UNBIASED TEXTS

1.

Do China's recent military purges spell trouble for Xi Jinping?

They were trusted and favoured by Xi Jinping. Now, they seem to be vanishing.

In recent months, the disappearances of several high-ranking Chinese officials have sparked intense speculation over whether Mr Xi is embarking on a purge, particularly of those linked to the military.

The latest person who appears to have fallen from grace is defence minister Li Shangfu, who has not been seen in public for some weeks now.

While his absence was not seen as unusual at first, scrutiny intensified when [a top US diplomat pointed it out](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-66817348). A Reuters report later said General Li, who used to oversee arms procurement for the People's Liberation Army (PLA), was being investigated over military equipment purchases.

His "disappearance" comes weeks after [two top officials](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-66369136) in the Rocket Forces - the military arm that controls nuclear missiles - and a military court judge were removed.

Fresh rumours are now circulating that some cadres in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) central military commission that controls the armed forces are also being investigated.

Little to no official explanation has been given for these removals, apart from "health reasons". In this void, speculation has blossomed.

The main theory is that authorities are cracking down on corruption in the PLA.

The military has been on heightened alert - in July it issued an unusual call-out asking the public for tip-offs on corruption in the past five years. Mr Xi also launched a fresh round of inspections, criss-crossing the country to make five visits to military bases since April, according to checks by BBC Monitoring.

Corruption has long been a problem in the military particularly since China began liberalising its economy in the 1970s, noted James Char, a research fellow at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University who studies the relationship between the CCP and the military.

Every year China spends more than a trillion yuan on the military with some going towards procurement transactions, which for national security reasons cannot be fully revealed. This lack of transparency is further compounded by China's one-party centralised system.

Unlike the kind of public scrutiny other countries' militaries are subjected to, China's armed forces are overseen exclusively by the CCP, pointed out Dr Char.

While Mr Xi has had some wins in tempering corruption within the armed forces and restoring its reputation to some extent, "rooting out corruption is a formidable if not impossible undertaking" as it would require "systemic redesigns which I'm afraid the authoritarian state remains averse to", Dr Char added.

"Until the CCP government is willing to put in place a proper legal system no longer sanctioned by itself, such purges will keep occurring." (…)

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-66875526

2.

Xi Jinping replaces leaders of China's elite nuclear force

China replaced two leaders of an elite unit managing its nuclear arsenal, triggering speculation of a purge.

General Li Yuchao who headed the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Rocket Force unit and his deputy had "disappeared" for months.

Former deputy navy chief Wang Houbin and party central committee member Xu Xisheng were named as replacements.

This is the biggest unplanned shake-up in Beijing's military leadership in almost a decade.

"The latest purge is significant… [as] China is undertaking one of the most profound changes in nuclear strategy in decades," said Lyle Morris, a foreign policy and national security fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute.

"[President] Xi [Jinping] has consolidated control of the PLA in unprecedented ways, but that doesn't mean it's complete. Xi is still worried about corruption in the ranks and has signalled that absolute loyalty to the [party] has not yet been achieved," he said.

Mr Xi is also chairman of China's top military command, the Central Military Commission.

At a meeting late last month, Mr Xi stressed the need to focus efforts on "addressing prominent issues faced by party organisations at all levels, in aspects such as maintaining the party's absolute leadership over the military", Chinese state media reported.

Beijing has not commented on the whereabouts of Gen Li and his deputy General Liu Guangbin, but a South China Morning Post report last week suggested that the commission's anti-corruption arm had launched an investigation into the two men, as well as Gen Li's former deputy Zhang Zhenzhong.

The report cited two unnamed sources.

Mr Wang's and Mr Xu's new appointments came a day before the 96th anniversary of the PLA's founding on 1 August. They were announced at a ceremony at the commission's headquarters in Beijing.

Both have been promoted from the rank of lieutenant general to full general which in China marks the highest rank for active service officers.

Mr Morris said Gen Li's downfall, together with the recent replacement of former foreign minister Qin Gang, presents one of the biggest leadership challenges for Mr Xi in recent times.

Mr Qin had been absent from public commitments for a month before he was replaced by his predecessor Wang Yi last week. No explaination was given for his removal.

In 2014, a broad purge among China's military ranks saw former deputy chairs of the Central Military Commission Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong ousted and prosecuted for corruption. Guo was sentenced to life in jail by a military court, while Xu died before his trial.

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-66369136

3.

Bill Gates meets Xi Jinping as US-China tensions simmer

Microsoft's co-founder Bill Gates met China's President Xi Jinping on Friday as tensions remain high between Washington and Beijing.

Mr Xi told Mr Gates that he was "the first American friend" he had met in Beijing this year, according to Chinese state media.

Mr Gates is the latest high-profile US business leader to visit China since it reopened its borders.

This weekend, the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will also visit China.

"I often say that the foundation of Sino-US relations is among the people, and we always look to the American people and hope that the two peoples will continue to be friendly," Mr Xi was reported to have said to Mr Gates.

It was Mr Xi's first meeting with a foreign business figure in recent years. He stopped travelling abroad in 2020, when China shut its borders during the pandemic. Mr Xi and Mr Gates are last known to have met in 2015.

This year, Tesla's Elon Musk, Jamie Dimon of JP Morgan and Apple's Tim Cook have all travelled to the country.

While they held meetings with senior Chinese officials, they did not meet Mr Xi.

Mr Gates is in China in his role as the co-chairman of the The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation he started with his former wife.

In 2020, Mr Gates stepped down from Microsoft's board to focus on the foundation, which focuses on global health, education and climate change.

He had quit his full-time executive role at the technology giant 12 years earlier.

Mr Blinken - who is the first US cabinet official to visit China since 2019 - is scheduled to arrive in Beijing this weekend. However expectations are low that any serious headway will be made on the growing list of disputes between the US and China.

https://www.bbc.com/news/business-65924990

4.

China tightens Xi Jinping's powers against the West with new law

China is adding to Xi Jinping's vast powers with a new law that will assert Beijing's interests on the world stage.

The law threatens to punish entities that act in ways "detrimental" to China's interests but does not specify which lines should not be crossed.

Experts say the law underscores China's aggressive diplomacy, but how actively it will be enforced when it takes effect on 1 July remains to be seen.

After all, China has been keen to court foreign investment post Covid.

Jacques deLisle, a law and political science professor from the University of Pennsylvania, said much of the law is "relatively empty rhetoric and largely familiar" but it spells a more assertive foreign policy and stronger pushback against the US.

State media outlet The Global Times called the law a "key step to enrich the legal toolbox against Western hegemony".

Dr Chong Ja-Ian, a non-resident scholar at Carnegie China, said it was a "signal" of Beijing's intention to "actively pursue their interests in ways that include more coercion and pressure, even as they hold out the attraction of cooperation and economic gains".

China's leaders tread an "inherent tension" between their pursuit of economic development and protection of national security and interests, said Manoj Kewalramani, who leads the China Studies Programme at Indian think tank the Takshashila Institution.

"This push and pull is likely to continue," he said.

Relations between Beijing and Washington in particular have been strained in recent years, with the two superpowers exchanging a series of tit-for-tat trade sanctions.

Chinese authorities have taken a series of actions against Western firms, including raiding and shuttering the local offices of several US-headquartered consulting firms this year. (...)

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-66050926

5.

Xi Jinping begins historic third term as China's president

China's leader Xi Jinping has secured a historic third term as president from the country's rubber-stamp parliament.

It follows a consolidation of power that has made Mr Xi, 69, China's most dominant leader in generations.

In the Chinese system of governance, the functions of the president are largely ceremonial.

Mr Xi's power comes from him being General Secretary of the Communist Party and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC).

He was handed both posts at a party congress last October.

Confirmation of his third term as president had been widely expected. The naming of a new premier and various ministers in the coming days is considered more important.

The new appointees are mostly expected to be Xi Jinping loyalists. This includes Li Qiang, who is tipped to serve as Mr Xi's number two.

On Friday, Mr Xi has also gained another term as the chairman of the CMC of the People's Republic of China. There are two CMCs in the country - one is a party organisation while another is a state institution - but their make-up is usually the same.

Mr Xi has solidified his rule as China reopens from his bruising zero-Covid policy that has fuelled anti-government protests. The country is also facing a falling birth rate that threatens its economic growth engine.

Ties between Beijing and Washington remain testy, recently highlighted by allegations China had been spying on the US with balloons.

"Whether a strengthened Xi and increasing centralisation is sufficient to overcome these problems - or perhaps make them worse - is unknown and perhaps not knowable at present," Ian Chong, a political scientist at the National University Singapore, told the BBC.

"In a sense, Xi is betting that centralisation under the party with him at the helm is a solution to these disparate issues," he said. (...)

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-64911512

6.

China's Xi Jinping unanimously elected to serve third term as president

Chinese President Xi Jinping won an official third five-year term as president Friday, following a vote by the country’s mostly ceremonial legislature.

The National People's Congress voted 2,952 to 0 to re-elect Xi, who is 69, putting him on track to stay in power for life.

Xi’s victory was a foregone conclusion as he has sidelined potential rivals and filled the top ranks of the ruling Communist Party with his own supporters since he first rose to power in 2012.

Xi named himself to a third five-year term as party general secretary in October, breaking a longstanding Chinese tradition where leaders hand over power after two terms, or once a decade.

His two-term limit was previously deleted from the Chinese constitution, leading experts to predict he could choose to stay in power for life.

NPC members were not given a list of potential other candidates, so it was assumed Xi ran unopposed. The election process was mostly done in secret.

In tandem with the presidency extension, Xi was unanimously named commander of the People's Liberation Army, the formal name for China’s military.

The Chinese armed forces are unique in that they are led by the ruling political party, rather than its members swearing an oath to defend the country or a constitution.

The elections were held as China is facing increasing international pressure to subside its aggression in the East China Sea and its hostilities with Taiwan and Hong Kong, and to call for Russia to end its invasion of Ukraine.

7.

Xi Jinping removed general amid corruption investigation, US officials believe: report

U.S. officials believe that missing Chinese General Li Shangfu has in fact been removed from his post and placed under investigation amid a possible "corruption purge" in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).

A report in the Financial Times (FT) cited three U.S. officials and "two people briefed on the intelligence," and all have concluded that Chinese President Xi Jinping removed Li from his position, following similar disappearances and reported ousting of two generals in the PLA Rocket Force, which operates China’s arsenal of missiles.

The investigation into Li relates to the procurement of military equipment and includes eight senior officials from the military's procurement unit, which Li led from 2017 to 2022 prior to his appointment as defense minister. The military's disciplinary inspection commission is leading the probe. (...)

https://www.foxnews.com/world/chinas-xi-jinping-unanimously-elected-third-term-president

8.

On Taiwan, Xi Jinping warns against international ‘interference.’

Xi Jinping’s speech on Sunday broke little new ground on the question of Taiwan but struck a sharper tone, warning the world that China, and China alone, would decide how and when to bring about unification.

Referring to Taiwan earlier in his speech than he did five years ago — a sign of its taking on more importance, analysts said — Mr. Xi stressed that China would “continue to strive for peaceful reunification,” but he also said that China reserved the right to use force and “all measures necessary.”

“This is directed solely at interference by outside forces and a few separatists seeking Taiwan independence,” he said.

Declaring a firm line on Taiwan, Mr. Xi drew one of the speech’s longest stretches of applause from delegates in the room. The focus on external forces signaled growing recognition by China that Taiwan has become more of a priority for the United States, as well as for an increasing number of countries around the world. (...)

https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/16/world/asia/on-taiwan-xi-jinping-warns-against-international-interference.html

9.

Banana Peels for Xi Jinping

(...) Xi has painted himself into a corner, and it will be costly for him to ease up on his hated Covid policy.

This is a problem of Xi’s own making. He refused to import highly effective mRNA vaccines, and China’s effort to vaccinate older people has been anemic. Only 40 percent of Chinese over 80 have received a booster, so a relaxation of Covid rules could lead to Covid-19 killing hundreds of thousands of people.

Meanwhile, the current zero-Covid policy has devastated the economy and antagonized the population. It seems unsustainable.

(...) Gene Sharp, an American scholar who literally wrote the manual for toppling dictators, used to say that one of the biggest threats to tyrants was humor. Autocrats could survive earnest calls for free expression, but they deflated when they were laughed at.

I wonder if that will be the unclothed emperor’s challenge ahead, even if he restores the Big Silence.

Chinese university students have been singing the national anthem because it includes these words (written before the 1949 Communist revolution): “Arise, ye who refuse to be slaves … The Chinese nation faces its greatest danger.”

It would be awkward to arrest young people for singing the national anthem, but — like that blank paper — everyone knows what it signifies. That may be intolerable for Xi.

“You get three or five people together and sing the national anthem, and you’ll be arrested,” predicted a veteran Chinese journalist who also covered Tiananmen.

When police officers show up, protesters have sometimes switched to chanting satirical slogans in favor of the zero-Covid policy, like, “We want Covid tests!”

When Beijing protesters were criticized for being pawns of foreign forces, one didn’t miss a beat as he worked the crowd. “By foreign forces,” he asked, “are you referring to Marx and Engels?”

Chinese netizens these days discuss “banana peels” (xiang jiao pi) and “shrimp moss” (xia tai). Why? Because the former has the same initials as Xi Jinping. And “shrimp moss” sounds like the Chinese for “step down.”

A dictator’s dilemma: How do you arrest people for posting about banana peels without adding to the ridicule that undermines your rule?

https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/30/opinion/china-covid-protests-xi-jinping.html

10.

Xi Jinping Calls for China to create 'world-class military' as he targets Taiwan

Chinese dictator Xi Jinping called for China to create a world-class military as he declared supremacy over Hong Kong and set his sights on Taiwan on Sunday.

Xi made the comments during his opening address to the Chinese Community Party Congress in Beijing. Xi spoke before 2,300 CPP delegates who will later vote to grant him an unprecedented third term as China's president and general secretary of the CCP. The leader laid out ambitions for China, declaring a determination to beef up the country's military and take over Taiwan. (...)

https://www.foxnews.com/world/xi-jinping-calls-china-create-world-class-military-he-targets-taiwan

11.

Tibetan exile leader warns of Chinese aggression: 'China will transform you'

The oppression of Tibetans by the Chinese government is well documented – but new reports show that it's getting worse.

China is ramping up its abuses and 500,000 Tibetans are now being held in labor camps as part of a systematic genocidal campaign that has one aim. "They want to make Tibet into a Chinese province and they want to make Tibetans into Chinese," outgoing Tibetan president-in-exile, Lobsang Sangay, told Fox News.

The Chinese military has recently increased its presence in the country; forced sterilization is being reported, while people are routinely arrested and known to be tortured and killed. Sangay said it must be stopped. (...)

https://www.foxnews.com/world/tibetan-exile-leader-warns-chinese-aggression

12.

Stop flow of pro-China propaganda in Taiwan

The Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau and the New Taipei City Prosecutors’ Office recently uncovered misconduct by Kaohsiung news outlet China VTV Co. The company is being investigated for allegedly having financial connections with China without the approval of the Ministry of Economic Affairs’ Investment Commission.

China VTV also allegedly conducted an information campaign by creating videos in line with Chinese propaganda and posting them on social media, aiming to foment social division and mistrust in the government, prosecutors said.

This is nothing short of exhilarating, as it means that the government is finally using legal means to stop pro-China “accomplices” that are promoting Chinese propaganda. (…)

https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2022/11/29/2003789773

13.

Taiwan warns Australia about ‘hidden’ Chinese agenda

Beijing is pursuing a “divide and conquer” strategy as it cultivates ties with Canberra, Taipei’s envoy has claimed

Taiwan has warned Australia to be wary of a rapprochement with China, claiming that President Xi Jinping could be attempting to drive a wedge between Western countries.

In an interview with the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age published on Monday, Douglas Hsu, who was recently appointed as Taiwan’s chief representative to Canberra, warned that Xi may have a “hidden agenda” in bilateral relations.

Insisting that he has nothing against improved ties between China and Australia, and that he understands the desire to ramp up trade, Hsu urged Canberra to look beyond what he called the “rosy pictures” painted by Xi about bilateral relations.

“Their strategy is basically divide and conquer,” the envoy argued. “We don’t want to see a very troublesome world, but we have to keep in mind and look at the track record that Beijing has.”

Hsu also complained about what he described as “more aggressive behaviors from China” in recent years. The comments came after Taiwanese defense officials said they had registered more than 103 aircraft belonging to Beijing’s military operating near the island between Sunday and Monday. (...)

https://www.rt.com/news/583157-taiwan-australia-xi-hidden-agenda/

14.

Young Chinese find ways to express dissent outside of the country

Thousands of posters condemning China’s top leader have appeared on college campuses in New York, Barcelona, Stockholm, Tokyo and elsewhere over the past few days as Chinese students and dissidents spread the message of a lone protester in China.

The posters — paper pasted onto just about everything — have one common theme: Oust the “despotic traitor,” Xi Jinping.

Those words first appeared in Beijing on Oct. 13. As Mr. Xi, China’s top leader, was expected to coast to a third term during the Communist Party congress, someone whose identity has not been confirmed, managed to hang a banner on a busy bridge calling for Mr. Xi’s dismissal. On Sunday, that third term was confirmed.

The protest slogans on the banner also included “Elections, Not Dictatorship” and “Citizens, Not Flunkies.”

The appearance of such strong dissent before an important Communist Party meeting, in a heavily policed city, astonished the whole country. The protester was taken away by police, and online discussions were quickly censored.

Dissidents, however, then found ways to amplify the message overseas. The protest slogans on the Beijing bridge have popped up on bulletin boards, poles and bus stations at more than 200 colleges across at least 20 countries, as many international Chinese students said they were saluting the protester and fighting Mr. Xi’s autocracy. (...)

https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/22/world/china-xi-jinping-congress?smid=url-share#young-chinese-find-ways-to-express-dissent-outside-of-the-country

15.

Xi Jinping Has Fallen Into the Dictator Trap

President Xi Jinping’s first decade in power has been a study in hubris. He has purged political rivals and adopted heavy-handed policies that have imperiled China’s economy. He laid the groundwork for a crackdown in the Xinjiang region that drove Muslim citizens into thought reform camps and has alarmed and alienated neighbors with an aggressive foreign policy.

And things just might get worse.

The Chinese Communist Party congress, which opens on Sunday, is expected to hand Mr. Xi another five years as general secretary of the party. Rather than a reassuring sign of continuity, his third term as the top leader of China could spell years of uncertainty as problems mount around an unbound leader who has shown little inclination to share decision-making.

Mr. Xi fell into the same trap that has ensnared dictators throughout history: He overreached. He has concentrated more power in his hands than any Chinese leader since Mao Zedong, looming so completely over the country that he’s been called the “chairman of everything.”

Rivals — real and imagined — have been removed through an extensive anti-corruption campaign. Two more top former officials were jailed last month, accused of financial crimes and disloyalty to Mr. Xi. Mr. Xi has openly accused other politicians of plotting against the party from the outset of his purge ten years ago. He values fealty to himself as more important than competence, and subordinates compete to prove their loyalty by carrying out his policies to the extreme rather than raising harsh truths about negative consequences. (...)

https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/14/opinion/international-world/china-politics-xi.html

16.

China complains to Germany after foreign minister calls Xi a 'dictator'

China has complained to Germany after its foreign minister labelled President Xi Jinping a "dictator", the Chinese foreign ministry said on Monday, calling the title "absurd" and an "open political provocation".

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock made the remarks in a live interview with Fox News last week when asked about Russia's war on Ukraine.

"If Putin were to win this war, what sign would that be for other dictators in the world, like Xi, like the Chinese president?” , she said. (...)

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-complains-germany-after-foreign-minister-calls-xi-dictator-2023-09-18/

17.

China's military rocket force uncovers 'shortcomings,' PLA Daily reports

A unit of China's Rocket Force uncovered "shortcomings" during a field assessment of an exercise, the PLA Daily reported on Friday in a rare critique, suggesting gaps in combat readiness at the armed force overseeing conventional and nuclear missiles.

Assessment of problems in the training and preparation of troops must be done "every day and every month" to clear up bottlenecks and difficulties, the official newspaper of the Chinese military reported, citing a Communist Party leader of a unit at the Rocket Force who went on a recent field survey.

The combat readiness of the People's Liberation Army Rocket Force, a strategic branch of the Chinese military, has come under focus recently after its two most senior leaders were suddenly replaced at the end of July with commanders not from the force.

Since August, the Rocket Force has conducted at least two drills and training sessions, according to its official account on Weibo, a popular Chinese microblog. (...)

https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-military-rocket-force-uncovers-shortcomings-pla-daily-2023-09-15/

18.

Xi Jinping has entered a third term surrounded by loyalists

Chinese leader Xi Jinping has formally stepped into his norm-breaking third term ruling China with an iron grip on power, as he revealed a new leadership team stacked with loyal allies.

The new A-team: Xi announced six men — Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi — to stand alongside him as members of the Politburo Standing Committee, China’s top ruling body. They are all staunch Xi loyalists — clearing the path for him to rule with minimal internal discord or opposition.

All male Politburo lineup: Xi also revealed the new 24-member Politburo, which for the first time in at least 25 years includes no women – highlighting the stark lack of female representation in the Communist Party’s leadership.

Officials removed: Two names raised eyebrows for their conspicuous absence. Hu Chunhua, one of China’s vice premiers, was once widely viewed as a candidate for top leadership — but the 59-year-old is now no longer listed as a Politburo member. Meanwhile, former Xinjiang party secretary Chen Quanguo is also missing from the Central Committee roster.

No clear successors: Standing Committee lineups before the Xi era have included younger members as potential successors for the top leader. But with the youngest member at 60 years old this time, there’s no stand-out name in the mix – a potential sign Xi is not planning to step down anytime soon.

Fallout over Hu Jintao: The 79-year-old former leader was unexpectedly led out of the room during yesterday’s closing ceremony of the Party Congress, seeming initially reluctant to leave. State-run news agency Xinhua later said on its English-language Twitter — which is blocked in China — that Hu had been removed for “health” reasons, though many experts have voiced doubt. The incident has so far not been reported in state-run Chinese-language media or discussed on Chinese social media, where such conversation is highly restricted.

https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/22/china/china-party-congress-xi-jinping-leadership-lineup-revealed-intl-hnk/index.html

19.

Pro-Chinese online influence campaign promoted protests in Washington, researchers say

A Chinese marketing firm likely organized and promoted protests in Washington last year as part of a wide-ranging pro-Beijing influence campaign, according to new research.

The Chinese firm also used a network of over 70 fake news websites to promote pro-China content in an example of the more aggressive efforts by pro-China operatives to influence US political debate in recent years, according to security firm Mandiant, which analyzed the activity.

One of the protests was against a US government ban on goods produced in China’s Xinjiang region, where US officials have accused the Chinese government of systematic repression of the Uyghurs. The other protest was on the sidelines of a June conference on international religious freedom, Mandiant said.

One of the protests only attracted roughly a dozen people but it showed the scope and ambition of the pro-China efforts. (...)

https://edition.cnn.com/2023/07/24/politics/china-influence-washington-protests/index.html

20.

Anti-Xi protest spreads in China and worldwide as Chinese leader begins third term

Jolie’s nerves were running high as she walked into the campus of Goldsmiths, the University of London, last Friday morning. She’d planned to arrive early enough that the campus would be deserted, but her fellow students were already beginning to filter in to start their day.

In the hallway of an academic building, Jolie, who’d worn a face mask to obscure her identity, waited for the right moment to reach into her bag for the source of her nervousness – several pieces of A4-size paper she had printed out in the small hours of the night.

Finally, when she made sure none of the students – especially those who, like Jolie, come from China – were watching, she quickly pasted one of them on a notice board.

“Life not zero-Covid policy, freedom not martial-lawish lockdown, dignity not lies, reform not cultural revolution, votes not dictatorship, citizens not slaves,” it read, in English.

The day before, these words, in Chinese, had been handwritten in red paint on a banner hanging over a busy overpass thousands of miles away in Beijing, in a rare, bold protest against China’s top leader Xi Jinping.

Another banner on the Sitong Bridge denounced Xi as a “dictator” and “national traitor” and called for his removal – just days before a key Communist Party meeting at which he is set to secure a precedent-breaking third term. (...)

https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/22/china/china-party-congress-overseas-students-protest-intl-hnk/index.html

21.

Beijing must abandon ‘acts of coercion and aggression’, says Taiwan

Taiwan’s Interior Affairs Council, a government agency responsible for handling cross-strait affairs, responded on Sunday to Xi Jinping’s speech by saying that Beijing should “abandon its acts of coercion and aggression”.

Xi declared in the opening speech of the 20th Communist Party Congress that it is up to the Chinese people to resolve the Taiwan issue and that the country will never renounce the right to use force, but will fight for a peaceful solution.

“While the Chinese Communist Party is facing drastic changes in international relations and growing social and economic challenges, its policy towards Taiwan still lacks a new line of thought or correct judgment,” the council said in a statement.

(...)

China views Taiwan, which is democratically governed, as its own territory, despite strong objections from the Taipei government, which rejects claims to sovereignty and says only the people of the island have the right to decide their future.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has previously said that war between Taiwan and China is “absolutely not an option” and reiterated her willingness to talk to Beijing. China refuses to speak to Tsai, considering her a separatist.

Beijing offered Taiwan a “one country, two systems” model of autonomy, the same formula it uses for Hong Kong. But all major Taiwanese political parties have rejected this proposal and it has almost no public support, according to opinion polls.

https://www.worldstockmarket.net/beijing-must-abandon-acts-of-coercion-and-aggression-says-taiwan/

22.

China’s Xi emerges from Communist Party Congress with more power, set for third term

China’s top leader Xi Jinping is set to begin a norm-breaking third term with an even greater concentration of power, after retiring key party leaders from the top ruling body to make room for his own allies.

The week-long Communist Party Congress concluded Saturday with the ushering in of a new Central Committee – the party’s 200-member central leadership – which will in turn select a new slate of top leaders on Sunday.

Premier Li Keqiang and Wang Yang – neither of whom is seen to have close ties with Xi – are not included in the new Central Committee, meaning they have left China’s top ruling body and will go into full retirement.

Xi is widely expected to be appointed the party’s general secretary for another five years on Sunday, paving the way for potential lifelong rule. At 69, he has exceeded the informal retirement age of 68 for senior party leaders. Xi’s name is included in the list of new Central Committee members. (...)

https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/22/china/china-party-congress-closing-day-intl-hnk/index.html

23.

UN envoys tour Tibet on China-organised trip amid rights scrutiny

A group of U.N. ambassadors are touring Tibet on a trip arranged by China, diplomats said, an apparent push by Beijing to counter mounting criticism of its human rights record ahead of a review by the global body in early 2024.

Photos posted on the social media platform X suggested the trip was mostly attended by close Chinese allies.

U.N. experts have this year voiced repeated concerns over Tibet, which is administered by Beijing as an autonomous region within China, most recently in August when they raised the plight of jailed Tibetan rights defenders.

The United States last week imposed visa sanctions on unnamed Chinese officials for allegedly taking part in "forced assimilation" of Tibetan children through state-run boarding schools seeking to eliminate Tibet's traditions, according to a statement from U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

China's foreign ministry on Thursday vowed "reciprocal" measures and condemned U.S. "lies on Tibet".

China has also faced criticism for its treatment of Muslims in its Xinjiang region, which the U.N. said a year ago may constitute crimes against humanity. (…)

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/un-envoys-tour-tibet-china-organised-trip-amid-rights-scrutiny-2023-09-01/

24.

Philippines says China blocked, water-cannoned boat in South China Sea

The Philippines on Sunday accused China's coast guard of blocking and water-cannoning a Philippine military supply boat in the South China Sea, condemning the "excessive and offensive actions" against its vessels.

China's coast guard countered that it had implemented necessary controls in accordance with the law to deter Philippine ships, which it accused of trespassing and carrying illegal building materials.

China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, an assertion rejected internationally, while Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei, Taiwan and the Philippines have various claims to certain areas.

Beijing often irks its neighbours with maritime actions they call aggressive and with longer-term activities like building islands on reefs and equipping them with missiles and runways.

A Chinese coast guard vessel on Saturday blocked and water-cannoned the chartered Philippine boat on a routine troop rotation and resupply mission, "in wanton disregard of the safety of the people on board and in violation of international law", the Armed Forces of the Philippines said. (…)

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-says-china-blocked-water-cannoned-boat-s-china-sea-2023-08-06/

25.

China opposes UK's 'discriminatory actions' against China-linked deals

China firmly opposes what it called the British government's "discriminatory actions" against Chinese firms, the country's embassy in the UK said after London intervened in Chinese-linked takeovers eight times in the last year.

The British government said in a report that it had blocked or imposed conditions on eight transactions involving China-linked investment in domestic companies under its National Security and Investment Act in the last year.

"We strongly urge the British side to stop its unreasonable suppression of Chinese enterprises and provide a fair, just and non-discriminatory business environment for them," the Chinese embassy in London said on Wednesday.

Introduced in 2021, the National Security and Investment Act aimed to give Britain stronger powers to scrutinise and intervene in foreign investments, having traditionally been one of the most open markets for global mergers and acquisitions.

Britain said that China-related investment accounted for eight of the 15 interventions it had made in its first full-year set of figures of how the law was being used.

In November Britain ordered Chinese-owned technology company Nexperia to sell at least 86% of Britain's biggest microchip factory, Newport Wafer Fab, following a national security assessment under the law.

Britain is attempting something of a reset of relations with China, working together on areas of agreement while balancing national security concerns.

Complicating efforts to improve relations is a spat over China's plans to build a new embassy next to the Tower of London, which started as a local dispute but has escalated into a diplomatic standoff.

https://www.reuters.com/world/china-opposes-uks-discriminatory-actions-against-china-linked-deals-2023-07-12/

26.

China urges NATO to stop exaggerating ‘China threat theory’

China’s mission to the European Union urged NATO on Tuesday to stop exaggerating the “China threat theory” after the group’s leaders warned that the country presented “systemic challenges”.

NATO leaders on Monday had taken a forceful stance towards Beijing in a communique at United States President Joe Biden’s first summit with the alliance.

"China's stated ambitions and assertive behaviour present systemic challenges to the rules-based international order and to areas relevant to alliance security," NATO leaders had said.

The new U.S. president has urged his fellow NATO leaders to stand up to China's authoritarianism and growing military might, a change of focus for an alliance created to defend Europe from the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

The NATO statement "slandered" China's peaceful development, misjudged the international situation, and indicated a "Cold War mentality," China said in a response posted on the mission's website.

China is always committed to peaceful development, it added.

"We will not pose a 'systemic challenge' to anyone, but if anyone wants to pose a 'systemic challenge' to us, we will not remain indifferent."

In Beijing, a spokesman for the foreign ministry, Zhao Lijian, said the United States and Europe had "different interests," and that some European countries "will not tie themselves to the anti-China war chariot of the United States".

G7 nations meeting in Britain over the weekend scolded China over human rights in its Xinjiang region, called for Hong Kong to keep a high degree of autonomy and demanded a full investigation of the origins of the coronavirus in China.

China’s embassy in London said it was resolutely opposed to mentions of Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan, which it said distorted the facts and exposed the “sinister intentions of a few countries such as the United States.”

https://www.reuters.com/world/china-urges-nato-stop-exaggerating-china-threat-theory-2021-06-15/

27.

China denies using force to retrieve rocket debris in South China Sea

China denied on Monday that one of its coastguard ships used force to retrieve a piece of a rocket floating in the ocean that was being towed by a Philippine vessel in the South China Sea.

A Philippine military commander said earlier the Chinese coastguard ship "forcefully retrieved" the object by cutting a line attaching it to a Philippine boat.

China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a regular briefing that the object was debris from a rocket's payload fairing - casing that protects the nose-cone of a spacecraft - launched by China. (…)

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippine-military-says-china-forcefully-retrieved-floating-object-south-china-2022-11-21/

28.

U.S. accuses China of increased South China Sea 'provocations'

The United States on Tuesday accused China of increased "provocations" against rival claimants to territory in the South China Sea and other states operating there.

"There is a clear and upward trend of PRC provocations against South China Sea claimants and other states lawfully operating in the region,” Jung Pak, deputy assistant secretary for East Asia at the State Department, told a U.S. think tank event, referring to the People's Republic of China.

Pak told the Center for Strategic and International Studies that Chinese aircraft had increasingly engaged in unsafe intercepts of Australian aircraft in international airspace above the South China Sea and in three separate incidents in the last few months had challenged marine research and energy exploration activities within the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines.

Pak made the comment ahead of an anticipated call between President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping this week, which is expected to focus on ways to prevent the growing U.S.-China strategic rivalry veering into conflict, particularly over the self-ruled Chinese-claimed island of Taiwan.

Pak said Washington had a "very complicated relationship with Beijing" was not trying to counter everything it was doing in Southeast Asia and the rest of the developing world.

"We want to make sure that countries, as they have their relationships with Beijing, have the tools and the power, and the and the ability to stand up for their autonomy and their sovereign decision making," she said.

Her remarks also came ahead of meetings of Southeast Asian foreign ministers and partners, including the United States, next week in Cambodia.

China claims nearly all of the South China Sea and Pak called the claims "expansive and unlawful."

She added that China's "provocative actions" to implement such claims "contribute to regional instability, damage the economies of other claimant states, undermine the existing maritime order, and threaten the rights and interests of all nations that rely on or operate in this vital waterway."

https://www.reuters.com/world/china/us-accuses-china-increased-south-china-sea-provocations-2022-07-26/

29.

US accuses China of global media manipulation

China is manipulating global media through censorship, data harvesting and covert purchases of foreign news outlets, the United States said on Thursday, warning the trend could lead to a "sharp contraction" of global freedom of expression.

The U.S. State Department said in a report that Beijing has spent billions of dollars annually on information manipulation efforts, including by acquiring stakes in foreign media through "public and non-public means," sponsoring online influencers and securing distribution agreements that promote unlabeled Chinese government content.

The U.S. report comes amid controversy over China's efforts in recent years to expand the global footprint of its government-controlled media, especially as geopolitical competition between Beijing and Washington has intensified. Chinese leaders have sought to combat the negative images of China they feel are spread by world media.

Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for China's embassy in Washington, said the report was about heightening ideological confrontation and "smearing China's domestic and foreign policies."

"Written with a Cold-War mentality, the report is just another tool to keep China down and buttress American hegemony. China is strongly against such moves," Liu said.

Citing public reports and "newly acquired government information," the State Department's Global Engagement Center said Beijing had created its own information ecosystem by co-opting foreign political elites and journalists.

It had also invested in satellite networks and digital television services in developing regions that prioritize Chinese state-backed media content.

Chinese data harvesting overseas "has enabled Beijing to fine-tune global censorship by targeting specific individuals and organizations," it said.

"Unchecked, Beijing's efforts could result in ... a sharp contraction of global freedom of expression," the report said.

Despite unprecedented resources devoted to the campaign, Beijing had encountered "major setbacks" when targeting democratic countries, due to local media and civil society push-back, according to the report, which was produced under a congressional mandate to detail state information manipulation.

https://www.reuters.com/world/us-accuses-china-global-media-manipulation-2023-09-28/

30.

China appoints Li Qiang, a trusted ally of Xi Jinping, as premier

China’s rubber-stamp legislature has appointed Li Qiang, a long-time aide of leader Xi Jinping, as premier, the man tasked with reviving the world’s second-largest economy after three years of zero-Covid restrictions.

The National People’s Congress endorsed Li in a largely ceremonial vote at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Saturday morning. Li got 2,936 votes, with three votes cast against him and eight abstained.

Li, 63, is one of the most trusted protégés of Xi, the country’s most powerful leader in decades. He will replace outgoing Premier Li Keqiang, who had been Xi’s second in command since 2013.

Traditionally, the premiership is an influential role in charge of the economy, although over the past decade, its power has been eroded by Xi, who has taken almost all decision-making into his own hands.

Even so, much of the new premier’s efforts are likely to be concentrated on trying to turn around the fortunes of the Chinese economy, which recently set a GDP growth target for this year of about 5% – the lowest in decades.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang delivers his state of the nation address during the opening session of China's National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Sunday, March 5, 2023.

China sets lowest GDP growth target in decades as Beijing tightens its belt

That will be no easy task: China is in the midst of a historic downturn for the all-important housing market, consumer spending is sluggish, and unemployment remains high among the youth. And local governments are saddled by debt. (…)

https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/10/china/li-qiang-premier-china-economy-intl-hnk/index.html

31.

Xi Jinping hits out at US as he urges China’s private firms to ‘fight’ alongside Communist Party

China’s leader Xi Jinping hit out at the United States with unusually direct comments as he called on the country’s private companies to “fight” alongside the Communist Party at a time of mounting challenges at home and abroad.

“[In the past five years,] Western countries led by the United States have contained and suppressed us in an all-round way, which has brought unprecedented severe challenges to our development,” Xi told a group of government advisers representing private businesses during an annual legislative meeting in Beijing on Monday.

China’s top leader usually avoids directly attacking the US in public even as relations between Beijing and Washington have deteriorated sharply in recent years. He generally refers only to “Western countries” or “some developed nations” when making critical comments about Washington.

Speaking to business delegates from a top political advisory body, Xi expressed concerns about external and economic challenges facing the country, while urging Chinese people to “unite as one.”

“In the coming period, the risks and challenges we face will only increase and become more severe. Only when all of the people think in one place, work hard in one place … can we continue to win new battles,” he said, according to a readout published by state-run Xinhua news agency. “We are in the same boat.” (...)

https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/07/economy/china-two-sessions-xi-jinping-speech-us-challenges-intl-hnk/index.html

32.

Biden meets Li Qiang, says China economic 'crisis' makes Taiwan invasion less likely

U.S. President Joe Biden said on Sunday he held his highest level talks with Chinese leadership in months, adding that Beijing's economic wobbles would not lead it to invade Taiwan.

Biden said he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping's No.2, Chinese Premier Li Qiang, at the annual G20 summit in New Delhi. The talks were the highest level meeting between the two powers in nearly 10 months since Biden and Xi spoke at last year's G20 in Indonesia.

Li, who took became premier in March, attended the gathering of world leaders in place of Xi. The two leaders were not expected to hold talks at the G20 but unscripted encounters at summits are common. (…)

https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-holds-highest-level-talks-with-chinese-leadership-months-2023-09-10/

33.

Xi to skip G20 summit in India, China to send Li instead

Premier Li Qiang will lead China's delegation at a G20 summit in New Delhi this weekend, China's foreign ministry said on Monday, indicating President Xi Jinping would not attend and scuppering chances of a meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden there.

The Sept. 9-10 summit had been seen as a venue for a possible meeting between Xi and Biden, who has confirmed his attendance in New Delhi, following months of efforts by the two powers to stabilise ties frayed by trade and geopolitical tensions.

"The G20 is the main forum for international economic cooperation and China has always placed great importance on and proactively taken part in such events," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a press conference, when asked by a reporter why China's "leader" would not attend.

Mao declined to directly confirm that Li's attendance meant that Xi would not go, although she did not correct reporters who made that assertion. Reuters reported exclusively last month that Xi was likely to skip the meeting and send Li. (…)

https://www.reuters.com/world/china-says-premier-li-will-attend-g20-summit-2023-09-04/

34.

Beijing accuses Japan of hyping China threat

China's foreign ministry on Friday accused Japan of exaggerating a perceived threat from Beijing as an excuse to boost its own military might, after Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida warned the invasion of Ukraine could be replicated in East Asia.

Speaking at a regular briefing in Beijing, foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian also said that if Japan really wanted peace and stability in East Asia, it should immediately stop provoking confrontation between big powers.

https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/beijing-accuses-japan-hyping-china-threat-2022-05-06/

35.

Chinese buyout baron’s dissent challenges Beijing

A loyal Chinese capitalist has turned against the country’s Covid-19 policy. Buyout baron Shan Weijian, ordinarily a public supporter of President Xi Jinping’s tough policies, broke ranks over draconian lockdowns. In a private meeting, he painted a dire picture of economic and political instability in ways that may jeopardise the initial public offering of his private equity firm, PAG. Making an example of him could backfire, though.

Omicron-variant containment measures in cosmopolitan Shanghai have rattled the country’s elite read more . The griping is getting louder. Wang Sicong, son of billionaire Wang Jianlin, had his Weibo account shut down after he questioned the government’s endorsement of traditional medicines to treat the virus.

Wang is just a rich kid, but Shan is a symbol of China’s reform success. Caught up in Mao’s Cultural Revolution, he was sent to farm China’s Gobi Desert, but managed to make his way to the United States, studying under now-U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and landing jobs at the World Bank and JPMorgan. PAG manages some $50 billion and has invested in a slew of successful companies. (…)

https://www.reuters.com/breakingviews/chinese-buyout-barons-dissent-challenges-beijing-2022-04-29/

36.

Olympics-Tibetans march on IOC headquarters to protest Beijing Games

Several hundred Tibetan and Uyghur activists marched on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Thursday, a day before Beijing 2022 opens, accusing the Swiss-based organisation of complicity in “atrocities” committed against ethnic minorities in China.

Hours earlier, Chinese President Xi Jinping said that the Beijing Olympics would be streamlined, safe and splendid, even as IOC President Thomas Bach decried boycott ghosts “rearing their ugly heads again” over human rights concerns.

The United States, Britain and some other allied countries have staged diplomatic boycotts of the Games over those concerns.

“Today here we are gathered, Tibetans from at least eight different countries in Europe, in front of the IOC building to protest against IOC awarding the Winter Olympics 2022 to the Beijing government,” Karma Choekyi, head of the Tibetan Community of Switzerland and Liechtenstein, told Reuters.

She said more than 150 Tibetans had self-immolated after the 2008 Beijing Summer Games because of “much repression in Tibet”.

“So to award yet again the Winter Olympics 2022 to Beijing means the IOC has not taken (account) of gross human rights violations by the Chinese regime on the people of Tibet, east Turkistan (Xinjiang), southern Mongolia and even the fragile democracy in Hong Kong,” she said.

The marchers - many wrapped in the red, yellow and blue flag of Tibet and dressed in traditional robes - chanted and played drums, holding a minute of silence for their “martrys” before starting a “peace march” along Lake Geneva. (…)

https://www.reuters.com/lifestyle/sports/tibetans-march-swiss-based-ioc-protest-beijing-games-2022-02-03/

37.

China appears to have suspended spy balloon program after February shootdown, US intel believes

China appears to have suspended its surveillance balloon program following a major diplomatic incident earlier this year, when one of the country’s high-altitude spy balloons transited the United States, multiple sources familiar with US intelligence assessments told CNN.

US officials believe that Chinese leaders have made a deliberate decision not to launch additional balloons since the one over the US was shot down by American fighter jets in February, the sources said. The US has not observed any new launches since the episode occurred.

The apparent suspension of the program comes as both the US and China have sought to stabilize an increasingly tense relationship. Asked for comment on the balloon program, Chinese embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu told CNN that the February episode was “unexpected” and “isolated.”

“Since the incident happened, China has stated repeatedly that the balloon is found to be an unmanned civilian airship used for meteorological and other research purposes, and that its accidental entry into US airspace is entirely an unexpected, isolated incident caused by force majeure,” Liu said. “The facts are clear and shall not be distorted or misrepresented. We hope relevant parties can stop hyping up on this.” (…)

https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/15/politics/china-spy-balloon-program-us-intelligence/index.html

38.

Biden compares China’s Xi Jinping to ‘dictators’ even as Washington and Beijing work to thaw relations

President Joe Biden compared Chinese President Xi Jinping to “dictators” during a political fundraiser in California Tuesday night, delivering the unscripted remarks roughly a day after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said his recent trip had yielded “progress” in repairing the fractured relationship between Washington and Beijing.

“The reason why Xi Jinping got very upset in terms of when I shot that balloon down with two boxcars full of spy equipment in it is he didn’t know it was there. No, I’m serious. That’s what’s a great embarrassment for dictators, when they didn’t know what happened,” Biden told attendees at the fundraiser in the Bay Area, referring to the Chinese spy balloon that the US shot down earlier this year.

The president’s apparently off-message remarks come amid a particularly tense time in US-China relations. Washington’s top diplomat said Monday that the US and China had made “progress” toward bringing relations back on track with both sides agreeing on the need to “stabilize” their bilateral relationship.

China quickly slammed Biden’s remarks, with Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning calling them an “open political provocation” on Wednesday and “extremely absurd and irresponsible.”

“The remarks seriously contradict basic facts, seriously violate diplomatic etiquette, and seriously infringe on China’s political dignity,” Mao said. (…)

https://edition.cnn.com/2023/06/20/politics/biden-xi-jinping-dictator-comment/index.html

39.

Cartoon elves and scrolls visualize Chinese military’s goal of Taiwan ‘reunification’

China’s military released an animation on Sunday depicting the journey to reunite two halves of a torn scroll across the Taiwan Strait, a thinly veiled reference to the country’s longstanding goal of “reunification” with the democratic, self-ruled island.

The animation was released by the Eastern Theater Command of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to mark National Day, the anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, and is the latest short film to capitalize on nationalist sentiment over historic Chinese treasures held overseas.

China’s ruling Communist Party claims Taiwan, home to 24 million residents, as its territory — despite never having controlled it. It has long vowed to “reunify” Taiwan with the Chinese mainland, by force if necessary.

At the very center of that threat sits the Eastern Theater Command, the wing of China’s enormous military force that handles operations in the Taiwan Strait, and which routinely conducts military exercises including simulated precision attacks on the island. (…)

https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/china-pla-taiwan-national-day-intl-hnk/index.html

40.

Top Chinese university scraps English tests in move cheered by nationalists

A top university in northwest China has scrapped English tests as a prerequisite for graduation, rekindling a heated debate about the role of the world’s lingua franca in the country’s education system after years of rising nationalist sentiment under leader Xi Jinping.

In a notice Wednesday, the Xi’an Jiaotong University in the capital city of Shaanxi province said students will no longer need to pass a nationwide standardized English test – nor any other English exams – to be able to graduate with bachelor’s degrees.

The announcement caused a stir on social media, with many praising the decision and calling for more universities to do the same.

“Very good. I hope other universities will follow suit. It’s ridiculous that Chinese people’s academic degrees need to be validated by a foreign language (test),” said a comment with more than 24,000 likes on microblogging site Weibo, where a related hashtag attracted more than 350 million views Thursday.

Passing the College English Test, a national standardized exam first held in 1987, has been a graduation requirement at the majority of Chinese universities for decades – although the government has never made it an official policy.

The common practice underlined the importance Chinese universities placed on English – the world’s predominant academic and scientific language – especially when the once-insular and impoverished country was opening up and eager to catch up with the developed world after the turbulence of the Mao Zedong era.

But in recent years, some universities have downgraded the importance of English, either by replacing the national College English Test with their own exams or – as in the case of the Xi’an Jiaotong University – dropping English qualifications altogether as a graduation criteria. (…)

https://edition.cnn.com/2023/09/21/china/china-university-english-test-intl-hnk/index.html

41.

Taiwan urges China to stop ‘continuous military harassment’

Taiwan’s defence ministry has called on China to stop its “military harassment” of the self-ruled island after detecting more than 100 Chinese military aircraft in the latest of a series of military manoeuvres designed to assert Beijing’s claim to sovereignty.

The ministry said that since Sunday, it has spotted 103 Chinese military aircraft, including fighter jets, over the sea, a number it called a “recent high”. It also said it detected nine navy ships.

Its map of Chinese activities over the past 24 hours showed 40 of the planes crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait, which had served as an unofficial barrier between the two sides until China began regularly crossing it a year ago.

Other aircraft flew south of Taiwan through the Bashi Channel, which separates the island from the Philippines.

Beijing claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and has not ruled out the use of force to achieve its goal.

China’s activities over the past day posed “serious challenges” to security in the strait and regionally, the ministry said in an accompanying statement. (…)

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/18/taiwan-urges-china-to-stop-continuous-military-harassment

42.

Why are China’s workers studying ‘Xi Jinping Thought’?

China’s workers have long been known for putting in long days at the office, but they now face a new set of responsibilities: studying the writings of President Xi Jinping.

Since Beijing launched a new propaganda drive earlier this year, Xi Jinping Thought is reportedly becoming a common topic of discussion among employees at state-owned companies and private businesses, including foreign firms. (…)

https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/9/7/why-are-chinas-workers-studying-xi-jinping

43.

Xi Jinping calls for protection of ‘hard-won stability’ in Xinjiang visit

Chinese president visited far western region, where the UN has accused China of possible ‘crimes against humanity’, for first time in a year. Chinese President Xi Jinping has made a rare visit to Xinjiang, calling on officials to conserve “hard-won social stability” in a region where Beijing is accused of abuses that the United Nations has said could amount to “crimes against humanity”.

The Chinese government has pursued a years-long campaign against what it describes as “terrorism” and “extremism” in the northwestern region, detaining large numbers of Uighurs and other mostly Muslim ethnic minorities.

A UN report last September found China’s actions in Xinjiang may constitute “crimes against humanity” and called on Beijing to immediately release “all individuals arbitrarily deprived of their liberty”, clarify the whereabouts of those whose families have been unable to locate them and undertake a “full review” of its laws on domestic security as well as repeal all discriminatory laws.

The government of the United States as well as parliaments in the United Kingdom, Canada and France have since labelled China’s treatment of the Uighurs as a “genocide”.

Beijing denies the allegations.

State broadcaster CCTV said Xi travelled to the regional capital Urumqi on Saturday, listened to a government work report and delivered a speech “affirming the achievements made in various tasks in Xinjiang”.

It was his first publicly-known visit to Xinjiang since July 2022, shortly before the UN issued its report. That was his first visit to the area in eight years.

Xi “stressed that top priority must always be given to maintaining social stability… and we must use stability to guarantee development”, CCTV reported. (…)

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/27/xi-jinping-calls-for-protection-of-hard-won-stability-in-xinjiang-visit

44.

US takes aim at China companies, executives over fentanyl supply chain

US authorities have brought charges and sanctions against Chinese companies and executives they claim supply chemicals used to produce fentanyl.

The United States has imposed sanctions and launched indictments against dozens of Chinese companies and individuals it claims are involved in the illegal trade of the highly-addictive drug fentanyl.

The charges and sanctions, brought by the US Attorney’s Offices in Florida and the federal Treasury Department on Tuesday, were strongly condemned by China.

US officials described their actions, which include charges against Chinese companies and executives accused of advertising, manufacturing and distributing precursor chemicals for synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, as the latest effort in their fight against the deadliest overdose crisis in US history.

“We are here today to deliver a message on behalf of the United States government. We know who is responsible for poisoning the American people with fentanyl,” US Attorney General Merrick Garland told reporters.

“We know that this global fentanyl supply chain, which ends with the deaths of Americans, often starts with chemical companies in China,” he said.

Prosecutors accused some of the Chinese chemical manufacturing companies of using fake labels and other mechanisms when shipping the illegal substances to the US to avoid detection. Other shipments went to Mexico’s powerful Sinaloa drug cartel, prosecutors said.

Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for China’s embassy in Washington, DC, said the Chinese government took a firm stance on counter-narcotics and accused the US of “scapegoating” China and undermining China-US anti-drug cooperation. (…)

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/4/us-takes-aim-at-chinese-firms-executives-over-fentanyl-drug-supply-chain

45.

Fears China ‘closing in on itself’ amid crackdowns, rising nationalism

From new laws on espionage and public security to fewer foreign films and arguments on clothing, is China turning away from the world?

When 29-year-old accountant Cai Yutong pulled out her iPhone 13 at a Starbucks on the outskirts of Shanghai, her colleague sitting opposite her moved closer.

“You know, they are launching a new Huawei phone, right?” she asked, according to Cai who recounted the episode to Al Jazeera.

Huawei is a giant of China’s telecommunication and consumer electronics industry and a major producer of smartphones.

Before Cai could answer the question, her colleague had pulled out a Huawei mobile from her bag.

“I think to fully support China against America, we all need to switch to Huawei as soon as we can,” she said and gestured towards Cai’s iPhone, before taking a sip of her Starbucks coffee.

“Her nationalism didn’t reach as far as the American coffee in her other hand,” Cai told Al Jazeera a few days after. Starbucks was founded in the northwestern United States city of Seattle.

Cai sees the incident as symptomatic of a new consumer nationalism among Chinese citizens, eager to champion domestic giants over foreign rivals.

Huawei and Apple recently launched new models to their smartphone collections within a few days of each other.

The new Huawei smartphone contains domestically produced advanced microchips and is a source of techno-nationalist pride in China.

And while thousands of Chinese consumers still queued up outside Apple stores on the morning of September 22 to be among the first to buy the iPhone 15, the California-based tech giant has found itself increasingly targeted in a reflection of the simmering rivalry between the US and China. (…)

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/3/china-risks-undermining-own-security-as-communist-party-asserts-control

46.

‘Moving Backward’: In Xi’s China, Some See an Era of Total Control

A decade ago, many prominent Chinese hoped that Xi Jinping would usher in openness and reform. Today, some of them believe he has created a totalitarian state.

As Xi Jinping was preparing to take the helm of the Chinese Communist Party a decade ago, a great number of China’s political, business and intellectual elites were hopeful that he would make their country more open, just and prosperous.

They included a professor at the party’s top academy who helped train thousands of high-ranking cadres. An economist who would win China’s top economics prize for 2012. A young historian planning to teach a class about contemporary Chinese history, including sensitive periods like the Cultural Revolution.

Mr. Xi’s speech at the opening of the 20th party congress on Sunday made it clearer than ever that China is moving in the opposite direction from liberalization. Obsessed with national security, he is more focused on quashing all ideological and geopolitical challenges than on reform and opening up, the policies that brought China out of poverty.

He used the term “new era” 39 times in his speech, boasting of the party’s achievements under his leadership. But for some Chinese, it has been a dark era — a shift away from a system that, while authoritarian, tolerated private enterprise and some diversity in public opinion to one that now espouses a single ideology and a single leader.

The former professor at the Central Party School, Cai Xia, urged the United States and the world to see China as she sees it: as a totalitarian state that rules with “terror and ideology,” referring to a well-known political theory.

“It’s been an era of moving backward,” she said after watching Mr. Xi’s speech. “It was a decade that was marked by economic retrogression and ideological struggles.”

Ms. Cai has been expelled from the party for such criticism. The historian, Sun Peidong, can no longer teach or publish freely. Xu Chenggang, the economist, is disappointed that the party again controls everything, including the private sector.

All three are living in the United States.

They all believe that China, with its vast surveillance systems and punitive social control, now resembles Stalin’s Soviet Union and Mao’s China. In their view, even Russia and Iran have more space for dissent.

It’s a view whispered at dinner tables and in chat groups. One online nickname refers to China as “the North Korea to the west.” (…)

https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/business/china-xi-jinping-governance.html

47.

China expels former Bank of China chairman from Communist Party

China's ruling Communist Party has expelled the former chairman of the state-owned Bank of China from the party, accusing him of illegal activities and taking bribes, the top anti-graft watchdog said on Saturday.

Liu Liange was accused of illegally granting loans and causing significant financial risks, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) said in a statement on its website.

He also brought prohibited publications into the country and illegally took bribes and accepted entertainment at private clubs and ski resorts, said the commission, which is responsible for tackling corruption in the 97 million-member party.

Reuters was not immediately able to contact Liu to seek comment.

Liu, born in 1961, had been working in banking and finance institutions, including in the central People's Bank of China and the Export-Import Bank of China, before he was promoted to become chairman of the Bank of China in 2019.

Liu resigned from that position in mid-March this year.

Two weeks later, state media reported that the CCDI had opened an investigation into him on suspicion of serious violations of party discipline and laws.

Fighting corruption to advance the party's "self-revolution" has been a signature policy of President Xi Jinping since he became supreme leader in 2012.

Xi's campaign against corruption is popular among a public fed up with widespread graft. It has also helped him consolidate power by replacing rivals with loyalists, analysts have said.

https://www.voanews.com/a/china-expels-former-bank-of-china-chairman-from-communist-party/7301066.html

48.

China censored this photo of two athletes. Was it for a perceived Tiananmen massacre reference?

China appears to have censored a photograph of two Chinese hurdlers embracing after a race because their lane numbers formed an accidental reference to the Tiananmen massacre in 1989.

The image captures Lin Yuwei, from lane 6, and Wu Yanni, in lane 4, hugging following the women’s 100-meter hurdles final at the Asian Games in Hangzhou.

As they stood together, stickers showing their lane numbers formed “6 4”, a pairing widely seen as a reference to June 4, 1989.

That day Chinese military tanks rolled into the capital Beijing during a bloody crackdown to clear students protesting for democracy in Tiananmen Square.

Beijing tightly controls references to the event, scrubbing all mention of it from the internet within China, and moving quickly to erase any reference to it on social media, including even seemingly innocuous moments when the numbers 6,4 and 89 appear together and are entirely unrelated to Tiananmen.

The race took place on October 1, China’s National Day, a delicate occasion when the authorities are more vigilant against any signs of dissent that may distract from celebrations.

State broadcaster CCTV originally posted the photograph on Weibo, China’s Twitter-like social media service, on Sunday night, but removed it from its account about an hour later, CNN has found.

A search on Weibo Thursday no longer yielded results of the same image, though scattered postings of another photograph showing the two athletes crossing a hurdle with their lane numbers on display – though in an less conspicuous manner – can still be found.

The photograph cannot be found on Baidu, China’s popular search engine, and Google services are blocked in the country.

The image can be seen in an article published Monday by state news agency Xinhua but the numbers have been cropped out of the photo.

CNN has reached out to Weibo, Baidu, CCTV and the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party for comment.

China imposes stringent censorship not just on criticism of the Communist Party but also matters it deems sensitive and incongruous with the party’s values and ideology.

The rules have in the past led to the censorship of what might appear to some to be innocuous images, such as women’s cleavage and men modeling in lingerie as a gimmick on social media to boost sales.

https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/04/china/hurdlers-hugging-photo-censor-china-intl-hnk/index.html

49.

Xi’s Surprise Shake-Up Exposes Problems at Top of China’s Nuclear Force

The Chinese leader’s replacement of two commanders has fanned speculation about corruption or failings in the force that manages China’s nuclear missiles.

In the years since China’s leader, Xi Jinping, transformed the People’s Liberation Army, one of his crowning creations has been the Rocket Force, the custodian of China’s expanding nuclear arsenal. The force, with its array of missiles and launch silos, embodied Mr. Xi’s ambitions to elevate his country as a respected, and feared, great power ready to counter American supremacy in the region.

But this week, Mr. Xi abruptly replaced the Rocket Force’s two top commanders with outsiders with no experience in the nuclear force. It was the highest-level upheaval in China’s military in over five years. The move comes as China is also dealing with questions about the fate of its former foreign minister, Qin Gang, who disappeared from public view in late June before being replaced without explanation.

The shake-up in the rocket force indicated that the force’s expansion has been accompanied by serious problems in its top ranks. Suspicions of corruption or disloyalty to Mr. Xi may slow or complicate China’s upgrade of its conventional and nuclear missiles, several experts said.

“I imagine this could disrupt the modernization,” said David C. Logan, an assistant professor at the Fletcher School of Tufts University who studies the Rocket Force and China’s nuclear weapons modernization. “Instability at senior levels is never good when you’re carrying out large-scale changes, and the shifts taking place in the Rocket Force are significant. Plus, its senior leadership now appears to have little relevant experience with the missile forces.”

The reasons for the removal of the former commanders of the Chinese rocket force — General Li Yuchao and his deputy, General Liu Guangbin — are unclear. The force is extremely tight-lipped, even for the opaque Chinese military. The two men have not appeared in official media reports for months.

Their absence has set off a flurry of speculation, including rumors that one or both were recruited as spies, and allegations of corruption which were reported last week in the South China Morning Post, a Hong Kong newspaper. Several analysts said that graft involving the force’s big spending on missiles, silos and technology seemed the most plausible cause for the downfall of the two leaders.

“There is a lot of money going to the People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force right now as they built up their infrastructure, particularly their nuclear silos,” said Matt Bruzzese, an analyst at BluePath Labs, a consultancy firm in Washington, who wrote a recent study of the Rocket Force. “Historically, contracting has been one major avenue for P.L.A. corruption. (...)

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/02/world/asia/china-nuclear-shakeup.html

50.

Xi Rebuilt the Military to His Liking. Now a Shake-Up Threatens Its Image

Xi Jinping, China’s leader, set out to clean up the military a decade ago. But now his crown jewel, the missile force, is under a shadow.

As Xi Jinping has entrenched his hold on power in China, he has likened himself to a physician, eradicating the toxins of corruption and disloyalty that threaten the rule of the Communist Party. And his signature project for over a decade has been bringing to heel the once extravagantly corrupt military leadership.

But recent upheavals at high levels of the People’s Liberation Army forces suggest that Mr. Xi’s cure has not endured. Last week, he abruptly replaced two top generals in the Rocket Force, an unexplained shake-up that suggests suspicions of graft or other misconduct in the sensitive arm of the military that manages conventional and nuclear missiles.

“Obviously, something has gone wrong in the system, which is probably related to discipline and corruption,” said Andrew N.D. Yang, an expert on the Chinese military who was formerly a senior Taiwanese defense official. “It’s like a virus in the system that has come back. It’s a deep-rooted problem, and it has survived in the system.”

A scandal involving the top brass of the armed forces would be a setback for Mr. Xi, who has taken pride in turning the 98 million-strong Communist Party and the Chinese military into unquestioning enforcers of his rule. Days before the generals were ousted, Mr. Xi removed the foreign minister, Qin Gang, another troublesome dismissal for Mr. Xi, who had elevated Mr. Qin as a trusted enforcer of his policies.

The signs of misconduct are likely to reinforce Mr. Xi’s conviction that China’s officials can be kept from straying only with intense scrutiny and pressure from above. That strategy includes subjecting cadres to constant inspections by party investigators; campaigns to instill loyalty to the Communist Party and to Mr. Xi; and to dismissals and arrests.

In Mr. Xi’s view, “you never get to the point where the danger recedes,” said Joseph Torigian, an assistant professor at American University in Washington who studies elite politics in China. “Even when you have an absolutely dominant leader, that doesn’t mean you don’t have churn in the system.” (...)

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/07/world/asia/china-nuclear-military-xi.html