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Chronology of Possible Chinese Gray Area and Hybrid Warfare Operations

By Anthony H. Cordesman

With the assistance of Grace Hwang

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There is no simple or reliable way to define Chinese gray area or hybrid civil and military operations that affect U.S. strategic interests. Many Chinese demonstrative or low-level operations, claims, and political acts can have such an effect, but they are only reported as serving commercial interests, reflecting local claims or interests, or supporting China's internal security needs.

Their impact on China's strategic competition with the United States may be highly indirect, and the motives behind Chinese actions may be highly uncertain. Many activities are described, in terms of their impact on U.S. strategic partners, other states, and non-state actors, to not have an impact on competition with the United States. Other activities may not be reported in open source literature or may not be described accurately at all. Even when some Chinese actions clearly involve gray area or hybrid operations, the motives behind such actions might actually be very different.

Much of the available reporting also is written in ways that highly compartmentalize civil and military activities, or activities within each category. Military exercises involving air, land, and maritime claims are often described in very different ways. The motives behind investments and major civil projects may only be viewed in terms of their commercial merit or benefits, and not their strategic impact. "Trade wars" may only be viewed as business activities when they have significant strategic impact.

Defining the Full Range of Gray Area and Hybrid Warfare Activities

Even the definitions of Hybrid Warfare, Gray Zone Warfare, Non-linear Warfare, Multidomain Warfare, Quasi Warfare, and Unrestricted Warfare are uncertain, and they sometimes exclude civil and political operations in areas like cyber, industrial espionage, information warfare, civil hacking and cracking of computer and Internet systems, a state-subsidized competition and other forms of direct and indirect competition with the United States.

A quick review of such definitions illustrates the issues involved:

Hybrid warfare

Dr. Frank G. Hoffman's 2009 definition has been most widely quoted for defining hybrid warfare:¹

"Any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism and criminal behavior in the battle space to obtain their political objectives."

Gray zone warfare

Hoffman's definition for gray zone warfare is also widely accepted and notes that,²

"Those covert or illegal activities of non-traditional statecraft that are below the threshold of armed organized violence; including disruption of order, political subversion of government or non-governmental organizations, psychological operations, abuse of legal processes, and financial corruption as part of an integrated design to achieve strategic advantage."

Multi-domain warfare

The United States has formalized the title of irregular warfare as “multi-domain warfare.” According to a 2017 Report released by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command,³

“Multi-Domain Battle is an operational concept with strategic and tactical implications. It deliberately focuses on increasingly capable adversaries who challenge deterrence and pose strategic risk to U.S. interests in two ways. First, in operations below armed conflict, these adversaries employ systems to achieve their strategic ends over time to avoid war and the traditional operating methods of the Joint Force. Second, if these adversaries choose to wage a military campaign, they employ integrated systems that contest and separate Joint Force capabilities simultaneously in all domains at extended ranges to make a friendly response prohibitively risky or irrelevant.”

Unrestricted warfare

Chinese military analysts largely refer to irregular warfare activities as “unrestricted warfare.” From a widely sourced book for military strategy published in 1999, Colonel Qiao Liang and Colonel Wang Xiangsui describe unrestricted warfare as,⁴

“Unrestricted war is a war that surpasses all boundaries and restrictions. It takes nonmilitary forms and military forms and creates a war on many fronts. It is the war of the future.”

Quasi-Warfare

The Chinese use of military warfare is also sometimes referred to as quasi-warfare. Chinese analysts of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) distinguish quasi-warfare to be marked by the “three non-” warfares: non-contact (*fei jierong*), non-linear (*fei xianshi*), and non-symmetric (*fei duicheng*).⁵

Non-contact (*fei jierong*) is warfare conducted in which the more advanced side will be outside the immediate geographical zone of the enemy’s weapons, and therefore be impervious to strikes while also retaining the ability to conduct its own direct strikes on the enemy. Non-linear (*fei xianshi*) is warfare that has no distinguishable battlefield due to the advancement of technology and codependent nature of the relationship between the sides – and it is usually carried out over the information space. Non-symmetric (*fei duicheng*) is warfare that engages the adversary in every strategic aspect with the use of limited military resources.

The Contents of this Chronology

This chronology is a rough working attempt to illustrate the range and depth of Chinese activities. Many of the entries are uncertain or ambiguous. Many more have almost certainly been omitted or have never been reported. A full analysis would involve a wide range of country experts and military experts. It also would require substantial intelligence analysis at classified levels to be truly comprehensive.

This working chronology does still, however, illustrate the broader patterns of Chinese activity that demonstrate the full range of Chinese capabilities at gray zone warfare. These activities not only impact U.S.-Chinese relations, but they can also impact Russian competition with the United States. This chronology primarily serves as a starting point for a far more comprehensive analysis.

An additional analysis of U.S. and Chinese strategic competition is provided in a separate Burke Chair analysis, entitled *U.S. Competition with China and Russia: The Crisis-Driven Need to Change U.S. Strategy*. This report is available on the CSIS website [here](#).

Comments and Suggested Additions and Corrections

This is a rough working paper. Please send comments and suggest additions and corrections to Anthony H. Cordesman, Burke Chair in Strategy, CSIS, at acordesman@gmail.com.

Chronology of Chinese Gray Zone Operations

2004: China opens the Confucius Institute program to promote Chinese culture and language overseas. There has since been concerns that the Chinese Communist Party uses the program to spread propaganda and engage in espionage.

January 11, 2007: China carried out an anti-satellite missile test in space by shooting down one of its old weather satellites. This test was the first successful satellite intercept test since a 1985 test conducted by the United States.

September 2013: China launches the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to invest in infrastructure development in almost 70 countries and organizations. BRI is composed of the “Belt,” which refers to the overland routes and the “Silk,” which refers to the maritime routes. China is also reported to start development of the “Ice Silk Road” along the Northern Sea Route in the Arctic, which Russia claims to be part of its international waters. China has the potential to use the BRI as a form of economic coercion by allowing loan deferral or even requesting early loan payment.

March 14, 2013: Xi Jinping becomes China’s new president.

March 16, 2018: President Xi Jinping is re-elected to a second five-year term.

Coronavirus Disinformation Campaign

December 2019: The Coronavirus’s first case starts in eastern Hubei province and leads to widespread travel restrictions.

January 2020: Trump’s Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger first proposed to shut down some flights from China in late January.

- In **March 2020**, he led a review that led the State Department slash a number of visas for Chinese journalists under the rationale that they worked for state-backed propaganda outlets. China responded by expelling journalists from U.S. publications, including The Washington Post.

January 28, 2020: The WHO Director-General (DG) Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing. Following the meeting, Tedros commended China for “setting a new standard for outbreak control” and praised the country’s top leadership for its “openness to sharing information” with the WHO and other countries.

March 2020: Chinese disinformation campaign about Coronavirus conspiracies:

- Zhao Lijian, a Chinese diplomat, shared a conspiracy theory online accusing a U.S. Army service member of bringing the virus to China.
- A primary objective driving the CCP’s disinformation campaign is to spread false information that COVID-19 originated outside of China. The Taiwanese government reported that the CCP used proxy accounts and bots to disseminate false stories on numerous social media platforms around the world.
- United States intelligence agencies have assessed that Chinese operatives pushed disinformation messages across platforms, according to six American officials. The disinformation showed up as texts on many Americans’ cellphones, a tactic that officials said they had not seen before.

March 18, 2020: Beijing sells Italy protective gear for COVID-19 efforts.

March 21, 2020: China sends a train to Spain loaded with 110,000 medical masks and 776 protective suits as part of the “Health Silk Road.”

April 27, 2020: China asked Germany to put Chinese efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic in a positive light, but Berlin rejected the request.

April 28, 2020: The Chinese ambassador to Australia threatened Canberra with economic retaliation if Australia pursued an independent inquiry into the COVID-19 pandemic, which would reveal Beijing’s policy failures during the crisis.

April 29, 2020: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo condemns Chinese response to COVID-19 in a press statement.

April 30, 2020: Chinese state-owned media attacked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, devoting prime airtime to describe him as an “enemy of humankind” practicing “highly venomous” diplomacy. He’s a “super-spreader” of a “political virus.” He’s a “rumor monger” with a “dark mind.”

April 30, 2020: European Union’s report. described Chinese and Russian efforts to spread falsehoods and propaganda about the pandemic. But *The New York Times* reported that the language had been toned down amid criticism from China.

Chinese-U.S. Economic Trade War

April 6, 2017: President Xi urges trade cooperation with the U.S. at his first official meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump in Florida.

May 22, 2017: United States and China agree to a trade deal that would give US firms greater access to China’s agriculture, energy, and financial markets, while China gains access to sell cooked poultry to the United States.

February 7, 2018: The US implements ‘global safeguard tariffs’ – placing a 30 percent tariff on all solar panel imports, except for those from Canada, (worth US\$8.5 billion) and a 20 percent tariff on washing machine imports (worth US\$1.8 billion).

March 22, 2018: President Trump imposes sanctions on China including restrictions on investment and tariffs on \$60 billion worth of products.

April 2, 2018: China announces it will impose 25% trade tariffs on a list of 106 U.S. goods, including soybeans, cars, and orange juice, in retaliation for similar US tariffs on about 1,300 Chinese products.

April 16, 2018: U.S. Department of Commerce concludes that Chinese telecom company ZTE violated US sanctions. US companies are banned from doing business with ZTE for seven years.

April 17, 2018: China announces antidumping duties of 178.6 percent on imports of sorghum from the United States.

May 19, 2018: U.S. China trade war put on hold. In a joint statement, the countries say China will “significantly increase” purchases of U.S. goods and services. Both sides agree to not impose new tariffs on one another while talks continue.

May 29, 2018: U.S. reimposes 25% tariffs on \$50 billion worth of Chinese goods. It also announces new limits on Chinese investment in high-tech industries.

June 7, 2018: US and ZTE agree to deal that will allow ZTE to resume business.

August 14, 2018: The Chinese Ministry of Commerce announces that a formal case has been lodged at the WTO against the US for its tariffs on solar panels.

August 22-23, 2018: U.S. and Chinese mid-level representatives meet for the first time since early in the trade war to discuss ways to resolve the deepening trade conflict and escalating tariffs. Discussions end with no major breakthroughs.

December 2, 2018: The U.S. and China agree to a temporary truce to de-escalate trade tensions, following a working dinner at the G20 Summit in Buenos Aires on December 1, 2018. According to the agreement, both the US and China will refrain from increasing tariffs or imposing new tariffs for 90 days (until March 1, 2019), as the two sides work towards a larger trade deal.

April 1, 2019: China announces that it will ban all variants of the synthetic opioid fentanyl, effective May 1, 2019, in what is considered a concession to the US amid trade talks. Because of the opioid crisis in the US, China's treatment of fentanyl production and distribution had been a source of tension in bilateral relations.

May 16, 2019: The US Department of Commerce announces the addition of Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd and its affiliates on its "entity list", which effectively bans US companies from selling to the Chinese telecommunications company without US government approval.

November 1, 2019: The World Trade Organization (WTO) said Friday that China can impose compensatory sanctions on US imports worth US\$3.6 billion for the US failure to abide by anti-dumping rules on Chinese products. The announcement centers on a WTO case that originated nearly six years ago, long before the trade war.

January 15, 2020: U.S. and China finally signed the long-awaited phase one trade deal at the White House, easing 18-month trade tensions.

Chinese-U.S. Espionage War

April 1, 2001: An American spy plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet, known as the "Hainan Island incident." The U.S. spy plane was flying close to the People's Republic of China (PRC) island province of Hainan and the Chinese Paracel Islands when it was intercepted by two Chinese fighter jets. One jet crashed into the U.S. plane killing the pilot and the U.S. crew was detained by Chinese authorities for two days and then released.

April 21, 2009: Computer hackers, that were traced back to China, breached the Department of Defense's (DoD) Joint Strike Fighter project and stole information of F-35 fighter jets.

November 2013: The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) networks were first breached. but it was not until **October 2014** that OPM officials realized that the hacker had gained millions of personnel records and information.

September 25, 2015: The U.S. and China reached a "common understanding" to not conduct or support cyber espionage and intellectual property theft for the purposes of commercial gain.

January 2016: Chinese officials kidnap a U.S. official working at the American consulate in Chengdu, China but released him the following day.

August 10, 2016: The U.S. indicted the China General Nuclear Power Group (CGN) for stealing nuclear secrets for the past two decades.

August 15, 2019: The U.S. added four Chinese companies, all subsidiaries of the China General Nuclear Power Group (CGN), to the “Entity-List” for stealing U.S. nuclear technology.

East/South China Sea

September 13, 2010: Japan arrests Chinese trawler crew in disputed waters in East China Sea. Japan later frees the crew but rejects Chinese demands for an apology.

September 23, 2010: Following a maritime standoff near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu island with Japan in 2010, China restricted rare earths exports to Japan.

- **September 5, 2012:** Japan purchases Senkaku islands from a private owner. China sends patrol ships to the area.
- **February 7, 2013:** China denies allegations by Japan that its navy ships twice put radar locks on Japanese military vessels after disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea.

April 12, 2012: Philippines and Chinese naval vessels confront one another off the Scarborough Shoal reef in the South China Sea, which may have significant reserves of oil and gas.

- **May 3, 2012:** China quarantines bananas from the Philippines.
- **June 15, 2012:** China increase ships present near the Scarborough Shoal reef.

November 2013: China says it has established a new Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over an area of the East China Sea, covering disputed islands controlled by Japan and a disputed South Korean-controlled rock.

May 9, 2014: A row with Vietnam over disputed islands escalates, as ships from the two countries collide in the waters of the South China Sea. Chinese workers flee Vietnam after the row sparks anti-China riots.

May 22, 2015: The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) carried out military exercises past the first island chain through the Miyako strait near Japan and 1,500 kilometers from Guam.

October 2015: The Obama administration sent a guided missile destroyer, the Lassen, within territorial waters near the Subi Reef, one of several artificial islands that China has built in the disputed Spratly Islands chain.

- **October 2015:** China expresses anger at U.S. naval ship sailing by artificial reefs Beijing is building among disputed Spratly Islands in South China Sea.

June 2016: Chinese fisherman is arrested by Indonesian authorities operating near Natuna Island – this time leading to an injury of one Chinese fisherman – has ratcheted up tensions between Beijing and Jakarta.

June 2016: China threatens to set up new Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) pending U.S. moves.

July 2016: The Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague issued its ruling on a claim brought against China by the Philippines under UNCLOS, ruling in favor of the Philippines but while China is a signatory to the treaty, it refuses to accept the court’s authority.

- From 2012 to 2015, Chinese clam harvesters severely damaged or destroyed at least 28 reefs across the South China Sea. The ecological results were devastating, and, in July 2016, the arbitral tribunal that ruled on a case brought against Beijing by

Manila found that China had violated its obligations under international law to protect the marine environment.

August 30, 2016: China sells Pakistan 8 new stealth attack submarines.

October 2016: Filipino President Duterte has agreed to 13.5 billion dollars in trade deals with China and softened his country's claims to Scarborough Shoal.

October 2016: Filipino President Duterte called for the expulsion of U.S. troops.

November 2016: PLAAF begins sorties to circumnavigate the island—frequently involving H-6K bomber aircraft flying through the Bashi Channel, south of Taiwan.

These flights serve two roles: they provide training for aircrews in conducting longer-distance sorties for a potential future conflict over Taiwan; and they also serve a propaganda role, with “island encirclement” sorties promoted in state media as part of a psychological warfare campaign to intimidate residents of Taiwan.

January 6, 2017: In 2017, Chinese attack submarines conducted port calls in Seppangar Malaysia and Karachi but Sri Lanka denied a port call request in Colombo. The patrols demonstrate the PLA's dedication to protecting China's sea lines of communication and power projection in the Indian Ocean.

January-February 2017: During the first two months of 2017, three Chinese ships patrolled the Luconia Shoals, an area of islets and reefs that are only about 90 miles north of Malaysian Borneo.

June 2017: The JS Izumo, the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force's largest warship, sailed through the South China Sea for three months, making port calls to Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

July 5, 2017: Vietnam began drilling for oil in an area of the resource-rich South China Sea also claimed by China.

- On **June 20** when Vietnamese officials rejected a demand to halt all oil and gas exploration so senior Chinese general cut short an official visit to Vietnam.

July 14, 2017: Indonesia's Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries held a high-profile news conference to release its first national territorial map since 2005, unveiling the newly named North Natuna Sea. The new map also included new maritime boundaries with Singapore and the Philippines, with which Indonesia had concluded agreements in 2015.

August 2017: The John S. McCain, passed near Mischief Reef, which China claims as its territory. These freedom of navigation operations near contested islands and reefs across the South China Sea are meant to show that the United States does not accept that China.

May 2018: When two American warships — the Higgins, a destroyer, and the Antietam, a cruiser — sailed within a few miles of disputed islands in the Paracels in May, Chinese vessels rushed to challenge what Beijing later denounced as “a provocative act.”

June 2018: After the West criticized Myanmar for its treatment of the Rohingya minority, Beijing negotiated a deep-water port with Burma. This port is another “pearl” in China's “String of pearls” in the Indian Ocean.

March 31, 2019: Two PLAAF J-11 fighters crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait (an unofficial boundary, but one traditionally observed by military aircraft from each side), the first

such reported incident since 2011. This prompted a scramble by ROCAF fighters and a response from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-Wen who vowed the “forceful expulsion” of PLA aircraft repeating this action in the future.

June 13, 2019: Tensions in the disputed South China Sea ratcheted up as the Philippine government protested the sinking of a Filipino boat by a Chinese fishing vessel, which left 22 Filipino fishermen floating at sea before they were rescued by a Vietnamese boat.

September 12, 2019: Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte said he has been offered a controlling stake in a joint energy deal by Chinese President Xi Jinping in exchange for ignoring an international arbitration in Manila's favor on the South China Sea.

September 25, 2019: China launched the first Type 075 amphibious assault ship, with an estimated displacement of 30,000 to 40,000 tons.

December 2019: PLA Navy (PLAN)'s first indigenously-designed carrier SHANDONG (CV-17) was commissioned in mid-December 2019 at Sanya Naval Base on the southern Chinese island province of Hainan.

December 26, 2019: SHANDONG sailed through the Taiwan Strait in the course of conducting local-area training and sea trials.

January 16, 2020: The U.S. Navy guided-missile cruiser USS SHILOH (CG-67) transited the Taiwan Strait. PRC outlets condemned the action and called for the United States to abide by the PRC's “One-China Principle.”

January 21, 2020: Multiple PLAAF Su-30 and Y-8 aircraft flew from airfields in southern China and passed through the Bashi Channel south of Taiwan, before returning the same way. ROCAF fighter aircraft were scrambled in response.

January 23, 2020: A formation of PLAAF aircraft passed through the Bashi Channel en route to the western Pacific Ocean.

February 9-10, 2020: PLA naval and air forces conducted joint drills in waters to the south of Taiwan. PRC state media explicitly linked the drills to the U.S. visit of Taiwan Vice President-elect Lai.

February 9, 2020: PLAAF carried out a long-distance training flight that crossed the centerline in the Taiwan Strait, prompting Taiwan to scramble F-16s in response. PLAAF aircraft circumnavigated Taiwan, flying through the Bashi Channel and into the western Pacific Ocean, before turning north and returning via the Miyako Strait to the northeast of Taiwan.

February 12, 2020: A U.S. Air Force MC-130J Commando II aircraft flew north to south along the airspace over the Taiwan Strait, while two U.S. Air Force B-52 Stratofortress bombers flew along Taiwan's east coast.

February 15, 2020: The U.S. Navy guided-missile cruiser USS CHANCELLORSVILLE (CG-62) transited the Taiwan Strait.

February 17, 2020: A U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft operating over international waters 380 miles west of Guam was allegedly targeted by a lasing device from the PLAN LUYANG III (Type 052D)-class destroyer HOHHOT.

February 28, 2020: A PLAAF H-6 bomber transited through the Bashi Channel south of Taiwan before circling back and returning to base.

March 5-9, 2020: The U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN-71) conducted a port visit in Da Nang, Vietnam.

March 16, 2020: People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force aircraft conducted a set of unusual nighttime sorties over the sea to the southwest of Taiwan.

Although the nature of the mission was unusual—this marked the first time that PLA aircraft flew in the vicinity of Taiwan at night and follows more assertive rhetoric from People's Republic of China (PRC) media outlets and spokespersons since the landslide reelection of Taiwan President Tsai Ing-Wen on January 11.

March 26, 2020: The U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS MCCAMPBELL (DDG-85) transited the Taiwan Strait. A PRC spokesman called such actions “extremely dangerous.”

April 2, 2020: Vietnam claims China sunk a Vietnamese fishing boat. The fishing boat sank last Thursday in water near the Paracels, also known as the Xisha islands, in the northern part of the sea.

April 6, 2020: China holds South China Sea drills came after the US aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt passed through those waters on its way to Guam.

April 10, 2020: The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS *Barry* (DDG-52) sailed through the Taiwan Strait, according to the Navy.

April 21, 2020: The America, an amphibious assault ship, and the Bunker Hill, a guided missile cruiser, entered contested waters off Malaysia. At the same time, a Chinese government ship in the area has for days been tailing a Malaysian state oil company ship carrying out exploratory drilling.

April 22, 2020: “The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS *Barry* (DDG-52) sailed through the Taiwan Strait during routine underway operations.

When *Barry* transited the sensitive waters on Friday, China had just launched its second Type 075 amphibious assault ship. The first Type 075 launched in September.

April 28, 2020: Chinese authorities say they sortied ships and aircraft to "track, monitor, verify, identify and expel" the guided-missile destroyer USS *Barry* from the Paracel Island chain in the South China Sea.

April 29, 2020: The guided missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill sailed through the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea Wednesday for the second time, according to the U.S. 7th Fleet.

April 29, 2020: The Chinese carrier Liaoning and its five-ship strike group were spotted approximately 50 miles southeast of Miyako.

To track Chinese artificial islands, see CSIS's Asia Maritime's Transparency Initiative.⁶

Chinese Sovereignty Issues

- Taiwan

- **April 24, 2001:** U.S. President George W. Bush approves the sale of advanced weapons to Taiwan, including submarines, spy planes, helicopters, torpedoes and anti-ship missiles.
- **May 2001:** The Bush administration grants Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian permission to visit New York while en route to Latin America. China angrily accuses the U.S. of violating agreements to maintain relations solely with Beijing.
- **June 2, 2001:** China carries out military exercises simulating an invasion of Taiwan, at the same time as the island's armed forces test their capability to defend Taiwan against a missile attack from China.
- **July 2001:** A Chinese court convicts two Chinese citizens with permanent residency in the United States on charges of spying for Taiwan and sentences them to ten years in prison.
- **June 2008:** China and Taiwan agree to set up offices in each other's territory at the first formal bilateral talks since 1999.
- **November 2015:** China's President Xi Jinping and Taiwan's President Ma Ying-jeou hold historic talks in Singapore, the first such meeting since the Chinese Civil War finished and the nations split in 1949.
- **May 2017:** After the election of Tsai Ing-wen as president, China restricted the flow of tourists to Taiwan, which resulted in 22% less Chinese tourists to Taiwan in 2017 compared to the previous year.
- **July 2017:** Chinese news sources spread a rumor in 2017 that claimed the Tsai administration had banned the burning of incense and “ghost money” in Taoist temples. As a result, mass demonstrations occurred in Taipei demanding the government to lift the ban – although there was never even a ban.
- **December 2019:** In December 2019, China’s new aircraft carrier, Shandong, sailed through the Taiwan Strait before the Taiwanese presidential elections.
- **January 11, 2020:** Taiwan President Tsai’s is reelected for a second term.
- **March 26, 2020:** Passage of the “Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative” (“TAIPEI Act”), which was signed into U.S. law on March 26. The measure provides a symbolic statement of support for Taiwan.
- **Tibet**
 - **May 2001:** President Bush holds a "private meeting" with Tibet's exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama at the White House.
 - **June 2003:** China, India reach de facto agreement over status of Tibet and Sikkim in landmark cross-border trade agreement.
 - **March 2008:** Anti-China protests escalate into the worst violence Tibet has seen in 20 years, five months before Beijing hosts the Olympic Games.
 - **January 2013:** A Tibetan monk receives a suspended death sentence for inciting eight people to burn themselves to death. Nearly 100 Tibetans have set themselves on fire since 2009, many fatally, in apparent protest against Chinese rule.
 - **November 2016:** China restricted cross-border trade with Mongolia after Ulaanbaatar accepted a visit from the Dalai Lama.
 - **July-August 2017:** Row with India over disputed area of Himalayas, where China says Indian troops were trespassing.
- **Hong Kong**

- **March 2010:** Google ends its compliance with Chinese internet censorship and starts re-directing web searches to Hong Kong, in response to cyberattacks on e-mail accounts of human rights activists.
- **September-December 2014:** Protests against Beijing's plans to vet candidates for elections in 2017 begin in Hong Kong.
- **June 2019:** Hong Kong sees start of months of anti-government and pro-democracy protests against a proposal to allow extradition to mainland China.
- **Xinjiang**
 - **July 2009:** Scores of people are killed, and hundreds injured in the worst ethnic violence in decades as a protest in the restive Xinjiang region turns violent.
 - **July-August 2011:** Police kill seven Uighurs suspected of being behind separate attacks in the towns of Horan and Kashgar.
 - **November 2013:** Communist Party leadership announces plans to relax one-child policy and other reforms include the abolition of "re-education through labor" camps.
 - **January 2019:** Mass detention of Uighurs caught global attention.
- **Dissidents**
 - **October 2010:** Jailed Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo is awarded Nobel Peace Prize, prompting official protests from Beijing.
 - When the Nobel Committee in Norway awarded Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, China restricted the imports of Norwegian salmon. It was only until Norway issued a public statement acknowledging China's "sovereignty" and apologized for harming the mutual trust between the two countries that the trade restrictions were eased.

China-Korea

July 28, 2017: Korea launched a Terminal High Altitude Defense (THAAD) missile defense system in 2017 and China halted group tours to South Korea and limited imports of certain Korean products in China. China used product safety regulations to curb imports of South Korean cosmetics and cited fire code violations for closing South Korean-owned Lotte department stores in China – which had provided land for the missile system.

Sino-Russian Relations

1992: China and Russia issue the Joint Statement on the Basis of Mutual Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, recognizing each other as friendly countries⁷

1996: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - dubbed the Shanghai Five - meet in Shanghai and agree to cooperate to combat ethnic and religious tensions in each other's countries.

June 15, 2001: Leaders of China, Russia and four Central Asian states launch the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and sign an agreement to fight ethnic and religious militancy while promoting trade and investment. The group emerges when the Shanghai Five - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - are joined by Uzbekistan.

July 16, 2001: China and Russia sign "Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation."

August 18, 2005: China and Russia hold their first joint military exercises.

July 2008: China and Russia sign a treaty ending 40-year-old border dispute which led to armed clashes during the Cold War

February 2009: Russia and China sign \$25 billion deal to supply China with oil for next 20 years in exchange for loans.

May 21, 2014: China signs a 30-year deal worth an estimated \$400bn for gas supplies from Russia's Gazprom.

January 27, 2020: Russia delivers S-400 to China.

March 4, 2020: Russia accuses China of technology theft.

“Unauthorized copying of our equipment abroad is a huge problem. There have been 500 such cases over the past 17 years. China alone has copied aircraft engines, Sukhoi planes, deck jets, air defense systems, portable air defense missiles, and analogues of the Pantsir medium-range surface-to-air systems,” said Yevgeny Livadny, Rostec’s chief of intellectual property projects.⁸

China in Africa

November 2, 2006: African heads of state gather for a China-Africa summit in Beijing. Business deals worth nearly \$2 billion are signed and China promises billions of dollars in loans and credits.

February 2007: President Hu Jintao tours eight African countries to boost trade and investment. Western rights groups criticize China for dealing with corrupt or abusive regimes.

June 2016: China had more than 3,000 peacekeepers deployed to support 10 UN missions – the largest contingent of any permanent member nation of the UN Security Council—while also committing to establish another 8,000 member peacekeeping standby force.

- **Djibouti**

- **February 2017:** China opened a military base in Djibouti to monitor exports and imports that pass through the Bab el-Mandeb strait. This base also allows China to maintain a naval force in the regions.

- **Somalia**

- **April 2017:** China contributed to counterpiracy operation in the Gulf of Aden by deploying its 28th naval escort task forces in the region.

- **Libya**

- **September 2018:** China and Libya signed a Memorandum of Understanding on jointly building the Belt and Road during the eighth ministerial meeting of the CASCF held in Beijing, allowing Chinese companies to enter Libya.

- **Yemen**

- **2012:** China National Corporation for Overseas Economic Cooperation (CCOEC) signed a deal to build three natural gas-fired power plants in Yemen.
- **2013:** Yemen and China to expand two container ports in the southern cities of Aden and Mokha at a total cost of \$508 million.

- **Sudan**

- **August 2017:** China’s first helicopter unit deployed to a UN mission in Sudan to support the UN African Union Mission in Darfur.

- **Nigeria**
 - **May 16, 2018:** Nigeria has awarded a \$6.68 billion contract to the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) for work on a major segment of a railway linking the country's commercial hub Lagos, in the southwest, and Kano in the north, Xinhua reported.
- **Tanzania**
 - **September 12, 2014:** Construction of the USD 11 billion Bagamoyo megaport has been pushed forward by the government of Tanzania from January 2015 to the last trimester of 2014, following the successful negotiations with Chinese officials, Global Construction Review reports.

China has also conducted gray zone operations in Africa with Cape Verde, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Chad, Cameroon, Sudan, Gabon, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Seychelles, Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.

Belt Road Initiative

China has partnered with the following countries for its Belt and Road Initiative: Russia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan, India, Mongolia, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Brunei, East Timor, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Iran, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Estonia, Croatia, Albania, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova.

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- ² Frank G. Hoffman, “Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges,” *National Defense University*, (PRISM Volume 7 no. 4), November 8, 2018, <https://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/1680696/examining-complex-forms-of-conflict-gray-zone-and-hybrid-challenges/>
- ³ U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, “Multi-Domain Battle: Evolution of Combined Arms for the 21st Century 2025-2040,” December 2017, [https://www.tradoc.army.mil/Portals/14/Documents/MDB_Evolutionfor21st%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.tradoc.army.mil/Portals/14/Documents/MDB_Evolutionfor21st%20(1).pdf)
- ⁴ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999), <https://www.c4i.org/unrestricted.pdf>
- ⁵ Frank G. Hoffman, “Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges,” *National Defense University*, (PRISM Volume 7 no. 4), November 8, 2018, <https://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/1680696/examining-complex-forms-of-conflict-gray-zone-and-hybrid-challenges/>
- ⁶ Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, “China Island Tracker,” *CSIS*, <https://amti.csis.org/island-tracker/china/>
- ⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “China and Russia: partnership of strategic coordination,” https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18028.shtml
- ⁸ James M. Dorsey, “A Fragile Anti-US Alliance: Russia Accuses China of Technology Theft,” BESA Center, March 4, 2020, <https://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/russia-china-technology-theft/>