



## CHINA REFORM MONITOR

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of  
P.R.C. Government Actions and U.S. Policy

# China Reform Monitor No. 1422

July 9, 2020 **Joshua Eisenman**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Intelligence and Counterintelligence; International Economics and Trade; Corruption; China; Russia; Southeast Asia

### LEADING RUSSIAN ARCTIC SCHOLAR ACCUSED OF SPYING FOR CHINA

The President of Russia's Arctic Academy of Sciences, 78-year-old Valery Mitko, has been arrested by Russian authorities and charged with high treason for passing secret information on Russia's submarine detection technology to China during a visit to Beijing. Mitko, who is one of Russia's foremost Arctic scientists, has been under house arrest since February and faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted. (AsiaNews, June 16, 2020)

### JAKARTA REJECTS BEIJING'S OFFER FOR SOUTH CHINA SEA TALKS

Indonesia has rejected China's offer to negotiate over the South China Sea and reiterated that under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) it has no overlapping claims with Beijing. "Indonesia reiterates that the 9-Dash line map implying historic rights claim clearly lacks international legal basis and is tantamount to upset UNCLOS 1982," read the letter from Indonesia's Permanent Mission to the UN. The letter said Jakarta supports a 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which sided with the Philippines over Beijing. Beijing responded with its own letter to the UN that acknowledged "there is no territorial dispute between China and Indonesia in the South China Sea," but asserted that the two countries "have overlapping claims on maritime rights and interests in some parts of the South China Sea." Hikmahanto Juwana at the University of Indonesia said: "Indonesia should never allow itself to be lured into negotiating. So far, Indonesia has consistently refused and will never want to negotiate with China." (BenarNews, June 5, 2020)

### ZOOM ADMITS ENDING MEETINGS AT BEIJING'S BEHEST

Pressure from China led video teleconferencing platform Zoom to end at least four meetings relating to commemorating the Tiananmen Square crackdown anniversary and/or discussing the crisis in Hong Kong, suspend the accounts of human rights activists, and threaten to block any future meetings that China deems illegal. Zoom did not identify which law the meetings – which were hosted outside the PRC – had violated, but said it is developing new measures "to comply with requests from local authorities when they determine activity on our platform is illegal within their borders." U.S. representatives Greg Walden (R-OR) and Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) sent a letter to Zoom CEO Eric Yuan calling on him to clarify the company's practices. Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) told Yuan to "pick a side: American principles and free-speech, or short-term global profits and censorship." (London *Guardian*, June 12, 2020)

### TWITTER SUSPENDS 170,000 CHINA-LINKED FALSE NEWS ACCOUNTS

Social media platform Twitter has removed a network of 23,750 Beijing-controlled accounts and another 150,000 or so "bot" accounts that were retweeting and amplifying propaganda and false information favorable to the CPC. Twitter said the network was conducting "a range of coordinated and manipulated activities" mostly in Chinese, including praising China's response to the COVID19 pandemic and promoting "deceptive narratives" about Hong Kong pro-democracy protests and Taiwan. "While the CPC won't allow the Chinese people to use Twitter, our analysis shows it is happy to use it to sow propaganda and disinformation internationally," said Fergus Hanson of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Beijing has denied using artificial amplification and suppressing information, and said Twitter should take down accounts smearing China. (AP/Market Watch, June 12, 2020)

### MYANMAR'S AUDIT CHIEF CAUTIONS HIS GOVERNMENT AGAINST CHINA'S BRI

Myanmar's auditor general, Maw Than, has cautioned his own government about continued reliance on loans from Beijing that come with high rates of interest. Myanmar's current national debt stands at about \$10 billion, of which \$4 billion is owed to China, Than told a news conference in Naypyidaw. "The truth is the loans from China come at higher interest rates compared to loans from financial institutions like the World Bank or the IMF. So, I would like to remind the government ministries to be more restrained in using Chinese loans," he said. Myanmar repays as much as \$500 million annually to China in both principal and interest. In January, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi agreed to speed up BRI infrastructure financing, resulting in 33 exchange letters, protocols and MoUs on mega-project development