



China Reform Monitor No. 1506

May 26, 2022 Joshua Eisenman

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XI MOVES TO SILENCE "ZERO COVID" CRITICS...

The seven-member Politburo Standing Committee led by Xi Jinping has pledged to "fight against any speech that distorts, questions or rejects our country's Covid-control policy." The CPC leadership reaffirmed its support for the "zero-Covid" approach, which has led to lockdowns in dozens of Chinese cities. The Standing Committee statement means Xi is fending off opposition to the policy, said Deng Yuwen, who once edited a party newspaper. "No matter how much disunity from within, they still have to listen to Xi. Covid prevention has become a fight that Xi cannot afford to lose," Deng said. (Bloomberg, May 5, 2022)

...AS CHINA CENSORS WHO CHIEF'S CRITICISM

"We don't think that (China's zero-COVID strategy) is sustainable considering the behavior of the virus and what we now anticipate in the future," World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said recently. In response, Beijing criticized Tedros for making "irresponsible remarks," and his comment were quickly scrubbed from Chinese social media platforms. WeChat, China's largest platform, disabled the sharing function of the UN account that posted Tedros' comment, claiming it "violated relevant laws and regulations." (Reuters, May 12, 2022)

CHINA CRACKS DOWN ON "ILLEGAL ENTRY AND EXIT"

China is cracking down on "illegal entry and exit," including by conducting "strict reviews" of all travel documents and visas. The National Immigration Administration has instructed PRC nationals not to leave China unless absolutely necessary. People applying for or renewing passports are being rejected and anyone hoping to leave must first get an exit permit from their local police station. In Baisha, Hunan, police ordered residents to hand over their passports. Border police have also enhanced their inspections of incoming citizens, questioning them about their overseas activities, asking whether they plan to leave the country again, and invalidating their passports. Immigration authorities are "maintaining the highest level of prevention and control," resulting in "low levels" of outbound passengers at border crossings and airports, said a spokesman. "The police have strengthened full-time and all-region patrols, controls and investigations, closely cooperating with law enforcement in neighboring countries to crack down hard on illegal entry and exit activities." (Radio Free Asia, May 10, 2022)

A SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN AGAINST "HISTORICAL NIHILISM"

Beijing has launched a campaign against "historical nihilism," a catch-all term for any accounts that counter the official party history. Major outlets including Douban, Douyin, and Toutiao began cracking down after an article appeared in the official CPC magazine Study Times calling for more internet control. In March, the Beijing office of the Cyberspace Administration of China sent a group to Douban's headquarters to supervise its censorship. Weibo has closed 76 accounts and deleted 3368 posts in historical and news discussions. The platform called on users to report any such comments and urged users to post only "positive, value-oriented content." Cadres are being required to attend screenings of a documentary, "Historical Nihilism and the Soviet Collapse," which attributes the Soviet Union's decline to political liberalization and emphasizing the Communist Party's misdeeds. (*China Digital Times*, April 28, 2022)

CHINA ORDERS GOVERNMENT, STATE FIRMS TO DUMP FOREIGN PCS

China has ordered all central government level agencies and state corporations to replace foreign-branded personal computers and operating software with domestic alternatives within two years. The move is Beijing's most aggressive effort yet to eradicate overseas technology. The official mandate, which will eventually replace more than 50 million PCs on a central government level alone, will soon be extended to provincial government agencies. However, certain state-owned media and cybersecurity bodies may be issued special permits so they can continue to buy advanced foreign equipment. (Bloomberg, May 6, 2022)