



## CHINA REFORM MONITOR

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

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April 18, 2023 **Joshua Eisenman**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; China; Russia; India; Latin America

### **XI ABANDONS JAPAN'S CLAIM TO RUSSIAN-HELD ISLES**

After six decades, China has abandoned its support for Japan's claims of sovereignty over four islands taken by Russia in 1945. In talks last month with Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping told the Russian leader that China "does not take either side" regarding the territorial row. In July 1964, Mao told a Japanese delegation in China that he believes the Russian-held islands "should be returned to you," and Beijing had maintained that position ever since. Maps in China show the disputed islands as Japan's territory "occupied by Russia." Bilateral negotiations over the islands, known as the Northern Territories in Japan and the Southern Kurils in Russia, were suspended after Tokyo imposed sanctions on Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine. (Japan Times, April 3, 2023)

### **MEXICO ASKS CHINA TO STOP FENTANYL PRECURSOR EXPORTS**

In a letter to Xi Jinping, Mexico's President, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, wrote: "I write to you, President Xi Jinping, to ask you for humanitarian reasons to help us by controlling the shipments of fentanyl." Only after several paragraphs of ranting against the United States did López Obrador ask Xi to stop shipments of fentanyl precursor chemicals, which Mexican cartels use to make the synthetic opioid that they traffic into the U.S. The drug kills about 70,000 Americans per year. (Associated Press, April 4, 2023)

### **CHINA RENAMES PLACES ALONG THE DISPUTED INDIAN BORDER**

China's Ministry of Civil Affairs has issued a statement claiming to have "standardized" the names of 11 places, including five mountains, in a region that Beijing calls southern Tibet or "Zangnan." India rejected China's new names for the locations, which it regards as part of its state of Arunachal Pradesh. "Arunachal Pradesh is, has been and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India," said an Indian spokesperson. A Chinese spokesperson, however, said the name changes were "completely within the scope of China's sovereignty [because] the southern Tibet region is Chinese territory." (Reuters, April 4, 2023)

### **CHINA DELAYING HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS WITH THE UNITED STATES**

Beijing has frozen high level bilateral diplomatic contacts with Washington in the wake of the recent Chinese spy balloon incident. The freeze includes delaying scheduling a call between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping, as well as visits to China from Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and other top U.S. officials. Washington keeps reaching out, but the Beijing keeps demurring. "The Chinese have been reluctant to engage in discussions around confidence building or crisis communications or hotlines. Given the fact that our forces operate in proximity, we're going to have increasing challenges," National Security Council Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell said last week. Working level exchanges continue, however. Rick Waters, deputy assistant secretary of State for China and Taiwan, visited China last month, while China's former ambassador to the U.S., Cui Tiankai, visited Washington. Elizabeth Economy, a senior advisor to the Secretary of Commerce on China issues, and Scott Tatlock, the deputy assistant secretary for China and Mongolia, are currently in China. (Politico, April 5, 2023)

### **CHINA APPOINTS SHANGHAI BISHOP, VIOLATING PACT WITH THE VATICAN**

Beijing has appointed a new bishop in Shanghai, the largest Roman Catholic diocese in China, in violation of a bilateral pact with the Vatican that was renewed last October for the second time since 2018. The Holy See learned via the media and was later officially informed of China's decision to transfer Bishop Shen Bin to the diocese of Shanghai. The Council of Chinese Bishops - which the CPC controls, Shen leads, and the Holy See does not recognize - appointed him. Four months ago, the Vatican first accused China of violating their bilateral accord when it installed a bishop in a diocese that the Holy See does not recognize. The bishopric of Shanghai has been vacant since 2013 because the Vatican's choice to administer the diocese, the city's auxiliary bishop, Ma Daqin, has been under house arrest since 2012 for rejecting the party-controlled Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. (Reuters, April 4, 2023)