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### CHINA'S POPULATION WILL FALL TO 525 MILLION BY 2100

The Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) predicts that China's population of 1.4 billion will drop 60% by 2100, to 525 million. The new figure is 62 million fewer people than SASS projected last year. Meanwhile, the share of Chinese people aged 65 and older (14 percent in 2020) will rise to 35 percent by 2050. Additionally, in 2020, each elderly Chinese was supported by an average of five people between the ages of 20 to 64; that ratio that will drop to 1.5 by 2050, SASS projects. "China's pension crisis will develop into a humanitarian catastrophe," posits Yi Fuxian of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. (*Newsweek*, February 15, 2024)

### THOUSANDS OF CHINESE MIGRANTS CROSS FROM MEXICO INTO THE U.S.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection detained more than 37,000 Chinese migrants at the Mexican border in 2023 – nearly 10 times the number it did a year earlier. The number of Chinese migrants detained while attempting to enter the U.S. via Mexico has grown apace with China's economic difficulties. It costs only \$5,000 for Chinese migrants to get to the U.S. border. From China, they first fly to Thailand, then on to Turkey and then Ecuador, which does not require visas from PRC citizens. Next, they drive to Colombia and sail to the edge of the Darien Gap connecting Panama to South America. After hiking through the rainforest for three days, they bus to Mexico, where they pay smugglers to bring them to Tijuana. "What drives most people is the economic reasons to leave China," says Ian Johnson of the Council on Foreign Relations. "I think it's likely to continue for the next several years." (*Nikkei*, February 13, 2024)

### QIN GANG'S LOVER WAS A BRITISH SPY

Soon after his disappearance last June, China's former foreign minister, Qin Gang, tried to take his own life after he was shown evidence that his lover, former state media journalist Fu Xiaotian, was an agent for Britain's MI6. After his attempted suicide, Qin was reportedly moved to a military hospital in Beijing, where he died in July under unknown circumstances. Qin's disappearance followed the visit to Beijing of Andrey Rudenko, Russia's deputy foreign minister, who told his Chinese counterparts that Qin had been compromised by British intelligence. After serving as PRC ambassador to the U.S., Qin became foreign minister in January 2023. (*Newsweek*, February 13, 2024)

### META TAKES DOWN MORE FAKE ACCOUNTS BASED IN CHINA

Meta has removed another network of fake Facebook and Instagram accounts originating in China – the sixth in the last year. Posing as U.S. military families and anti-war activists, the fake accounts included 33 Facebook and four Instagram profiles, six pages and six Facebook groups. According to Meta, they spread pro-China propaganda on the platforms and posted and shared "criticism of U.S. foreign policy towards Taiwan and Israel and its support of Ukraine." The same group also ran fake YouTube and Medium accounts. "The greatest change in the threat landscape has been this emergence of Chinese influence operations," said Meta's security chief, Ben Nimmo. (*Engadget*, February 14, 2024)

### CHINESE SCAMMERS STEAL FACIAL RECOGNITION DATA, ACCESS BANK ACCOUNTS

A group of China-based hackers dubbed GoldFactory is stealing facial recognition data and using it to access bank accounts throughout Asia. In October 2023, GoldDigger, a fake banking app, began accessing accounts at more than 50 banks in Vietnam. The update, GoldDiggerPlus, even offers a fake customer service agent to help walk the mark through the installation process. In Thailand, the scammers trick victims into downloading a "digital pension" app by pretending to be from government agencies. During installation, people are prompted to record a short video for facial recognition, which the criminals then capture and use to make deepfake videos. They also trick victims into installing software that gives hackers remote access to personal computers. (*The Record*, February 15, 2024)