

The China–Taiwan Weekly Update



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

Key Takeaways

- **The ROC Mainland Affairs Council criticized the PRC for interfering in Taiwan’s arts and entertainment industry after Taiwanese artists and performers reposted the PRC’s announcement of military drills around Taiwan on October 14.**
- **The PRC accused a joint US-Canadian transit of the Taiwan Strait of undermining peace and threatening the PRC’s sovereignty.**
- **PRC President Xi Jinping traveled to Kazan, Russia for the 16th BRICS summit from October 22 to 24. The summit will cover BRICS expansion and deepening financial cooperation among member states.**
- **The United States sanctioned two PRC firms involved in producing drones for Russia. This is the first time the United States has accused PRC entities of sending lethal aid to Russia’s war effort in Ukraine.**

Cross-Strait Relations

Taiwan

The ROC Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) criticized the PRC for interfering in Taiwan’s arts and entertainment industry after Taiwanese artists and performers reposted PRC announcements of military drills around Taiwan on October 14.^[1] The MAC stated that the CCP uses political ideology to intervene in performing arts activities and has even required artists to make political statements when performing in mainland China due to strict regulations against “endangering national unity sovereignty, and territorial integrity.” Several artists reposted specific CCP unification slogans during the PRC’s Joint Sword 2024B exercises last week, such as “reunification with the motherland is inevitable.”^[2] The PRC state broadcaster CCTV subsequently published screenshots

of Taiwanese artists' expressions of support for unification and encouraged them to follow up and clarify their stances.[3]

The MAC emphasized the CCP's inculcation of political ideology in the art and entertainment industry in a statement on October 1. It called out the CCP for mobilizing Taiwanese celebrities to express pro-unification stances to their audiences after dozens of Taiwanese artists, actors, and celebrities publicly supported unification.

The PRC pressures Taiwan's arts and entertainment industry in a variety of ways, ranging from threats of banning and ostracization to direct co-optation. Some of the banned performers and bands have expressed support for Taiwanese statehood, whereas others have simply performed at concerts dedicated to causes such as anti-annexation and support for Hong Kong protesters in 2019. The PRC pressured the popular Taiwanese band Mayday to support the PRC's claim that Taiwan is a part of China in December 2023.[4] Reuters cited an anonymous source who provided access to an internal security note that details the PRC's threats to fine the band for lip-syncing, a fraudulent offense in the PRC. Several Taiwanese YouTubers also called attention to CCP efforts to recruit them to facilitate United Front work in June 2024. The United Front is a whole-of-government and society effort to advance the CCP's ideology and interests by co-opting non-government segments of Chinese society. United Front activities against Taiwan aim to inculcate in the Taiwanese public CCP notions that the PRC is the only legitimate government of China and Taiwan is a part of that China. The celebrities claimed that the CCP is spending considerable resources to lure Taiwanese internet celebrities to influence Taiwanese politics.[5] YouTuber Ba Jiong revealed that a draft contract he received discussed a plan to establish a "Taiwan Support Party" that artists would join as honorary members to shape the future of PRC-Taiwan relations.[6] The terms stated that the CCP would invest millions of dollars to enable Taiwanese artists to put on shows and events that promoted CCP-aligned narratives of cross-strait relations.

The PRC likely aims to shape the younger generation's perceptions of Taiwan's political status and Chinese identity to conform to CCP cross-strait policies through such pressure on Taiwan's arts and entertainment industry. Young people make up most of celebrities' fans and therefore are the audience for their political expressions, both at in-person events and on social media.

The PRC thanked South Africa for demanding that Taiwan relocate its representative office out of Pretoria. South Africa first asked Taiwan's representative office to relocate from Pretoria, its administrative capital, verbally in December 2023.[7] It also requested that Taiwan relocate the office in April 2024 and then issued an "ultimatum" to Taipei on October 7, 2024, stating that it would close the office if it did not relocate.[8] PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mao Ning approved of South Africa's demand and stated that the one-China principle is "a recognized norm of international relations and the will of the international community and the general trend." She also said that "'Taiwan independence' is unpopular and will fail." [9]

Taipei responded by declaring it will not relocate the office. Taiwanese officials have stated that Taipei "retains the right to determine its location and status," because the office is Taiwanese property.[10] ROC Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung said that the office "is still in operation and will stay in the capital" and that South Africa is violating a 1997 agreement stating that Taiwan could maintain an office in

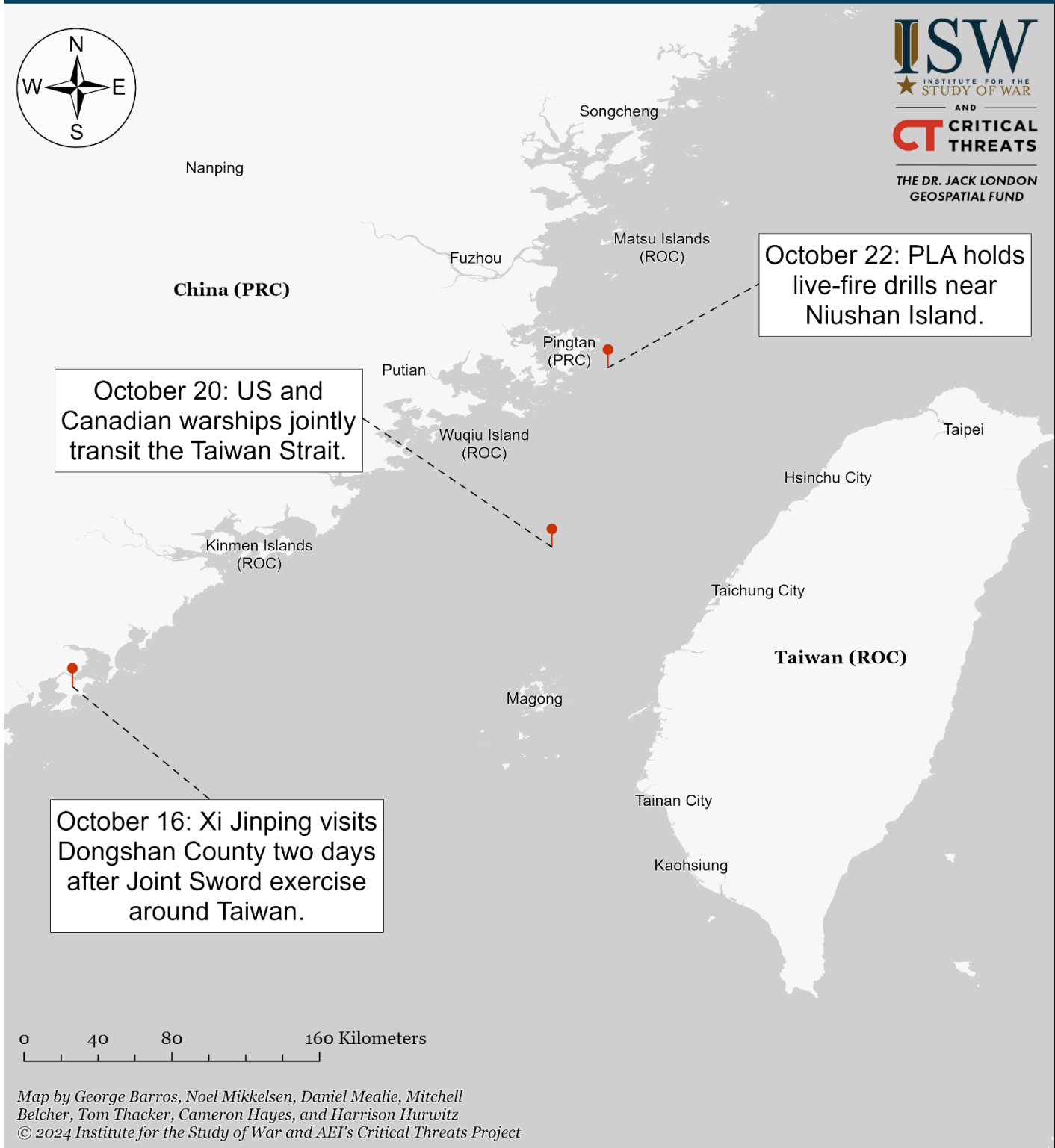
South Africa's capital despite South Africa's formal relations with the PRC (established in 1996, before South Africa broke off ties with Taiwan in 1998).[11] Taiwan may also consider requesting South Africa to move its representative office out of Taipei in response.[12]

Taiwan faced a similar issue in 2017 when Nigeria ordered Taiwan's liaison office to relocate from the administrative capital. In this case, Taiwan complied.[13] The *Washington Post* reported that it "remains unclear whether South Africa would follow through on its threat to shut down the office's operations if Taipei sticks with its insistence on not moving." [14]

China

The PLA conducted live-fire drills near an island in the Taiwan Strait a week after it carried out the Joint Sword 2024B exercise around Taiwan. The Maritime Safety Administration (MSA) announced that the drills would take place in the waters near Niushan Island on October 22, eight days after the Joint Sword exercise and two days after a US and Canadian warship jointly transited the Taiwan Strait. Niushan Island, part of Fujian Province, is 165 kilometers from Taipei and 80 kilometers south of Taiwan's Matsu islands. It is the closest point in the PRC to the main island of Taiwan.[15] Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said the PLA drill is part of an annual routine military exercise. It said the PLA is using the drill to exert deterrence in the Taiwan Strait.[16]

Activities in the Taiwan Strait, October 15-22



CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping visited an island county opposite Taiwan days after the PLA's Joint Sword 2024B exercise around Taiwan. Xi visited Dongshan County on October 16 as part of an inspection tour of Fujian Province. Dongshan County was the site of a battle in 1953 in which the ROC unsuccessfully tried to retake the island from the PLA, four years after the CCP established the PRC and expelled the KMT from the mainland. It was the last battle of its kind between PRC and ROC forces. Dongshan has also been the site of PLA drills, including landing exercises. PRC media and government readouts did not specify whether Xi inspected military facilities in Dongshan and did not mention any connection with the Joint Sword exercise.^[17] Xi visited the memorial hall of former Dongshan CCP Party Secretary Gu Wenchang. CCTV and other state media noted that Xi has mentioned Gu in speeches many times and that Gu played an important role in defending Dongshan from KMT forces.^[18] This is Xi's first inspection tour of Fujian since 2021.

The PRC accused a joint US-Canadian transit of the Taiwan Strait of undermining peace and threatening the PRC's sovereignty. The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS *Higgins* and Royal Canadian Navy Halifax-class frigate HMCS *Vancouver* jointly conducted a transit of the Taiwan Strait on October 20. A statement from US INDOPACOM said the ships transited through a "high seas corridor in the Strait that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal state."^[19] PLA Eastern Theater Command (ETC) spokesperson Li Xi said the ETC mobilized naval and air forces to monitor the transit. Li claimed the transit "disturbed the situation and undermined the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait."^[20] PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) spokesperson Lin Jian claimed that "the Taiwan issue is not an issue of freedom of navigation, but an issue concerning China's sovereignty and territorial integrity." He said the PRC "firmly opposes any country provoking or threatening China's sovereignty and security in the name of freedom of navigation."^[21] The rhetoric reflects frequently stated PRC positions and is similar to its response to the Canadian transit on August 1 and the German transit on September 14.^[22] It is harsher than the response to the previous US-Canada joint transit in November 2023, however, when the ETC did not accuse the United States and Canada of undermining peace.^[23]

PRC President Xi Jinping traveled to Kazan, Russia for the 16th BRICS summit from October 22 to 24. The BRICS summit will be the first to include new members Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates. Its original members are Brazil, Russia, India, the PRC, and South Africa.^[24] Russian foreign affairs advisor Yuri Ushakov called the summit "the largest foreign policy event ever held by Russia," with high-level representatives from 36 countries attending including 20 heads of state.^[25] Xi arrived in Kazan, along with CCP Secretary of the Secretariat Cai Qi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, on October 22.^[26] MFA spokesperson Lin Jian said that the PRC is "willing to work with all parties to promote the steady and long-term development of the 'Greater BRICS Cooperation.'"^[27]

BRICS expansion will be an agenda item for discussion in Kazan. Lin Jian noted that the Kazan summit will constitute the first meeting since BRICS' expansion.^[28] Four new members joined in 2024. Saudi Arabia was also invited to join but has not yet accepted the invitation.^[29] Belarusian Foreign Minister Maxim Ryzhenkov claimed in September that the next wave of membership expansion will be announced at the Kazan summit, though BRICS officials have not confirmed this claim.^[30] Russian

President Vladimir Putin said at least 34 countries have expressed interest in joining BRICS, including Turkey, a NATO member.[31] PRC ambassador to Russia Zhang Hanhui said in an interview with state-owned Global Times that the summit will outline a “development blueprint for the BRICS mechanism” and that the PRC welcomed further expansion of BRICS and “BRICS Plus” cooperation.[32]

Financial cooperation among BRICS countries will also be a major topic and priority for the PRC. Global Times cited Institute of Developing Countries at the China Institute of International Studies Director Wang Youming, reporting that economic and financial cooperation is expected to be among key topics.”[33] Ambassador Zhang said the summit aimed to achieve “new landmark results” in areas such as finance, artificial intelligence, and energy and minerals. He particularly stressed financial cooperation, saying that countries should “strive to promote breakthroughs in domestic currency settlement and cross-border payment cooperation.” Zhang commented on the prospects of promoting a common BRICS currency by noting that the PRC has advanced the internationalization of its currency, the renminbi. BRICS adopting the renminbi, or another common currency, would reduce reliance on the US dollar among Global South countries.[34]

Northeast Asia

Japan

The Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) claimed that it “expelled” a Japanese fishing boat from the territorial waters of the Japan-controlled Senkaku Islands. CCG Spokesman Liu Dejun claimed the vessel was illegally fishing in Chinese waters on October 15 and 16.[35] The PRC and ROC both claim sovereignty over the uninhabited Senkaku Islands, which they call the Diaoyu Islands. Japan’s Coast Guard reported that CCG ships entered the territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands two days in a row, marking the 39th such incursion in 2024, but did not confirm whether the CCG expelled a Japanese boat.[36] There have been between four and twenty CCG incursions into the Senkaku Islands’ territorial waters within 12 nautical miles of the islands in months since April 2019. The CCG’s claimed expulsion of Japanese boats from the waters around the Senkaku Islands serves to legitimize the PRC’s law enforcement jurisdiction there and demonstrate the PRC’s de facto control of the islands, even though Japan administers the islands.

The CCG began near-daily incursions into the Senkaku Islands’ contiguous zone, and occasionally territorial waters, in 2012. It significantly increased the frequency of these incursions in 2019. It has made 90–110 incursions in most months since April 2019 into the Senkaku Islands’ contiguous zone. There have been only 9 days since October 20, 2023, without CCG incursions into the Senkaku contiguous waters. This behavior appears to be part of a long-term PRC strategy to gradually erode Japanese control and assert Chinese sovereignty over the islands.[37]

Russia

The United States sanctioned two PRC firms involved in producing drones for Russia. This is the first time that the United States has accused PRC entities of sending lethal aid

to Russia's war effort in Ukraine. A US Department of Treasury statement said that the two PRC firms worked with US-sanctioned Russian firms to develop and manufacture the Garpiya-series drone in PRC-based factories and ship them to Russia.[38] Russia has deployed Garpiya drones against Ukraine.[39] The Treasury statement said that the PRC-based Xiamen Limbach Aircraft Engine Co. produced the L550E engine for the Garpiya in the PRC in collaboration with Russian company Izhevsk Electromechanical Plant Kupol (IEMZ Kupol), a subsidiary of Russian state-owned weapons company Almaz-Antey.

The statement also stated that the PRC company Redlepus Vector Industry Shenzhen Co. works with the Russian firm TSK Vektor to ship the UAVs to Russia. TSK Vektor is an intermediary between IEMZ Kupol and its PRC suppliers. TSK Vektor and IEMZ Kupol are both under US sanctions. The statement said that Redlepus has used Vektor to export components with UAV applications since the beginning of 2024, including aircraft engines, parts of automatic data processing machines, and electrical components. It further said Redlepus worked with IEMZ Kupol and TSK Vektor to establish a joint drone research and production center. [40] Reuters previously reported on the collaboration between Redlepus and the Russian firms to produce drones, including establishing a joint drone research center in the PRC's Xinjiang region.[41]

The PRC MFA told Reuters it was unaware of a Russia-PRC drone production project and that the PRC had strict export controls on drones. A US National Security Council spokesperson said that the United States had not seen any evidence that the PRC government was aware of the transactions or had any involvement in providing lethal aid to Russia.[42] Xiamen Limbach and Redlepus Viktor are private firms. PRC firms providing lethal assistance to US-sanctioned Russian firms or jointly collaborating with Russia to produce lethal equipment nevertheless marks a significant departure from the PRC's cautious approach to supporting Russia and undermines the PRC's professed neutrality on the war in Ukraine.

South Asia

The PRC and India reached an agreement on border issues contested since 2020.[43] Weeks-long disengagement talks between the two sides concluded with an agreement that both sides would resume border patrols along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between Aksai Chin and Ladakh.[44] The two sides have held rounds of talks while maintaining military assets stationed at the border since Indian and PRC forces attacked each other with sticks and stones in May 2020. Indian PM Narendra Modi and PRC President Xi Jinping agreed to "intensify" de-escalation efforts at the 2023 BRICS Summit in Johannesburg.[45]

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar stated that "the disengagement process with China has been completed." Reuters reported that "the two militaries will patrol contested points along the border according to an agreed schedule." [46] The two sides have not released a joint statement.[47] PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian stated in a press conference that "at present, the two sides have reached a solution to the relevant issues, which China has positively evaluated. In the next step, China will work with India to implement the above solution." [48]

The PRC affirmed that it seeks to expand PRC-Pakistan cooperation at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Islamabad. In his first visit to Pakistan as PRC

Premier, Li Qiang met with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting. Li stated that “China is willing to work with Pakistan, focusing on establishing an upgraded version of the CPEC.”^[49] Li said that the new China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will “aim to accelerate the construction of major projects in areas such as railways, roads, and ports” and increase “practical cooperation in agriculture, mining, information technology, and energy.”^[50] PRC Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning stated in an October 14 regular press conference that “China and Pakistan are iron-clad friends and all-weather strategic partners.”^[51]

Expanded PRC-Pakistan cooperation could take the form of counterterrorism and security efforts. The *South China Morning Post* reported that Li Qiang met with Pakistani military officials during his visit and told them that the PRC hopes to improve counterterrorism cooperation. Li told Sharif that “China firmly supports Pakistan’s counterterrorism efforts and is willing to actively promote counterterrorism cooperation, helping Pakistan to strengthen its counterterrorism capacity building.”^[52] The SCO summit took place following a militant attack that killed two Chinese nationals in Karachi on October 6. This attack prompted PRC calls for Pakistan to improve its security situation and raised questions about Pakistan’s ability to protect PRC assets. Islamabad’s inability to control its security situation has long frustrated Beijing.

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