cobap

A Brief Overview of Greater China's Immigration and Border-Related Policies in Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic

Authors and Affiliation(s):	**Cayleigh Jackson**, Emory University & **Maggie Shum**, the University of Notre Dame
Last Updated:	November 15, 2020

Border Context: International travel policy in the People's Republic of China is primarily decided upon by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose policy control does not extend to the rest of Greater China. The most up-to-date COVID-19 information for the PRC can be found at the website of the National Health Commission. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government maintains its own COVID-19 website, and the Macau SAR Government maintains a special webpage against epidemics with up-to-date information. Similarly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan maintains a special webpage where the most recent COVID-19 updates for the region can be found.

Mainland China

Since the outbreak of the pandemic (Jan 2020), China has primarily issued a partial closure (1) on entry by foreign nationals, albeit a strict and comprehensive one. In early November 2020, China also implemented a series of country-specific citizenship bans (11), with a press briefing stating that Chinese embassies in the relevant countries would continue to announce these bans if necessary.

On 2-Feb, the Entry and Exit Administration of the People's Republic of China halted processes on all visas for entering Hong Kong and Macau. On Feb 17, the Shenzhen government relaxed the restrictions to allow Shenzhen citizens to travel to Hong Kong.

Beginning on 28-Mar, China prohibited most foreigners from entering the country by temporarily suspending entry of all foreign nationals holding visas or residence permits still valid to the time of the announcement on 26-Mar. Entry by foreign nationals with APEC Business Travel Cards were also suspended, as well as several temporary visa or visa-free travel policies, such as port visas, the 24/72/144-hour visa-free transit policy, the Hainan 30-day visa-free policy, a 15-day visa-free policy specified for foreign cruise-group tours, and several visa-free policies aimed at foreign tour groups from Hong Kong, Macau, and specific ASEAN countries. Foreign nationals with visas issued after the announcement on 26-Mar were unaffected by the suspension. This policy was not given a specific end date but was announced to be "a temporary measure" that "w[ould] be calibrated in light of the evolving situation and announced accordingly."

On 28-Sept, China slightly eased this restriction, announcing that foreign nationals holding valid Chinese residence permits for "work, personal matters, and reunion" are allowed to enter China without needing to apply for new visas. However, all other measures in the 26-Mar remain in place.

On 4-Nov, the Chinese embassy in the U.K. announced a ban on all traveling into China from non-Chinese nationals within the U.K., regardless if individuals "[hold] currently valid Chinese visas and residence permits for work, private affairs, or groups". This began a series of citizenship bans—shortly after on 5-Nov, Chinese embassies in Belgium, Bangladesh, Russia, the Philippines, Ukraine, France, Italy, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and India made identical announcements. These measures were again announced to be temporary and to be modified by a separate policy at a later date.

China has, to date, not implemented any policies to fully close specific land, air, or sea borders[1]. However, China has maintained very tight control on many of its borders, with some borders, such as the border with Vietnam, decreasing from 20.79 million inbound and outbound travels in 2019 to only 80 on average per day in May 2020. International flights were also heavily restricted, with international airlines only allowed to maintain one route into China that sends one flight per week. It is also notable that soon after the outbreak of the pandemic (Jan 2020), nearly all of China's neighbors quickly closed their borders with China.

In order to alleviate the pandemic's impact on the economy, Chinese officials are permitting essential business travel from Singapore and South Korea under fast-track arrangements. These measures exempt selected business personnel from strict quarantine measures so they can conduct business amid the pandemic.

Hong Kong

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has implemented partial closures based on travel history (2) and air travel by non-residents (1). Hong Kong has also implemented a variety of strict quarantine policies.

On 20-Jan, the Food and Health Bureau announced that all passengers traveling by air from the city of Wuhan into Hong Kong were required to submit a "Health & Quarantine

---

[1] China increased restrictions of one specific checkpoint on the border with Russia named *Suifenhe* in April, which was called by some media outlets as China "closing the border with Russia." However, China did not initiate a full closure; and in effect, Russia had closed its land border with China since February.

Information Declaration." This policy did not cover those from Wuhan entering Hong Kong via high-speed train.

On 27-Jan, the Hong Kong SAR government began to refuse entry into Hong Kong for all Hubei residents and all non-Hong Kong residents who had visited the Hubei Province in the past 14 days. This policy remained in place until mid-August.

On 8-Feb, the Hong Kong government implemented compulsory quarantine for 14 days of persons from mainland China, or visited China in the past 14 days arriving at Hong Kong via ports of entry.

On 25-Feb, Hong Kong restricted non-Hong Kong residents who had visited Korea in the past 14 days from entering Hong Kong; this measure was lifted in mid-March.

On 17-March, the Hong Kong SAR government announced compulsory quarantine for all persons who had visited Italy, France, Germany, Japan and Spain in the past 14 days when entering Hong Kong. The policy was extended to Ireland, the UK, the US and Egypt on 19-March.

Since 25-Mar, Hong Kong has denied entry for all non-Hong Kong residents coming from overseas countries and regions by plane. Additionally, this policy denies entry to all non-Hong Kong residents coming from Mainland China, Macau and Taiwan if they have been to any overseas countries and regions in the past 14 days, and all travelers must self-quarantine for two weeks. This measure was initially intended to be in place for 14 days after it was implemented, but was later extended until further notice.

On 2-Nov, Singapore announced its first two-way air travel bubble with Hong Kong. The policy intention was to allow individuals to travel between the two locations without the need to be quarantined, subject to conditions, including testing negative for Covid-19. However, on 21-Nov this arrangement was postponed for two weeks by the Singaporean government after an uptick in positive COVID-19 cases in Hong Kong.

Macau

Macau has implemented a complete closure (1).

On 27-Jan, the Macau SAR government began to refuse entry into Macau for all Hubei residents and all non-Macau residents who had visited the Hubei Province in the past 14 days.

On 18-Mar, the Macau SAR government announced it would ban all non-residents from entering Macau, with exceptions for residents of Mainland China, Hong Kong, and

Taiwan, as well as work permit holders. This restriction has not been lifted, and no timeline has been given for doing so.

Taiwan

Taiwan has implemented three partial closures based on travel history (1), citizenship (1), and airline transit (1). It also later implemented a complete closure (1), which is currently in the process of being slowly appeased.

Beginning on 7-Feb, Taiwan barred entry for all foreign nationals who had visited or resided in the PRC in the past 14 days, including those eligible for visa-free treatment, landing visas, e-visas, or currently carrying valid visas. This restriction originally only applied to those who had visited Mainland China, but was quickly amended to include Hong Kong and Macau, as well.

On 11-Feb, Taiwan suspended entry for all Hong Kong and Macau residents, with a handful of exceptions. Taiwan also suspended the transit of all airline passengers through Taiwan from 24-Mar until 7-Apr. Since 19-Mar, all foreign nationals have been barred from entering Taiwan, with the ability for foreign nationals to apply for an exempted status if they can meet criteria and submit required documentation. Since 24-June, 2020, Taiwan has begun to gradually ease this restriction.

From 29-Oct, the Taiwan government announced it would allow essential, short-term business travel for specific activities for residents from countries on the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC)'s low- and medium-risk location list.

Timeline

20-Jan - 27-Jan: Hong Kong SAR Food and Health Bureau requires all passengers travelling by air from Wuhan to submit a "Health & Quarantine Information Declaration" form

27-Jan - 17-Aug: Hong Kong SAR government refuses entry for all Hubei residents and all non-Hong Kong residents who visited the Hubei Province in the past 14 days

27-Jan -18-Mar: Macau SAR government refuses entry into Macau for all Hubei residents and all non-Macau residents who had visited the Hubei Province in the past 14 days

2-Feb - 17-Feb: People's Republic of China halts visa processes for Chinese citizens to enter Hong Kong or Macau

7-Feb - 19-Mar: Taiwan bars entry for all foreign nationals who visited or resided in Mainland China, Hong Kong, or Macau in the past 14 days

8-Feb - N/A: Hong Kong SAR government announces compulsory quarantine for those arriving from China or who had visited China

11-Feb - N/A: Taiwan suspends entry for all residents of Hong Kong and Macau

25-Feb - 17-Mar: Hong Kong bars entry for all non-Hong Kong residents who visited Korea in the past 14 days

17-Mar - 25-Mar: Hong Kong SAR government announces compulsory quarantine for those who had visited Italy, France, Germany, Japan and Spain in the past 14 days

18-Mar - N/A: Macau SAR government bans entry for all non-residents, not including residents of Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

19-Mar - 25-Mar: Hong Kong SAR government announces compulsory quarantine for those who had visited Ireland, the UK, the US and Egypt in the past 14 days

19-Mar - N/A: Taiwan bans all foreign nationals from entering Taiwan, with exceptions

24-Mar - 7-Apr: Taiwan bans all airline passenger transits through the country

25-Mar - N/A: Hong Kong prohibits all non-residents from arriving in Hong Kong by plane. Residents of Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau are denied entry if they have been anywhere overseas in the past 14 days and must mandatory quarantine

28-Mar - N/A: China suspends entry of foreign nationals holding still-valid visas or residence permits, and suspends a number of visa-free travel policies

24-June - N/A: Taiwan begins to ease the restrictions of its previous entry ban for foreign nationals

28-Sept - N/A: China reallows foreign nationals with valid residence permits to enter without applying for new visas

29-Oct - N/A: Taiwan allows essential travel from countries on the CECC's low- and medium- risk location list

2-Nov - N/A: Singaporean government announces two-way travel bubble with Hong Kong, delayed start until 21-Nov

4-Nov - N/A: Chinese embassy in the U.K. announces full travel bans for travelers coming to China from the U.K

5-Nov - N/A: Chinese embassies in Belgium, Russia, Ukraine, France, Italy, Nigeria, Ethiopia, India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines announce full travel bans for travelers coming to China from these countries

_____

Cayleigh Jackson is a research assistant (RA) and portfolio manager for the COVID Border Accountability Project (COBAP). COBAP documents country-level policy changes in travel and immigration, introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, worldwide. Jackson manages the China portfolio and monitors the data for Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Maggie Shum is research associate at the Keough School of Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame, and is a native of Hong Kong. Her research focuses on party organization, participatory institutions and contentious politics in Latin America and Hong Kong.