven Lee Meyers, “Defying U.S., China and Iran Near Trade and Military Partnership,” *New York Times*, July 22, 2020.

181. China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *State Council Member and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Accepts Media Interview at the Conclusion of Visit to Six Middle Eastern Countries* (王毅国务委员兼外长在结束访问中东六国后接受媒体采访), March 31, 2021. Translation; *CGTN*, “Wang Yi: China is a Long-Term, Reliable Strategic Partner of Middle East Countries,” March 30, 2021.

182. *Xinhua*, “(International) State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Is Interviewed by Media after Concluding Visit to Six Middle Eastern Countries -- China Is Permanent and Reliable Strategic Partner of Middle Eastern Countries,” March 30, 2021.

183. Shi Jiangtao, “Israel-Gaza Crisis an Opportunity for China to Position Itself as Peace Broker,” *South China Morning Post*, May 22, 2021; *Bloomberg*, “China Seizes on Gaza Crisis to Counter U.S. on Human Rights,” May 19, 2021.

184. Wang Yi, “End the Fighting and Violence Immediately and Uphold Equity and Justice,” *China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, May 16, 2021.

185. Patrick Howell O’Neill, “Chinese Hackers Disguised Themselves as Iran to Target Israel,” *MIT Technology Review*, August 10, 2021; FireEye, “UNC215: Spotlight on a Chinese Espionage Campaign in Israel,” August 10, 2021; Forest Cong, “Chinese Hackers Used Cyber-Disguising Technology against Israel, Report Finds,” *VOA News*, August 18, 2021; Amitai Ziv, “In First Massive Cyberattack, China Targets Israel,” *Haaretz*, August 10, 2021.

186. Austin Bodetti, “China’s Vaccine Diplomacy in the Middle East,” *Diplomat*, January 16, 2021.

187. Kok Xinghui and Dewey Sim, “With Malaysia, UAE Soon to Make Chinese Vaccines, Does Beijing Have an Edge in Vaccine Diplomacy,” *South China Morning Post*, April 9, 2021; Lisa Barrington, “Abu Dhabi Launches New COVID-19 Vaccine Plant with China’s Sinopharm,” *Reuters*, March 29, 2021.

188. Kok Xinghui and Dewey Sim, “With Malaysia, UAE Soon to Make Chinese Vaccines, Does Beijing Have an Edge in Vaccine Diplomacy,” *South China Morning Post*, April 9, 2021; Lisa Barrington, “Abu Dhabi Launches New COVID-19 Vaccine Plant with China’s Sinopharm,” *Reuters*, March 29, 2021.

189. Song Tao, “Africa: China Keen on Building a Moderately Prosperous Society,” Speech at the China-Africa Online Briefing of the Fifth Plenary Session of the Nineteenth CCP Central Committee, December 1, 2020.

190. Song Tao, “Africa: China Keen on Building a Moderately Prosperous Society,” Speech at the China-Africa Online Briefing of the Fifth Plenary Session of the Nineteenth CCP Central Committee, December 1, 2020.

191. China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on January 11, 2021*, January 11, 2021.

192. Zhang Yunbi, “China, DRC to Enhance Bilateral Ties,” *China Daily*, January 8, 2021; *Xinhua*, “China, Botswana Sign MoU on BRI Cooperation,” January 8, 2021; Jevans Nyabiage, “China Sends Africa Signal that Belt and Road Initiative Is Still Open for Business,” *South China Morning Post*, January 10, 2021; China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on January 11, 2021*, January 11, 2021.

193. Jevans Nyabiage, “China Cancels Democratic Republic of Congo Loans as It Joins Belt and Road,” *South China Morning Post*, January 7, 2021; *Reuters*, “Democratic Republic of Congo Says China Has Granted Pandemic-Linked Debt Relief,” January 6, 2021; China-Africa Research Initiative, “Global Debt Relief Dashboard,” 2021; China Africa Research Initiative and Boston University Global Development Policy Center, “Chinese Loans to Africa Database,” Version 2.0, 2021; Deborah Brautigam and Jyhjong Hwang, “China-Africa Loan Database Research Guidebook,” *Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies China-Africa Research Initiative*, 2019, 6.

194. Jevans Nyabiage, “Why China Is Building Gleaming New Government Facilities in Africa,” *South China Morning Post*, May 23, 2021; Jevans Nyabiage, “China Cancels Democratic Republic of Congo Loans as It Joins Belt and Road,” *South China Morning Post*, January 7, 2021.

195. Jevans Nyabiage, “Why China Is Building Gleaming New Government Facilities in Africa,” *South China Morning Post*, May 23, 2021; Eric Olander, “The Optics of China Paying for Kenya’s New Foreign Ministry Building Just Looks Awful,” *China Africa Project*, May 17, 2021; Citi Newsroom, “Ghana, China Sign Agreement for Construction of Foreign Ministry Annex Building,” April 11, 2021; Daily Guide Network, “Agreement Signed for Implementation of China-Ade Foreign Ministry’s Annex Building Project,” April 9, 2021.

196. *Al Jazeera*, “DR Congo President Seeks Review of Mining Contracts with China,” September 11, 2021; Eric Olander, “DRC: Tshisekedi Keeps Promise of Renegotiating Foreign Mining Contracts,” *The Africa Report*, August 25, 2021; Jevans Nyabiage, “China’s Cobalt Mines in Spotlight as DRC Seeks to Renegotiate Deals,” *South China Morning Post*, May 22, 2021; “DRC: President Tshisekedi to Renegotiate Mining Contracts,” May 14, 2021; Bienvenu-Marie Bakumanya, “DR Congo President Says He Will Renegotiate Mining Contracts,” *Barron’s*, May 14, 2021.

197. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Wang Yi Meets with Head of the Afghan Taliban Political Commission Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar," July 28, 2021.

198. *Al Jazeera*, "Chinese Officials and Taliban Meet, in Sign of Warming Ties," July 28, 2021; *Al Jazeera*, "With Economic Assets to Secure, China Embraces the Taliban," August 17, 2021; *Xinhua*, "China Permanent Representative to the United Nations: International Society Should Contribute More Positive Energy to the Push for Afghanistan Peace and Reconciliation Process" (中国常驻联合国代表: 国际社会应为推动阿富汗和平和解进程贡献更多正能量), June 23, 2021; Rachel Zhang, "China Seeks to Expand Belt and Road to Afghanistan in Name of Security as US Withdraws Troops," *South China Morning Post*, June 4, 2021; Rachel Zhang, "China Looks to Central Asia on Security to Create 'Safe Silk Road,'" *South China Morning Post*, May 14, 2021.

199. Ayaz Gul, "China Urges Afghan Taliban to Cut Ties with All Terrorists," *VOA News*, July 28, 2021; China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Wang Yi Meets with Head of the Afghan Taliban Political Commission Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar," July 28, 2021.

200. *Al Jazeera*, "Afghanistan: Taliban to Rely on Chinese Funds, Spokesperson Says," September 3, 2021.

201. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin's Regular Press Conference on September 8, 2021*, September 8, 2021.

202. Yun Sun, "A Reluctant Embrace: China's New Relationship with the Taliban," *War on the Rocks*, August 10, 2021; Yaroslav Trofimov and Chao Deng, "Afghanistan's Taliban, Now on China's Border, Seek to Reassure Beijing," *Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 2021.

203. Rachel Zhang, "China Seeks to Expand Belt and Road to Afghanistan in Name of Security as US Withdraws Troops," *South China Morning Post*, June 2021.

204. Prime Minister's Office, Pakistan (@PakPMO), "CPC has brought a better alternate governance model,' Prime Minister @ImranKhanPTI, Interaction with Chinese Media Representatives," Twitter, July 1, 2021, 5:05 a.m.; *Al Jazeera*, "Pakistan's Khan Backs China on Uighurs, Praises One-Party System," July 2, 2021.

205. *China Daily*, "Xi'an Meeting Marks New Progress in China and Central Asia Cooperation: China Daily Editorial," May 13, 2021; China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Wang Yi Talks about Eight-Point Consensus and Ten Outcomes of "China + Central Asia" Foreign Ministers' Meeting*, May 12, 2021.

206. Rachel Zhang, "China Seeks to Expand Belt and Road to Afghanistan in Name of Security as US Withdraws Troops," *South China Morning Post*, June 4, 2021; Rachel Zhang, "China Looks to Central Asia on Security to Create 'Safe Silk Road,'" *South China Morning Post*, May 14, 2021.

207. *Reuters*, "China's Xi Will Not Make a State Visit to Japan This Year -Sankei," February 28, 2021; *Japan Times*, "China's Xi Jinping Postpones State Visit to Japan Due to Coronavirus," March 5, 2020.

208. *Japan Times*, "China's Xi Jinping Postpones State Visit to Japan Due to Coronavirus," March 5, 2020.

209. Mari Yamaguchi, "Japan's Ruling Party Calls for Government to Cancel Xi Visit," *Associated Press*, July 7, 2020.

210. Tomoyuki Tachikawa, "FOCUS: China's Xi Paves Way for 3rd Term as President, May Baffle Japan," *Kyodo News*, March 11, 2021.

211. John Feng, "China Sends Ships to Senkaku Islands after Japan Names Country Top Security Threat," *Newsweek*, July 14, 2021.

212. Liu Xuanzun, "PLA's Type 055 Destroyer Enters Sea of Japan for 1st Time," *Global Times*, March 19, 2021.

213. Jesse Johnson, "China Sends Aircraft Carrier Strike Group near Okinawa in Message to U.S. and Japan," *Japan Times*, April 5, 2021; Adam Kehoe, "China's Liaoning Carrier Strike Group Passes through Japan's Miyako Strait," *Drive*, April 4, 2021.

214. Jesse Johnson, "What's behind Surging Tensions in the Taiwan Strait?" *Japan Times*, June 6, 2021; EU-Japan Summit 2021, "Joint Statement," May 27, 2021; *Japan Times*, "Japan to Mention Taiwan Stability in Defense Report for First Time," May 14, 2021.

215. Demetri Sevastopulo and Kathrin Hille, "US and Japan Conduct War Games amid Rising China-Taiwan Tensions," *Financial Times*, June 30, 2021.

216. Kaoru Osawa, "Japan's No. 2 Raises Possibility of Joining US in Defending Taiwan," *Nikkei*, July 6, 2021.

217. *Japan Times*, "Japan's LDP Plans Security Talks with Taiwan's Ruling Party," August 18, 2021.

218. Jon Grevatt, "Japan MoD Confirms No Cap on Defence budget," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, June 2, 2021.

219. Jon Grevatt, "Japan MoD Confirms No Cap on Defence Budget," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, June 2, 2021.

220. Jon Grevatt, "Japan Lines Up Defence Policy Review," *Jane's Defence Industry*, September 20, 2021.

221. Kuni Miyake, "Will Japan's China Policy Change under Kishida's Leadership?" *Japan Times*, October 1, 2021; Ryo Nemoto, "Countering China is top priority for Japan PM contender Kishida," *Nikkei*, September 4, 2021.

222. Ryo Nemoto and Natsumi Iwata, "74% in Japan Support Engagement in Taiwan Strait: Nikkei Poll," *Nikkei*, April 26, 2021.

223. *Japan Times*, "Some 70% of Japanese Want to Take Strong Stance on China's Intrusions," April 15, 2021.

224. Sumitha Narayanan Kutty and Rajesh Basrur, "The Quad: What It Is—and What It Is Not," March 24, 2021; United States White House, "Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: 'The Spirit of the Quad,'" March 12, 2021; Joe Biden et al., "Our Four Nations Are Committed to a Free, Open, Secure and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region," *Washington Post*, March 13, 2021.

225. United States White House, "Joint Statement from Quad Leaders," September 24, 2021; United States White House, "Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: 'The Spirit of the Quad,'" March 12, 2021.

226. Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Outcome of Video Teleconference on COVID-19 Response between Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Choi and His Counterparts*, March 22, 2021.

227. U.S. White House, "Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: 'The Spirit of the Quad,'" March 12, 2021.

228. U.S. White House, "Joint Statement from Quad Leaders," September 24, 2021.

229. U.S. Embassy & Consulates in India, *Joint Statement on the Third U.S.-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue*, October 27, 2020.

230. India Space Research Organization, Dr. K. Sivan, *Chairman, ISRO/Secretary, DOS Had a Meeting with the President of Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency*, March 11, 2021; *Hindu*, "India, Australia Sign Amended MoU for Space Cooperation," February 18, 2021.

231. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian's Regular Press Conference on March 15, 2021* (2021年3月15日外交部发言人赵立坚主持例行记者会), March 15, 2021. Translation.

232. *Hindustan Times*, "We Decide Our Foreign Policy: Bangladesh's Curt Response to China over Warning to Join Quad," May 11, 2021.

233. U.S. White House, "Remarks by President Biden in Press Conference," June 13, 2021.

234. Wajahat Khan, "Pakistan's Top Diplomat Warns China Could Fill Void Left by US," *Nikkei*, May 26, 2021.

235. James Crabtree, "Why a Trade War with China Is a Bad Idea for India," *Foreign Policy*, June 29, 2020.

236. *Swarajya*, "Satellite Imagery Shows Indian and Chinese Tanks Were Positioned Less than 500 Feet Apart on Kailash Range," June 26, 2021; *Swarajya*, "We Were Absolutely on the Brink of Armed Conflict with China in August, 'Situation Was Extremely Tense': Northern Army Commander," February 17, 2021.

237. *Swarajya*, "Satellite Imagery Shows Indian and Chinese Tanks Were Positioned Less than 500 Feet Apart on Kailash Range," June 26, 2021; *Swarajya*, "We Were Absolutely on the Brink of Armed Conflict with China in August, 'Situation Was Extremely Tense': Northern Army Commander," February 17, 2021.

238. Vikram Misri, "Ambassador's Remarks at the Opening Session of 7th ICWA-CPIFA Dialogue," April 15, 2021.

239. Vikram Misri, "Ambassador's Remarks at the Opening Session of 7th ICWA-CPIFA Dialogue," April 15, 2021.

240. Rajat Pandit, "LAC: India, China Complete Gogra Disengagement, but Depsang Remains a Major Problem," *Times of India*, August 6, 2021; Krishn Kaushik, "Disengagement of Troops: China Suggests Major Gen-Level Talks," *Indian Express*, June 15, 2021; *Jane's Country Risk Daily Report*, "Indian and Chinese Forces' Disengagement in Ladakh Unlikely in Near Future; Sustaining Risk of Unintended Military Escalation," June 15, 2021; Christopher Biggers and Sean O'Connor, "China-India Border Dispute Rumbles on despite Disengagement," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 4, 2021.

241. Dinakar Peri, "Chinese transgressions testing India, say officials," *Hindu*, October 3, 2021; Manu Pubby and Rahul Tripathi, "Chinese PLA in Uttarakhand's Barahoti, returns after damaging bridge," *Economic Times*, September 28, 2021.

242. Robert Barnett, "China Is Building Entire Villages in Another Country's Territory," *Foreign Policy*, May 7, 2021; Brahma Chellaney, "Beijing Replicates Its South

China Sea Tactics in the Himalayas,” *Strategist*, March 10, 2021; Kinling Lo and Rachel Zhang, “China-India Border Dispute: Village Built in Conflict Zone Part of Beijing’s Poverty Alleviation Scheme, Source Says,” *South China Morning Post*, January 24, 2021.

243. Robert Barnett, “China Is Building Entire Villages in Another Country’s Territory,” *Foreign Policy*, May 7, 2021.

244. Kinling Lo and Rachel Zhang, “China-India Border Dispute: Village Built in Conflict Zone Part of Beijing’s Poverty Alleviation Scheme, Source Says,” *South China Morning Post*, January 24, 2021; China National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, *Speed Up the Construction of Moderately Well-Off Villages on the Tibetan Border* (加快推进西藏边境小康村建设), September 24, 2020. Translation.

245. *Recorded Future*, “China-Linked Group RedEcho Targets the Indian Power Sector amid Heightened Border Tensions,” 2021, 1, 4.

246. Eric Bellman and Rajesh Roy, “India Suspects China May Be behind Major Mumbai Blackout,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2021.

247. Sahil Joshi, “Mega Mumbai Power Outage May Be Result of Cyber Attack, Final Report Awaited,” *India Today*, November 20, 2020.

248. *Recorded Future*, “China-Linked Group RedEcho Targets the Indian Power Sector amid Heightened Border Tensions,” 2021, 7; Sahil Joshi, “Mega Mumbai Power Outage May Be Result of Cyber Attack, Final Report Awaited,” *India Today*, November 20, 2020.

249. Eric Bellman and Rajesh Roy, “India Suspects China May Be behind Major Mumbai Blackout,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2021; *Times of India*, “Mumbai Blackout: Government Denies China’s Cyber Campaign against Indian Power Grid,” March 1, 2021.

250. *Recorded Future*, “Threat Activity Group RedFoxtrot Linked to China’s PLA Unit 69010; Targets Bordering Asian Countries,” June 16, 2021, 1.

251. India Ministry of Communications, *Telecom Department Gives Go-Ahead for 5G Technology and Spectrum Trials, Telecom Service Providers to Start 5G Trials in Different Locations across India, 5G Trials to Cover Rural, Semi-Urban and Urban Areas, Go-Ahead Includes Trials Featuring Indigenous 5G Technology*, May 4, 2021.

252. *Reuters*, “India to Impose Permanent Ban on 59 Chinese Apps, Including TikTok - Indian Media,” January 25, 2021.

253. Phillip Coorey, “US Mocks Beijing’s Threats against Australia,” *Australian Financial Review*, November 19, 2020.

254. Eryk Bagshaw and Anthony Galloway, “If You Make China the Enemy, China Will Be the Enemy: Beijing’s Fresh Threat to Australia,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 18, 2020.

255. Andrew Greene, “China Grappling with Insecurity and Power, DFAT Boss Frances Adamson Says,” *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, June 23, 2021.

256. Peter Jennings, written testimony before U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Hearing on U.S.-China Relations at the Chinese Communist Party’s Centennial*, January 28, 2021, 2.

257. Peter Jennings, oral testimony before U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Hearing on U.S.-China Relations at the Chinese Communist Party’s Centennial*, January 28, 2021, 196.

258. Lowy Institute, “Poll 2021.”

259. *Bloomberg*, “China-Australia Relations: Canberra ‘Ready to Sit around the Table’ with Beijing Again, PM Scott Morrison Says,” June 13, 2021.

260. Department of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade, *Foreign Arrangements*; Stephen Dziedzic, “The Federal Government’s New Foreign Relations Laws Have Passed Parliament. Here’s What That Means,” *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, December 8, 2020.

261. Senator the Hon Marise Payne, *Decisions under Australia’s Foreign Arrangements Scheme*, April 21, 2021; Colin Qian and Tom Daly, “China Says Australia’s Belt and Road Snub to ‘Further Damage’ Relations,” *Reuters*, April 21, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on December 9, 2020*, December 9, 2020.

262. Office of the Secretary of State, *The Elements of the China Challenge*, December 2020, 13; Catherine Putz, “A Discussion with US Senator Chris Murphy about Subnational Diplomacy and China,” *Diplomat*, September 9, 2020.

263. Alexander Ward and Paul McLeary, “Biden Announces Joint Deal with U.K. and Australia to Counter China,” *Politico*, September 15, 2021; Julian Borger, “US, UK and Australia Forge Military Alliance to Counter China,” September 15, 2021.

264. U.S. White House, "Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS," September 15, 2021.

265. Alexander Ward and Paul McLeary, "Biden announces joint deal with U.K. and Australia to counter China," *Politico*, September 15, 2021.

266. White House, "Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS," September 15, 2021.

267. Kavi Chongkittavorn, "China Seeks Stronger ASEAN Ties," *Bangkok Post*, July 28, 2020; *South China Morning Post*, "Quick Guide to China's Diplomatic Levels," January 20, 2016.

268. Viet Anh, "China Exerting 'Maximum Pressure' to Set Its Own East Sea Rules: Expert," *VN Express*, August 1, 2019; Jitsiree Thongnoi, "'Major Progress' on South China Sea Code of Conduct Talks Even as Beijing Warns Other Countries against 'Sowing Distrust,'" *South China Morning Post*, July 31, 2019.

269. Viet Anh, "China Exerting 'Maximum Pressure' to Set Its Own East Sea Rules: Expert," *VN Express*, August 1, 2019.

270. Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "ASEAN, China Reaffirm Commitment to Enhance Strategic Partnership," May 18, 2021; Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "ASEAN, China Reaffirm Commitment to Strengthen Closer Cooperation," July 2, 2020.

271. Willard Cheng and Ronron Calunsod, "ASEAN, China Eye 2022 as New Target to Conclude Talks on South China Sea COC: Source," *ABS-CBN News*, June 9, 2021.

272. Sharon Seah et al., "The State of Southeast Asia: 2021 Survey Report," *IS-EAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, February 10, 2021, 2.

273. Sharon Seah et al., "The State of Southeast Asia: 2021 Survey Report," *IS-EAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, February 10, 2021, 2.

274. Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, "China and Malaysia in Another Star-Edown over Offshore Drilling," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, November 25, 2020.

275. *Benar News*, "Malaysia Will Lodge Diplomatic Protest with China over Maritime Airspace Intrusion," June 1, 2021.

276. *Agence France-Presse*, "Malaysia Scrambles Jets to Intercept Chinese Military Planes," June 1, 2021; *Reuters*, "Malaysia Scrambles Fighter Jets after 16 Chinese Military Aircraft Fly toward Borneo," June 1, 2021.

277. Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, "Contest at Kasawari: Another Malaysian Gas Project Faces Pressure," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, July 7, 2021.

278. Euan Graham, "Aerial Manoeuvres in the South China Sea," *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, June 9, 2021; Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga et al., "China Signals Resolve with Bomber Flights over the South China Sea," *War on the Rocks*, August 2, 2016.

279. Hishammuddin Hussein (@HishammuddinH2O), - @MalaysiaMFA will issue a diplomatic note of protest against the intrusion to the Government of the PRC; will also summon the Ambassador of the PRC to Malaysia to provide explanation regarding this breach of Malaysian airspace and sovereignty." Twitter, June 1, 2021, 11:11 a.m.; Radzi Razak, "Hishammuddin: 'Big Brother' Just a Personal Term Referring to Senior Chinese Counterpart," *Yahoo! News*, April 3, 2021.

280. Marhalim bin Abas, "Malaysia Aims to Acquire ED Long-Range Air Surveillance Radar," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, June 20, 2021.

281. Joseph Sipalan, "Malaysia Appoints Ericsson as 5G Development partner," *Reuters*, July 1, 2021; Joseph Sipalan and Krishna N. Das, "Malaysia to Choose 5G Partners Based on Own Security Standards," *Reuters*, February 17, 2020.

282. Andrew S. Erickson and Ryan D. Martinson, "Records Expose China's Maritime Militia at Whitsun Reef," *Foreign Policy*, March 29, 2021; National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea, "Statement on the Presence of China's Maritime Militias at the West Philippine Sea," March 20, 2021.

283. Gabriel Dominguez, "Philippines to Increase Number of Vessels and Aircraft Monitoring Disputed Whitsun Reef," *Jane's*, March 29, 2021; *Radio Free Asia*, "Philippines Military Orders Ships Deployed to South China Sea," March 25, 2021.

284. *Similarity*, "Over a Hundred Chinese Fishing Ships Remain in Philippine EEZ as of May 18," May 24, 2021; Teddy Locsin Jr. (@teddyboyllocsin), "NTF just informed. Only 9 ships left." Twitter, April 13, 2021, 1:33 a.m.; Rene Acosta, "Persistent Chinese Maritime Militia Presence off Philippines Raises Concerns in Manila," *USNI News*, April 12, 2021; Gabriel Dominguez, "Chinese Fishing Vessels Moored at Whitsun Reef Disperse to Nearby Areas," *Jane's*, March 31, 2021.

285. Patricia Lourdes Viray, "Chinese Missile Boats Drive away Filipino TV Crew in West Philippine Sea," *Philstar Global*, April 9, 2021.

286. Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs, *Statement: On the Illegal Presence of the Chinese Coast Guard in Bajo de Masinloc, and Their Belligerent Actions against the Philippine Coast Guard*, May 3, 2021.

287. *Reuters*, "Philippines Flags 'Incursions' by Nearly 300 Chinese Militia Boats," May 12, 2021.

288. Pia Ranada, "Amid Chinese Incursions, Duterte Again Says Nothing PH Can Do," *Rappler*, April 20, 2021.

289. Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, "Out in Force: Philippine South China Sea Patrols Are Way Up," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, May 26, 2021.

290. Idrees Ali and Karen Lema, "Philippines' Duterte Fully Restores Key U.S. Troop Pact," *Reuters*, July 30, 2021.

291. *Radio Free Asia*, "Philippine Coast Guard Plans to Upgrade South China Sea Monitoring," May 26, 2021; Frances Mangosing, "AFP Eyes Logistics Hub in Pag-Asa Island for Uninterrupted WPS Patrols," *Inquirer*, May 4, 2021.

292. Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, "Vietnam Shores Up Its Spratly Defenses," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, February 19, 2021.

293. *Maritime Executive*, "U.S. Funds Indonesian Maritime Training Center near Strait of Malacca," June 30, 2021.

294. Jon Grevatt, "Japan, Indonesia Sign Defence Trade Deal," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, March 31, 2021.

295. Jon Grevatt, "Japan, Vietnam Sign Defence Equipment and Technology Accord," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, October 20, 2020.

296. Sébastien Seibt, "France Wades into the South China Sea with a Nuclear Attack Submarine," *France 24*, February 12, 2021.

297. Sarah Zheng, "South China Sea: Challenge to Beijing as French Nuclear Submarine Patrols Contested Waterway," *South China Morning Post*, February 9, 2021.

298. Bill Hayton, "The Carrier Strike Group in the South China Sea," *Council on Geostrategy*, July 2021, 4–5.

299. UK Royal Navy, *First Sea Lord Sea Power Conference Speech 2021*, May 19, 2021.

300. Sanjeev Miglani, "India Deploys Warships in South China Sea as Part of 'Act East' Policy," *Reuters*, August 4, 2021; Jon Jackson, "Germany Sends Warship to South China Sea in Latest Challenge to Beijing Territorial Claims," *Newsweek*, August 2, 2021.

301. Zhou Endi, "Expert: British Aircraft Carrier Returns to the South China Sea, China Should Consider Countermeasures" (英国航母又来南海 中国应该考虑反制), *Sing Tao Global Network*, July 31, 2021. Translation; Zheng Wang, "Chinese Discourse on the 'Nine-Dashed Line': Rights, Interests, and Nationalism," *Asian Survey* 55:3 (May/June 2015): 502–524, 509.

302. *Reuters*, "The Month since Myanmar's Military Coup," February 28, 2021.

303. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, "Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup," September 15, 2021.

304. Rebecca Ratcliffe, "Myanmar Opposition Announces 'Defensive War' against Junta," *Guardian*, September 7, 2021.

305. *UN News*, "Myanmar: UN Security Council Strongly Condemns Violence against Peaceful Protesters," March 11, 2021; Ryan Heath, "It Will Backfire on Everyone: U.N. Democracies Walking a Fine Line with China on Myanmar," *Politico*, February 2, 2021; *Xinhua*, "Major Cabinet Reshuffle Announced in Myanmar," February 2, 2021.

306. Colum Lynch, Robbie Gramer, and Jack Detsch, "U.S. and China Reach Deal to Block Myanmar's Junta from U.N.," *Foreign Policy*, September 13, 2021; *Radio Free Asia*, "China Closes Border with Myanmar amid COVID-19 Surge," July 8, 2021.

307. *Radio Free Asia*, "China Online Meeting Including Myanmar's NLD Seen as Recognition of Ousted Myanmar Party's Influence," September 13, 2021.

308. Shannon Tiezzi, "China Underscores Solidarity with North Korea on Party Anniversary," *Diplomat*, October 14, 2020.

309. Won-Gi Jung, "China Appoints New Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Affairs," *NK News*, April 12, 2021; Eduardo Baptista, "China's Ex-Ambassador to Britain Liu Xiaoming Named Special Envoy for North Korea," *South China Morning Post*, April 12, 2021.

310. Won-Gi Jung, "China Appoints New Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Affairs," *NK News*, April 12, 2021; Eduardo Baptista, "China's Ex-Ambassador to Britain Liu Xiaoming Named Special Envoy for North Korea," *South China Morning Post*, April 12, 2021.

311. Kinling Lo, "China, North Korea Reaffirm Ties on Defense Treaty Anniversary," *South China Morning Post*, July 11, 2021.

312. Scott Snyder and See-Won Byun, "China-Korea Relations Poised for Recovery Despite Intensified Conflict on Social Media," *Comparative Connections* 23:1 (2021): 105–114.

313. Laura Silver, Kat Delvin, and Christine Huang, "Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries," *Pew Research Center*, October 6, 2020; John Power, "Young South Koreans Turn on China as Hong Kong, Coronavirus Weigh on Minds," *South China Morning Post*, October 14, 2020.

314. Cheng Xiaohe, "Seoul Shouldn't Give Up Strategic Ambiguity over Joining Quad," *Global Times*, March 11, 2021.

315. Hyung-Jin Kim, "North Accuses US of Hostility for S. Korean Missile Decision," *AP News*, May 30, 2021; Andrew Jeong, "South Korea Can Now Build Missiles Able to Reach Beijing, with U.S. Blessing," *Wall Street Journal*, June 11, 2021.

316. John Ratcliffe, "China Is National Security Threat No. 1," *Wall Street Journal*, December 3, 2020.

317. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on January 20, 2021*, January 20, 2021.

318. Rachel Treisman, "China Slaps Sanctions on 28 Trump Administration Officials, Including Mike Pompeo," *NPR*, January 20, 2021.

319. Matthew Lee, "US Unveils New Rules for Government Contacts with Taiwan," *AP News*, April 9, 2021.

320. *CGTN*, "Wang Yi: A Window of Hope Is Opening for China-U.S. Relations," January 2, 2021; *Reuters*, "China Senior Diplomat Says U.S. Relations at 'New Crossroads,'" January 1, 2021; *AP News*, "China Hopes for Cooperation, Better Relations under Biden," January 21, 2021.

321. China Ministry of National Defense, *Transcript of the Ministry of National Defense Regular Press Conference for January 2021* (2021年1月国防部例行记者会文字实录), January 28, 2021. Translation.

322. Anthony J. Blinken, "A Foreign Policy for the American People," *U.S. Department of State*, March 3, 2021; Simon Lewis and Humeyra Pamuk, "Biden Administration Singles Out China as 'Biggest Geopolitical Test' for U.S.," *Reuters*, March 3, 2021.

323. Matthew Lee and Mark Thiessen, "US, China Spar in First Face-to-Face Meeting under Biden," *AP News*, March 18, 2021; Nahal Toosi, "China and U.S. Open Alaska Meeting with Undiplomatic War on Words," *Politico*, March 18, 2021.

324. Matthew Lee and Mark Thiessen, "US, China Spar in First Face-to-Face Meeting under Biden," *AP News*, March 18, 2021.

325. Matthew Lee, "Blinken Reaffirms Trump-Era Ruling on Hong Kong Autonomy," *AP News*, March 31, 2021.

326. John Hudson, "As Tensions with China Grow, Administration Formalizes Genocide Declaration against Beijing," *Washington Post*, March 30, 2021.

327. Martin Matishak, "Intelligence Community Creating Hub to Gird against Foreign Influence," *Politico*, April 26, 2021.

328. Teddy Ng, "US Still Seeking Dialogue with Chinese Military Chiefs, Pentagon Says," *South China Morning Post*, May 26, 2021.

329. Idrees Ali, "EXCLUSIVE Pentagon Holds Talks with Chinese Military for First Time under Biden, Official Says," *Reuters*, August 28, 2021.

330. *BBC News*, "US Senate Passes Sweeping Bill to Counter China Tech Reach," June 9, 2021.

331. Yew Lun Tian and Tony Munroe, "In 'Frank' Talks, China Accuses U.S. of Creating 'Imaginary Enemy,'" *Reuters*, July 26, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *Xie Feng: The China-U.S. Relationship Is in a Stalemate, Fundamentally Because Some Americans Portray China as an 'Imagined Enemy,'* July 26, 2021; Laura Zhou and Jun Mai, "China Promises US a 'Tutorial' in How to Treat Other Countries Equally ahead of Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman's Visit," *South China Morning Post*, July 25, 2021.

332. *Xinhua*, "China Puts Forward Two Lists during Talks with Visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of State," July 26, 2021; Stuart Lau, "Beijing Thrusts Long List of Demands at Biden Administration," *Politico*, July 26, 2021; Ken Moritsugu and Ng Han Guan, "US, China Old High-Level Talks, Highlighting Differences," *AP News*, July 26, 2021.

333. Amanda Coletta, "Canada's 'Two Michaels' Back Home After More Than 1,000 Days Imprisoned in China as Huawei's Meng Cuts Deal with U.S.," *Washington Post*, September 25, 2021.

334. Lily Kuo, "China's Release of 'Two Michaels' Vexes Country's Online Nationalists," *Washington Post*, September 27, 2021; Michael Forsythe, Chris Buckley, and Katie Benner, "American Siblings Barred from Leaving China for 3 Years Return to U.S.," *New York Times*, September 27, 2021; U.S. Department of Justice, "Huawei CFO Wanzhou Meng Admits to Misleading Global Financial Institution," September 24, 2021.