



China Reform Monitor No. 1486

December 14, 2021 **Joshua Eisenman**

Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Resource Security; Baltics; China; Russia; Southeast Asia; Taiwan

CHINA, RUSSIA, SIGN 5-YEAR MILITARY COOPERATION AGREEMENT

Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu, have signed a roadmap for closer military cooperation spanning the years 2021-2025. According to the Russian Defense Ministry, both sides hailed a series of exercises involving PLA and Russian warplanes and ships last month, and "expressed a shared interest in stepping up strategic military exercises and joint patrols." Shoigu said: "China and Russia have been strategic partners for many years. Today, in conditions of increasing geopolitical turbulence and growing conflict potential in various parts of the world, the development of our interaction is especially relevant. In such an environment, the Russian-Chinese coordination becomes a stabilizing factor in global affairs." For his part, Wei praised Russia for countering "U.S. pressure and military threats." Last year, Putin revealed that Russia was sharing sensitive military technologies with the PLA. (Associated Press, November 23, 2021)

CHINA'S COAST GUARD INTIMIDATES PHILIPPINE VESSELS

China's Coast Guard vessels fired water cannons at Philippine boats delivering supplies to Filipino marines at the Second Thomas Shoal in the contested Spratly Islands. Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin expressed his "outrage, condemnation and protest" over the "illegal" incident and demanded Beijing "back off." "Fortunately, no one was hurt; but our boats had to abort their resupply mission," said Locsin. He said the boats were within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone and were covered by the country's mutual defense pact with the U.S., and warned that China's "failure to exercise self-restraint threatens the special relationship" between the two countries. "We do not ask permission to do what we need to do in our territory." (*The Jakarta Post*, November 18, 2021)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: China's claims to the South China Sea were repudiated by The Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration on the Law of the Sea Treaty, to which Beijing is a signatory, back in 2016. However, China has ignored the ruling, and has continued to claim sovereignty over territories in the Seas, such as the Scarborough Shoal, in violation of international law.]

TO BEIJING'S CHAGRIN, TAIWAN OPENS OFFICE IN LITHUANIA

In a diplomatic breakthrough, Taiwan has opened a de facto embassy in Lithuania. In August, after Taiwan announced its office would be called the Taiwanese Representative Office in Lithuania, China demanded that the small Baltic state withdraw its ambassador to Beijing and recalled its own ambassador. Other Taiwan offices in Europe and the U.S. use "Taipei" in their titles to avoid angering Beijing. Taiwan's foreign ministry said the new office would "chart a new and promising course" for bilateral ties and identified semi-conductors, lasers and financial technology among possible areas for cooperation. "Taiwan will cherish and promote this new friendship based on our shared values," it said. Lithuania will open its own representative office in Taiwan. (Nikkei Asia, November 18, 2021)

NEW TEXTBOOKS REFLECT XI JINPING'S DOMINANCE

All primary, secondary and tertiary students have new textbooks this year outlining "Grandpa Xi's" political philosophy. The primary school version emphasizes the leader's wisdom, friendliness and care for children. It has photos of him planting trees, meeting children at school and reminding them that "Grandpa Xi Jinping is very busy with work, but no matter how busy he is, he still joins our activities and cares about our growth." To become what Grandpa Xi refers to as "qualified builders and successors of socialism," kids must have a "good moral character," be "diligent and thrifty," acquire knowledge about "science and technology," and be "creative and innovative." According to China's National Textbook Committee: "The textbooks reflect the will of the CPC... Primary schools should foster love and right understanding for the Party, country and socialism in students." (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, November 24, 2021)

PLA PUTS ADVANCED TECH AT CENTER OF REFORM

China is reshaping its military to incorporate AI, drones, big data, cloud computing and other advanced technology, according to the Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies. Its annual China Security Report describes the "intelligentization" of the PLA, including the accelerating development of military applications for such technologies. At the 2017 CPC Party Congress, Xi Jinping's directed the PLA to "speed up development of an intelligent military." Since then, China has been developing what it calls "intelligentized" warfare, including using AI to aid human decisionmaking. Beijing is considering establishing new forces specializing in space, networks and electronic warfare, and creating new interconnected domains better suited to joint operations and integrating state and private-sector systems. (Nikkei Asia, November 27, 2021)