



## China Reform Monitor No. 1445

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**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Australia; China; Europe; Japan

### BEIJING ENDS ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND WORSHIP FOR CHILDREN

While Muslim residents in Linxia, Gansu sheltered indoors amid the COVID19 pandemic, the domes and minarets on their religious buildings were replaced with Chinese-style roofs. "It just happened all of a sudden. They came up with this policy of de-Saudi-ification, de-Arabization, and that was it. We accepted it – how could we not? The government decided," said one local resident. Authorities are also restricting mosque-building, limiting participation in the hajj, and have banned the call to prayer as a "public nuisance." While adults can still worship, cadres now sit outside mosques to ensure minors do not enter prayers. Once popular, summer religious schools are now banned and schools enforce a strict Mandarin-only teaching policy and forbid students from joining religious activities, including the Ramadan fast. "The children have no religious education now," said Yang Cheng, a cadre member sent from Xiamen, Fujian. A local resident agreed: "Mostly the next generation will be affected. They will probably lose their faith, or it will be diluted." A Linxia propaganda official confirmed that Beijing ordered the campaign against "Arab-ization, Saudi-ization, and pan-Islamification" because, "We are worried about foreign infiltration and religious extremism." No extremist attack or activity has taken place in Linxia. ( *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 2020)

### CANDY UPROAR HIGHLIGHTS UNIVERSITY SNITCHING EPIDEMIC

The epidemic of snitching at Chinese universities hit a new low last week, when an employee at the prestigious Harbin Institute of Technology in Heilongjiang posted on her social media two photos of a box of chocolate candies and the message: "Today is Thanksgiving in the West and I'd like use occasion to thank students of Dorm No. 17 for supporting my work. At 7:50 am, I will be handing out candies in the lobby." A student responded to her message: "As a representative of the administration, have you not considered the implications of publicly celebrating Western holidays? Please stop this activity immediately. Otherwise I will report this to the relevant school department." After images of the exchange went viral, the school issued a statement that "the dorm supervisor's offer of chocolate candies was based on good intentions, and so were the student's messages." (CNN, November 27, 2020)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The editor was a visiting student at the Harbin Institute of Technology in 2001.]

### CHINA BANS AUSTRALIAN WINE AMID GROWING TENSIONS

Citing "improperly low-priced Australian wine," the Ministry of Commerce has imposed a 212.1% tariff on the product. The decision, which Australia's trade minister said will make his country's wine unsellable in China, means the product will join others that are effectively banned from China, including Australian beef, coal, barley, seafood, sugar and timber. Beijing's punitive measures are a response to Canberra's support for a probe into the origins of the coronavirus. A Foreign Ministry spokesman accused Australia of "adhering to the Cold War mentality and ideological prejudice have repeatedly taken wrong words and deeds on issues concerning China's core interests." Australia is negotiating a mutual defense treaty with Japan, enhancing multilateral defense cooperation with Quad partners, expanding intelligence sharing with the Five Eyes network, and has criticized China's military facilities in the South China Sea. (Associated Press, November 27, 2020)

### BEIJING'S INFLUENCE IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT UNDER FIRE

The European Parliament's EU-China friendship group has come under fire for advancing Beijing's agenda in Brussels. The group has organized at least 15 official trips to China, including to attend the Beijing 2008 Olympics, the 2019 the BRI Forum, and a "high-level political dialogue with several heads of the state." Reinhard Bütikofer, a German member of the EU Parliament and chair of its China Delegation, said: "The EU-China friendship group has been an embarrassment for as long as I can recall. [Friendship groups] are initiated by a foreign government and are supported by that foreign government in one way or another, and gather people that are sympathetic toward that government." Raphaël Glucksmann, a French lawmaker and chair of the new Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU, said: "One thing that really pisses me off is the capacity of Europeans to be surprised every time. I'm fed up with this. Our responsibility, from left to right, is to make sure we're not surprised anymore. We all understand that there are people outside who want to subvert our democratic system and processes. It's about threats that are inside the institutions and inside Parliament." (Politico, November 27, 2020)

## **CHINA NOW "ACTIVELY CONSIDERING" JOINING CPTPP: XI**

Chairman Xi Jinping has told Asia-Pacific leaders that China is "actively considering" joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (CPTPP). The announcement marks a significant shift in Beijing's attitude, which was strongly negative when negotiations for the multilateral trade pact began under the Obama administration in 2009. After the Trump administration pulled out, however, the CPTPP was signed by Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. Beijing's bid to join the bloc bolsters its claims to support free trade and multilateralism, and demonstrates its commitment to regional economic integration. Although China cannot meet CPTPP environment, labor, human rights, transparency and freedom of information standards, its members are now under political pressure to decide whether to open talks. (*South China Morning Post*, November 23, 2020)