

The China–Taiwan Weekly Update



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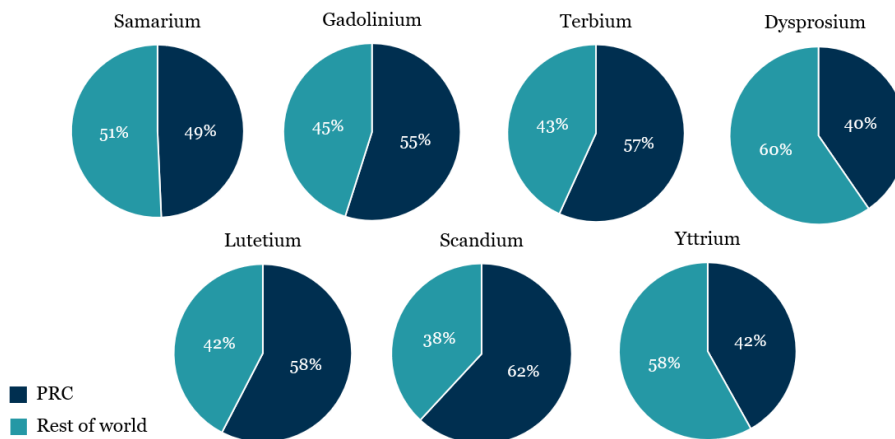
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April 11, 2025, Data Cutoff: April 9, 2025

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) raised tariffs on the United States from 34 percent to 125 percent and imposed export controls on seven critical minerals that are essential to the US defense industry. The PRC was retaliating for the United States increasing tariffs on the PRC. These export controls encompass seven materials with extensive military applications. The United States cannot produce the designated minerals at a sufficient scale and exempted them from tariffs in recognition of their importance. The PRC accounted for approximately 70 percent of US rare earth imports from 2020 to 2023 and approximately 70 percent of world mine production of rare earths in 2024. The PRC is leveraging this global dominance to coerce the United States.[1] The PRC Ministry of Commerce stated that the PRC “will fight to the end” and described the US threat of additional tariffs as “blackmail.” This came after the PRC imposed additional export controls against the United States acquiring other critical materials in December 2024 and February 2025 in response to US trade measures.[2]

Critical Materials	Primary Use	Example Military Applications
Samarium	Production of permanent magnets	Precision guided munitions, aircraft and UAV systems, naval systems, space and satellite tech, nuclear defense
Gadolinium	Alloys to improve mechanical properties in extreme temperatures	Aircraft and Naval Systems
Terbium	Production of permanent magnets	Aircraft, submarines, and missiles, night vision technologies
Dysprosium	Production of permanent magnets	Electric motors functioning in extreme temperatures, such as in fighter jet engines
Lutetium	High-performance alloys and catalysts for durability	Advanced superconductors and high-temperature ceramics
Scandium	Alloys, compounds, and catalysts for high-strength properties	Aircraft, naval vessels, vehicles, and explosive devices
Yttrium	Superconductors, phosphors for LED displays, and in alloying materials	Jet engines, high frequency radar system tuning, laser targeting

SW **STUDY OF WAR** **Estimated PRC Production Share (2021) of Affected Critical Minerals Export Controls on April 4, 2025**



Source: European Commission Raw Minerals Information System

The PRC is trying to exploit US tariffs and global financial uncertainty to strengthen its economic relationships abroad, including with traditional US partners. PRC President Xi Jinping will meet Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on April 11. Prime Minister Sanchez previously said that the European Union should increase cooperation with the PRC and have Spain mediate.[3] Separately, PRC Premier Li Qiang held a phone call with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on April 9.[4] This European engagement came after the PRC took part in a rare economic dialogue with Japan and South Korea on March 30 to discuss expanding trade cooperation.

Xi will visit southeast Asia, including Vietnam, on April 14.[5] Vietnam notably hosted the Spanish prime minister on April 9.

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) revoked the membership of senior military disciplinary officer Tang Yong on March 26.[6] Tang is the deputy secretary of the Central Military Commission (CMC) Discipline Inspection Commission, indicating that his revoked CPPCC membership is related to PRC President

Xi's ongoing efforts to increase the People's Liberation Army (PLA) loyalty to the party.

The CPPCC is a political advisory body comprised of CCP-affiliated elites across society. Revoking CPPCC membership is often the first step in the demotion or discipline of a party member. The next steps are often removing the member from their post and revoking their CCP membership. The CMC is the highest military decision-making body. The CMC Discipline Inspection Commission is the CMC disciplinary and investigation agency.

The CPPCC possibly revoked Tang's membership as punishment for his perceived failure in his supervisory duties. The PRC has investigated and replaced several senior PLA political commissars in recent months, likely due to Xi's dissatisfaction with the state of political loyalty in the PLA. The CMC suspended Miao Hua from his post as Political Work Department director in November 2024. This position is the senior-most political commissar in the PLA, carrying ultimate responsibility for instilling loyalty within the PLA to Xi and the CCP. Miao is under investigation for suspected "serious violations of discipline," which the PRC usually uses to describe officials who are corrupt or deemed disloyal. The CMC later replaced the political commissar for the PLA Ground Forces in December 2024.[7] Recent rumors have claimed that there is another investigation into CMC Vice Chairman He Weidong, who has been absent from the public eye in recent weeks.

Xi has directly tied the PLA's modernization goals to strengthening the military's political education.[8] This doctrine promotes the notion that Xi's organizational reforms of the PLA, the orientation of the CCP around Xi, and the emphasis on the CCP's strict control of the PLA are necessary to strengthen the PLA as a fighting force. The PRC issued directives in February that strengthened oversight of military-related publications after multiple PLA-affiliated organizations published articles in December 2024 that emphasized tenets of collective leadership and intra-party democracy, which are contrary to Xi's doctrine of central control.[9]

The South Korean Constitutional Court removed President Yoon Suk-yeol from office on April 4, meaning that the country will hold a snap presidential election on June 3.[10]

The Constitutional Court removed Yoon after he declared martial law in December 2024. Yoon also accused the Democratic Party (DP)-led opposition of paralyzing government operations. The Constitutional Court rejected Yoon's claims, asserting that his ability to "uphold the liberal democratic order" was "irreparably lost." Acting President Han Duck-soo convened a cabinet meeting on April 8, confirming the presidential election will proceed on June 3.[11]

The PRC has intensified its engagement with South Korea, likely to improve ties amid this transition. PRC General Secretary Xi met with South Korean National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik in February 2025, marking the first such meeting since 2014.[12] At the time, Xi signaled the possibility of visiting South Korea to attend an economic summit in October 2025. PRC Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi met with the South Korean foreign minister in March 2025 to discuss expanding economic cooperation.[13] The PRC is reportedly planning to lift its ban on South Korean media products as well. The PRC's engagement reflects its efforts to deepen ties with South Korea and divide it from the United States.

The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied state involvement after Ukrainian forces captured PRC nationals fighting in the Russian military in several areas of Donetsk Oblast. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reported on April 8 that Ukrainian forces captured

several PRC "fighters," who were fighting for Russia, and that Ukrainian intelligence indicated that there are "significantly more Chinese nationals" in the Russian military.[14] Zelensky noted that Ukrainian forces came into contact with a group of six PRC fighters during recent attacks and captured two. Zelensky told reporters on April 9 that Ukrainian intelligence knew of 155 PRC citizens fighting for Russia.[15] Zelensky also said that Russia was using social media to recruit PRC fighters, which PRC officials knew.[16]

Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Andriy Sybiha stated in an X (Twitter) post on April 8 that the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the PRC charge d'affaires in response to the incident.[17] The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the PRC is "verifying the relevant situation with Ukraine." [18]

Past PRC rhetoric on the war in Ukraine reflects simultaneous efforts to signal strong and consistent support for Russia while shirking the international opprobrium directed at Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.[19] US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce characterized the PRC nationals' involvement as "disturbing" and said that "China is a major enabler of Russia" that "provides nearly 80 percent of the dual-use items Russia needs to sustain the war." [20] NATO has similarly called the PRC a "decisive enabler" of the Russian war effort.[21]

ISW has noted that the PRC leverages its alleged neutrality on the war in Ukraine to benefit reputationally on the international stage.[22] PRC efforts to deny state involvement reflect its commitment to maintaining the neutral reputation that it has sought to cultivate in Ukraine. ISW has observed reports of various unspecified Russian entities recruiting vulnerable migrant workers into the Russian military. Indian authorities revealed in 2024 that unspecified Russian entities were managing a human trafficking network that lured Indian citizens to Russia under false pretenses and then coerced them into signing military contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense to fight in Ukraine.[23]

Taiwanese National Security Council Secretary General Joseph Wu visited the United States and met with senior US officials on April 4. [24] Taiwanese Foreign Affairs Minister Lin Chia-lung reportedly accompanied Wu. These meetings occurred outside Washington, DC, due to the unofficial ties between the United States and Taiwan.[25] The People's Republic of China (PRC) Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to the visit by accusing Taiwanese President William Lai Ching-te of "relying on the United States to seek independence"— rhetoric that is consistent with previous PRC criticisms of Lai and the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).[26]

Wu's visit to the United States highlights ongoing Taiwanese efforts to resist PRC coercion and threats. The visit came shortly after the PRC conducted two large-scale military exercises around Taiwan, which included simulating a blockade of the island.

Key Takeaways

- **The People's Republic of China (PRC):** The PRC raised tariffs against the United States and imposed export controls on seven critical minerals that are essential to the US defense industry. The PRC is also trying to exploit US tariffs and global financial uncertainty to strengthen its economic relationships with historic US partners.

- **PRC:** The CPPCC revoked the membership of the deputy secretary of the CMC Discipline Inspection Commission. The revocation of CPPCC membership is likely related to PRC President Xi’s ongoing efforts to increase PLA loyalty to the party. PRC leaders have connected their military modernization goals to their efforts to increase PLA loyalty and political subordination.
- **South Korea:** The South Korean Constitutional Court removed President Yoon Suk-yeol after he declared martial law in December 2024. A snap presidential election will occur on June 3. The PRC has intensified its engagement with South Korea, likely to improve ties amid this political transition.
- **Russia:** The PRC denied state involvement after Ukrainian forces captured PRC nationals who were fighting in the Russian military in Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that there are “significantly more Chinese nationals” in the Russian military. Zelensky added that Russia is using social media to recruit PRC nationals with the knowledge of PRC leaders.
- **Taiwan:** Taiwanese National Security Council Secretary General Wu visited the United States and met with senior US officials. The visit came shortly after the PLA conducted two large-scale military exercises around Taiwan, which included simulating a blockade of the island.

Cross-Strait Relations

Taiwan

Taiwan is conducting its longest-ever tabletop war games and live-fire drills for its annual Han Kuang 41 exercise. Taiwan is increasing the length and scale of this exercise in response to intensifying PRC aggression. The Han Kuang 41 exercise will involve tabletop war games over 14 days from April 5 to 18, and live-fire drills over 10 days from July 9 to 18.[27] This is almost double the length of the eight-day-long war games in 2024 and almost triple the length of the typical five-day-long ones.[28] The live-fire drills will be the longest ever in this exercise series. An unnamed Taiwanese military source told *Taiwan News* that the military plans to increase the number of reservists involved in the Han Kuang 41 exercise from 14,000 in 2024 to more than 20,000 in 2025.[29]

Taiwanese military officials have increasingly embraced realistic exercises in a shift away from more scripted ones.[30] The Han Kuang exercises became non-scripted in 2024 and will continue that approach in 2025 in order to improve troop readiness.[31] The Taiwanese National Defense Minister Major General Tung Chi-hsing said on April 2 that the military will simulate People’s Liberation Army (PLA) exercises evolving into full-scale attacks, highlighting the Taiwanese concern that regular PLA operations around Taiwan could escalate.[32] The PRC has normalized military activities, including exercises and incursions, around Taiwan in order to exhaust Taiwan’s resources, probe its response protocols, and reduce its response threshold. These effects erode Taiwanese threat awareness and could facilitate surprise PLA attacks on Taiwan.

The scale of the Han Kuang 41 exercise reflects growing Taiwanese concerns about PRC activity in the Taiwan Strait. The PRC conducted large-scale military exercises around Taiwan on April 1-2, which the G7 foreign ministers criticized and described as provocative.[33] The PRC has conducted other major exercises around Taiwan and significantly increased its incursions into Taiwan’s Air Defense

Identification Zone (ADIZ) since President Lai took office in May 2024.[34] Taiwanese officials have warned that the PLA may hold additional exercises around the anniversary of Lai's inauguration in May 2025 or on Taiwan's National Day in October 2025.[35] These officials have also expressed concern about increasing PRC activity around Pratas Island.

The PRC is increasingly using artificial intelligence (AI) in its information operations against Taiwan, according to a Taiwanese National Security Bureau (NSB) report to the Legislative Yuan.[36] The report described the information operations as meant to divide the United States and Taiwan, fracture Taiwanese society, and undermine opposition to the PRC. The information operations cover topics including PLA activities around Taiwan, President Lai's recent speech about PRC coercion, and Taiwanese semiconductor investments in the United States.[37] The NSB identified over 510,000 "controversial" posts that were part of these information operations across social media platforms, such as Facebook, X (Twitter), TikTok, and Taiwanese forums.[38]

AI development is increasing the PRC's capacity to conduct information operations against Taiwan. The NSB reported in January that the PRC's use of AI to generate fake accounts, audio, images, and videos in high volumes has become a key feature of its information warfare.[39] This content includes deep fakes of Taiwanese officials. Audio-visual platforms, such as TikTok, are especially susceptible to AI-enabled disinformation. The Taiwan Information Environment Research Center (IORG) — a civil society organization that researches disinformation — found in a study that TikTok users were more agreeable to narratives that align with PRC interests than non-users.[40]

Taiwanese authorities launched investigations into three DPP staffers over accusations that they conducted espionage for the PRC. The *Taipei Times* reported that the staffers committed security breaches, including leaking details of President Lai's travel itineraries.[41] The Taipei District Prosecutor's Office is investigating these cases and has reportedly asked to detain the three suspects without visitation rights.[42] One of the suspects — Chiu Shih-yuan — previously served as the vice president of the Taiwan Institute of Democracy, which is a DPP-affiliated think tank.[43] These investigations came shortly after Taiwanese authorities questioned a former aide to DPP Legislative Speaker You Si-kun over similar espionage charges. The Taipei District Prosecutors' Office is investigating allegations that the aide gave information to PRC agents in exchange for cash and cryptocurrency.[44]

The PRC espionage could undermine public confidence in the DPP, which PRC officials regularly accuse of being authoritarian and separatist. One Taiwanese lawmaker with the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) accused the DPP of hypocrisy in response to the espionage accusations, saying that the DPP accuses its political opponents of working with the PRC while the PRC has infiltrated the DPP.[45]

The number of prosecuted PRC espionage cases in Taiwan rose threefold from 2021 to 2024, according to the NSB.[46] The NSB has accused the PRC of using criminal networks and shell companies — in addition to infiltration — to access sensitive Taiwanese information.[47] The Lai administration has emphasized in recent weeks the need to counter and deter PRC espionage and coercion and adopted new measures to these ends, including reinstating military trials.[48] The PRC has criticized Lai's anti-espionage efforts as part of its ongoing information operation to portray Lai and his DPP as authoritarian oppressors.[49]

China

See topline section.

Northeast Asia

Japan

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced that the United States has begun upgrading US Forces Japan (USFJ) to a joint force headquarters. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized the plan for inciting the “China threat.” The United States will transform USFJ from a primarily administrative command to a warfighting command. Hegseth praised Japan as a model ally for deterring PRC aggression. Hegseth pledged that the United States would maintain credible deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, including in the Taiwan Strait.[50]

PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Guo Jiakun condemned the US move and commented that countries should be on “high alert” to avoid becoming US “cannon fodder.”[51] Guo added that the United States-Japan security cooperation should not threaten any country or endanger regional peace and urged the United States to stop “using Taiwan to contain China.”[52] PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian made similar comments in July 2024 when the plan to upgrade USFJ was conceived during a 2+2 meeting.[53]

South Korea

South Korea arrested a PRC national on March 29, uncovering a PRC-led espionage network targeting active-duty soldiers online for an information-for-money exchange, targeting sensitive details about US-South Korean military exercises.[54] South Korean police apprehended two PRC nationals who allegedly photographed a US-South Korean military airbase on March 21, which hosted F-35 aircraft.[55] South Korean police revealed that one of the arrested individuals had a parent serving as an officer in the PRC Ministry of Public Security.[56] South Korean authorities found images of US Military Base Camp Humphreys, Cheongju Air Base, three major international airports, and Osan Air Base among the possessions of those arrested. The timing of their visits coincided with the annual Freedom Shield US-South Korean military exercises.[57]

South Korea installed a “reciprocal” structure in the Yellow Sea, marking the first such response to PRC activity there since the impeachment of President Yoon Suk-yeol and the subsequent leadership vacuum. The South Korean Oceans and Fisheries Ministry installed a buoy within the bilateral Provisional Measures Zone (PMZ) in the Yellow Sea in response to a PRC structure established on March 26.[58] The buoy will monitor and assess PRC activities in addition to conducting environmental assessments and maritime research.[59] The PRC constructed steel structures within the PMZ in April, May, and December 2024. South Korea and the PRC agreed to establish the PMZ in the overlapping area of their exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in 2000 to resolve disputes related to Yellow Sea fishing rights and oil exploration.[60] South Korea dispatched the *Onnuri* marine research vessel to inspect the PRC structure in the disputed area on February 26, but China Coast Guard ships prevented the vessel from approaching the structure. South Korea sent a coast guard vessel in response, leading to a two-hour standoff.[61] The PRC Embassy in Seoul claimed that the structures are for fishing purposes and do not violate the agreement.[62]

South Korea's recent actions represent a diplomatic protest against the PRC's attempts to territorialize the Yellow Sea, expanding beyond the claimed Nine-dash line. The South Korean Oceans Minister Kang Do-hyung explained that the installation aims to monitor the PRC activities within the PMZ and limit further PRC installations in the zone.

Southeast Asia

Cambodia

The PRC held naval exercises with Cambodia at the recently upgraded Ream naval base. Access to the base could enhance PRC access to the Gulf of Thailand and position its naval assets closer to key chokepoints. PRC and Cambodian vessels practiced maritime communications and maneuvers in an exercise known as “Golden Dragon-2025.”[63] The exercise coincided with the inauguration ceremony for the expanded port facility, for which the PRC provided a new pier. The PRC made plans in 2024 to gift Cambodia two Type 056A missile corvettes, possibly in exchange for access to the base. Cambodia's constitution forbids the construction of foreign military bases on its soil, but Cambodia could circumvent this by giving the PLA preferred or exclusive access to the base.[64]

PRC-backed upgrades to the base align with broader PRC goals to expand military cooperation with Cambodia. The PRC and Cambodia have held six Golden Dragon exercises, but this marks the first time that the exercises have occurred at the upgraded Ream base.[65] Cambodia began holding exercises with the PRC in 2016. Cambodia cancelled exercises planned with the United States in 2017 and 2018 — a reflection of growing Sino-Cambodian relations.[66]

Expanded access to Cambodia and Ream Naval Base could advance the PRC's strategic and soft-power goals. PRC ports and bases — described as a “string of pearls” — enhance PRC access to the Indian Ocean and surrounding waters.[67] The PRC's only overseas naval base in Djibouti advances this goal, positioning PRC military assets near the Red Sea and critical Indian Ocean Sea lines of communication.[68] Ream provides access to the Strait of Malacca — a critical waterway key to PRC oil imports.[69] Centre on Contemporary China and the World fellow Brian Wong said that the facility at Ream could also improve PRC access to the Andaman Sea, permitting the “bypassing” of maritime chokepoints controlled by Indonesia, Vietnam, and Singapore.[70]

Events Near Gulf of Thailand and Cambodia April 2025



Philippines

The PRC arrested three Philippine citizens on espionage charges. The Philippine government accused the PRC of targeting innocent Filipinos in retaliation for a series of Philippine arrests of PRC spies. The Philippine National Security Council (NSC) released a statement on April 5 denying PRC accusations that the three arrested Filipinos were spying on behalf of the Philippine government.[71] The NSC stated that those arrested were students attending Hainan National University under a PRC-provided scholarship. The NSC statement doubted the veracity of the confession statements released by the PRC due to the scripted nature of the speech, references to non-existing Philippine intelligence agencies, and language portraying the PRC positively.[72]

The Philippines National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has investigated multiple espionage cases involving PRC nationals in recent months. PRC nationals were accused of gathering intelligence on

sensitive areas, including Philippine Navy, Coast Guard, and Air Force facilities; the Presidential palace; and the US Embassy compound.[73] The NBI released a statement on February 28 revealing that four of the arrested PRC nationals led civic groups overseen by the All-China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (ACFROC) — a CCP-led organization engaged in United Front work.[74] The United Front is a whole-of-government and society effort to advance CCP ideology and interests through overt and covert activities. The two civic organizations advertised their affiliation with the CCP and stated their purpose as promoting Chinese culture and expanding Chinese-Philippine friendships. The Philippine government has stated that it is taking action to neutralize PRC espionage networks and reduce CCP influence in Philippine domestic politics, especially prior to its May 2025 National Elections.

The Philippine government has suggested that the recent arrest of three Philippine nationals may be an act of retaliation by the PRC amid this spate of arrests of its own citizens in the Philippines.[75] The Philippine government has urged the PRC to respect the rights of Philippine nationals within its territory and has expressed concern that additional acts of retaliation may be forthcoming. PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian denied the Philippine government's accusations on April 7, repeating PRC talking points accusing the Philippines of fabricating espionage cases to target PRC citizens.[76] This follows a pattern of the PRC arresting foreign nationals on espionage during periods of worsening relations with their home country, as seen in Canada in 2018 and Australia in 2019.[77]

PRC and Philippines coast guard vessels nearly collided during a confrontation in the West Philippine Sea, marking the most recent confrontation in a period of heightened tensions between the two states. The constant CCG patrolling and near-daily incursions into Philippine territorial waters suggest that the PRC is attempting to normalize its presence in the West Philippine Sea. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) vessel *BRP Cabra* confronted a CCG vessel approaching the coast of Zambales in Central Luzon.[78] The *BRP Cabra* was deployed on April 5 to monitor CCG activity, which the PCG described as “reckless and dangerous,” and resulted in a near collision near Scarborough Shoal on April 6.[79] PCG spokesperson Jay Tarriela said that this incident marks the CCG's return to the coast of Zambales, where they maintained a consistent presence from late 2024 to early 2025.[80]

The PCG reported two other instances of suspicious activity this week. The PCG reported on April 3 that the PRC's *Sung Hang* research vessel conducted suspicious sailing patterns that did not align with its stated destination of the Indian Ocean.[81] The *Sung Hang*'s sailing patterns suggest that it was conducting surveillance activities, which are prohibited within the Philippines' archipelagic waters. The PCG reported a second PRC research vessel — the *Zhong Shan Da Xue* — suspected of conducting survey maneuvers near Batanes — the closest Philippine islands to Taiwan.[82] PCG Commandant Admiral Ronnie Gil Gavan ordered the deployment of a PCG aircraft to monitor and challenge the PRC vessel on April 7.

The Philippines has reported an increase in incursions into Philippine territorial waters by PRC vessels, particularly in the West Philippine Sea and contested areas around the South China Sea.[83] The PRC is likely aiming to normalize its presence in Philippine territorial waters, strengthening PRC territorial claims in the maritime region. The PRC's presence in various parts of the Philippines' maritime territory

may be intended to force the PCG to expend greater resources and manpower to respond to various incidents, similar to PRC operations in the Taiwan Strait.



Oceania

The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs called for Australia to refrain from politicizing Chinese ownership of the Port of Darwin in northern Australia. The Port of Darwin is Australia's nearest port to Asia and is located near Australia's Larrakeyah Defense Precinct. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his election rival Peter Dutton both called for an end to Chinese ownership of Darwin Port, citing concerns about potential CCP influence over the strategic asset.[84] PRC-based company Landbridge Group gained control of the Port of Darwin in 2015 when it signed a 99-year lease agreement with Australia's Northern Territory government for 506

million US dollars.[85] Landbridge’s control of the port has remained a controversial topic in Australian politics since 2015. Landbridge Group is a privately-owned, PRC-based company, but there is evidence that it is connected to the CCP. Landbridge Group is owned by CCP-affiliated PRC businessman Ye Cheng.[86] Ye is a member of the 12th National CPPCC Committee — a PRC United Front body — where he represented the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots, which aims to promote cross-Strait exchanges and national reunification.[87] The secretary of Landbridge Group’s CCP branch and leader of the company’s People’s Armed Militia is ex-PLA officer He Zhaoqing, raising concerns about the port’s ties to the PRC military.[88]

Dutton cited the fact that the Port of Darwin is directly opposite to the Larrakeyah Defense Precinct as the primary security concern behind Australia’s efforts to buy back the port.[89] The Larrakeyah Defense Precinct is a tri-services defense base that supports Australian Defense Force operations and training.[90] The precinct is also the home port for most of the Australian Navy’s patrol boats and two army landing craft. The Larrakeyah Defense Precinct hosts a rotational US force of roughly 2,500 troops each year as part of the 25-year United States-Australia Force Posture Agreement.[91] The Port of Darwin’s proximity to the precinct raises security concerns, especially given the Landbridge Group’s connection to the CCP.

The CCP will likely pressure the Landbridge Group to maintain its lease of the Port of Darwin despite potential offers by the Australian government to buy back the lease. Another private company — Hong Kong-based CK Hutchinson — made a deal to sell stakes in 43 global ports to US asset management firm BlackRock.[92] The State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) subsequently placed CK Hutchinson’s sale under an anti-trust review.[93] The PRC may seek to use similar mechanisms to prevent Landbridge from selling the Port of Darwin back to Australia. Landbridge Group rejected claims that it is affiliated with the PRC government and has repeatedly stated that the port is not for sale.[94]

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