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SOUTH KOREA MOVES TO CURB CHINA'S ONLINE INFLUENCE OPS

In response to online Chinese influence operations, lawmakers in South Korea's United Future Party are pushing to ban such activities by non-Koreans. They have filed a lawsuit against several notorious online users suspected of being trained in China, and are proposing to force websites to reveal the location of users posting on their discussion boards. Beijing's agents have been found to infiltrate online communities in the country, where they disseminate pro-China content and promote divisive ideas intended to enhance social divisions among Koreans. Korean netizens recently caught China's agents in the act when they created a fake online debate ad that routed users to websites such as Free Tibet or Free Hong Kong, which are banned in China. The results were pronounced; a large percentage of those who clicked the links left the same comment: "I am an individual." The phrase, which sounds unnatural in Korean, is believed to be how Chinese agents signaled to each other and Chinese authorities that they were tricked into visiting the banned websites. (*The Diplomat*, March 27, 2020)

BEIJING INVESTIGATES FIRM FOR SELLING FAULTY VIRUS TESTS TO EUROPE

Between 70-80 percent of the coronavirus test kits that Spain and the Czech Republic purchased from China were too inaccurate to be used, forcing doctors to rely on slow conventional laboratory tests. China sent 150,000 portable, rapid-test kits to the Czech Republic, and sold Spain \$467 million in medical supplies, including 950 ventilators, 5.5 million test kits, 11 million gloves, and 500 million protective face masks. Now, Beijing is investigating the test kit manufacturer, Shenzhen Bioeasy Biotechnology, which is accused of selling the faulty kits to the desperate countries at marked-up prices. The firm, which Beijing admitted was not licensed to make the tests, has blamed their poor performance on foreigners' failure to collect samples and use the kits correctly. (Fox News, March 27, 2020)

TAIWAN, CZECH REPUBLIC INK DEAL ON CORONAVIRUS

Taiwan and the Czech Republic are partnering on medical and technological research to fight COVID-19. "To further strengthen consultation and cooperation on combatting the COVID-19 virus, both offices will seek to mediate and share best practices and cooperation," read the joint statement signed by Taiwan's representative to the Czech Republic, Ke Liang-ruey, and the representative of the Czech Economic and Cultural Office in Taipei, Patrick Rumlar. The collaboration will include joint development of test kits, vaccines and medication, and research into health tech and info sharing. Last month, James Liao, the president of Academia Sinica, Taiwan's foremost research institute, and his Czech counterpart from the Czech Academy of Sciences, Eva Zazimalova, began collaboration on coronavirus-related research. (*Taiwan News*, April 2, 2020)

A BREWING U.S.-CHINESE MEDIA WAR

China has pulled the press credentials of more than a dozen journalists from the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*. Beijing also said the three papers plus the Voice of America and Time must "declare in written form information about their staff, finance, operation and real estate in China." The moves are retaliation for new U.S. restrictions that cut the number of reporters from China's four major state-owned media from 160 to 100 and require outlets to register as foreign agents. The *WSJ* is reportedly in particularly hot water after an opinion column that dubbed China the "sick man of Asia." (Reuters, March 17, 2020)

TAIWAN'S PREMIER CALLS FOR CROSS-STRAIT EXCHANGES

"Taiwan and China are two separate nations, and cross-strait exchanges can be beneficial and should not be completely cut off," Taiwan's Premier Su Tseng-chang said in response to lawmaker questions about the role of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC). Su said he supports the exchanges, so as long as the island's national security is ensured. The MAC ensures that protocols for cross-strait exchanges are observed, the nation's sovereignty is respected, and the safety of Taiwanese are met, said MAC Minister Chen Ming-tong, adding that through exchanges Taiwan's people can see if Taipei or Beijing is the better government. "The government encourages people to compare China and Taiwan," Su said. (*Taipei Times*, March 25, 2020)