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International News

East Asia

[China Power Cuts: What's Causing the Country's Blackout?](#)

China's power outages are significant based on their impact on China's strategic calculus. The first being that China may be more hesitant to act on revisionist claims in the South or East China seas because their home economy is less stable, however, these outages could exacerbate these disputes because both the Senkaku Islands and the Scarborough Shoal are said to contain oil. Thus, China's need for energy may push them to pursue these territories with greater zeal. This effects U.S. Security as there are mutual defense treaties with both Japan and the Republic of the Philippines that could draw the U.S. into conflict over these territories. Furthermore, China owns a significant portion of U.S. debt, and with the debt ceiling looming over congress, Chinese economic instability due to power shortages could encourage them to call U.S. loans. However, this is unlikely as the U.S. would be forced to default, potentially causing a global recession and collapse of the dollar that would negatively impact China. This event shows a greater trend of China fighting for energy independence, as they have almost no comparative advantage for fossil fuels but own great portions of the global supply chain for renewable energy technology. Thus, China will most likely continue its efforts to obtain oil whilst shifting toward renewables for long-term energy independence.

[China Keeps Buzzing Taiwan](#)

China is continuing the escalation of tensions between them and the U.S., though they have not violated Taiwanese airspace, this is an example of red-line testing to see what will provoke a U.S. response, deepening their position on their claims to Taiwan. This could shape relations in the region by weakening the perception of U.S. deterrence posture if there is no response, but a heavy-handed response could reduce U.S. credibility as a rational decision maker and further escalate tit-for-tat provocations. The state department has stated that they wish to continue their alignment with democratic Taiwan and criticized these escalatory measures, potentially to assure regional allies that Chinese revisionist tactics do not go unseen. It should be noted that both the U.S. and the PLA have increased presence in the Taiwan strait, increasing the chance of miscalculation but also provoking one another as opposed to a single antagonist. This could change U.S. military posturing within the Taiwan strait or increasing presence in nearby territory such as Guam, to facilitate a fast response or prevent escalation. This shows a greater trend in PLA actions as they continue to test the Biden administration's response to these actions, whilst potentially pursuing acquisition of disputed territories. These statistics were provided by the Taipei defense ministry; thus, the interpretation would be that of Taiwan itself and may affect the portrayed gravity of the situation.

[Taiwan very worried China will invade, Foreign minister says](#)

On and near the anniversary of the People's Republic of China, this show of force is an indicator of Xi Jinping's readiness to at least threaten Taiwan with the possibility of war. The article states this could be a test of resolve for Taiwan, but this is also a test for the Biden administration who has vowed to support Taiwan. This island is a key touchpoint for democracy in East Asia, which makes it contribute to ideological disputes between systems of government and issues such as human rights and individual liberty, which some argue that democracies better uphold. The U.S. is invested in promoting democracy in the region and its commitment to that promotion will be tested if Chinese action continues—is the U.S. willing to go to war with a nuclear power to protect the freedom of individuals? That is what China, and the rest of the world are interested to know. The Taiwan strait is a key geopolitical hotspot in east Asia which holds symbolic significance that can spill over to other conflicts. For example, if an emboldened China makes a move on Taiwan, Japan may feel the need to proliferate in order to defend its territory—as it has tense relations with China given, they have not apologized for the attacks on Nanking among other things—in the Senkaku Islands. Further, South Korea may do the same for the Diaoyu dispute, thus leading to a wave of proliferation. However, even without allied response, a war over Taiwan would include two nuclear powers with heavily connected economies that could spur global recession and endanger millions of lives. Further, this article also mentions that the semiconductor industry could be greatly affected by reduced output from Taiwan in the case of a conflict, which the effects are being seen in the tech sector now. Boiled down, the U.S. must handle this carefully, as a large response could provoke war, and a weak response could hurt U.S. assurance and embolden the PLA to take Taiwan, also leading to war. Military positions should be calculated from each of these angles, as the greater trend brings us closer to conflict.

Taiwan Preparing for Possible War with China

Taiwanese minister Wu is using strong, potentially escalatory, rhetoric against Chinese actions this week. Notable is the fact that he specifically states Taiwan is ready to defend itself, not implicating a U.S. response or asking for one, and yet they as the Australians for greater intelligence and security cooperation. It is unlikely this ask is unrelated to the Australian's new deal with the U.S. and U.K. to acquire nuclear submarine capabilities, thus making them a much more powerful naval player than they were to begin with. This shows Taiwan's desire for individual legitimacy (through self-defense) and multilateral security aid through different alliance structures. Possibilities could include increased deterrence with Aussie involvement or greater tension as more armed states become involved. The U.S. could potentially supply nuclear subs to an ally who will continue to provoke the Chinese and draw the entire world into a conflict if not handled correctly. Thus, the U.S. will need to add the reliability of Australian usage of said subs in the Taiwan conflict to its strategic calculus. Wu further asserting preparations for war could lead to a rise in tension as China could feel they must respond in kind or make the predictions of Wu come true. Wu is seeking security for Taiwan and may be using war rhetoric to bolster support from a strong allied deterrence posture; thus, these broad war claims must be evaluated through such a lens.

Chinese Military Expansion Poses Threats to Guam, Hawaii

Hicks clearly labels China as a competitor and explicitly states that the U.S. wants to deter aggressive posturing, whilst reassuring that AUKUS will not be used to develop nuclear weapons only submarine propulsion. Deterrence can lead to a prevention of action but also aggression because it can easily lead to miscalculation. The U.S. holds key strategic positions in Guam and Japan, and a security ally in Australia, thus the U.S. is interested in the actions of a military competitor in the region. Military presence for the sake of “maintaining peace” is seen as great power competition for hegemony and spheres of influence, thus threats on these strategic positions are threats against those two ends. The U.S. must determine if hegemony is necessary, or worth fighting over and evaluate why they are involved in East Asia in the first place. Though this posturing seems threatening, economic interdependence between the PRC and the U.S. both provide a significant cooling factor to conflict. Furthermore, the U.S. must look at its alliance structure to ensure that nations holding mutual defense treaties feel assured, or if their assurance is of great importance. Hicks laying out U.S. strategy in the region to reduce Chinese bullying and is not aimed at an arms race could help check escalation as well, acting defensive. But this notion functions on the presupposition that China is revisionist, which is a constant subject for debate. Though that may be true in some instances, nowhere in this article is there a definitive prediction or warrant as to why China would interfere with Hawaii, or what the brink is for China to stop posturing and start attacking. Thus, the trend seems to be that China will not take these accessory territories that have no historical significance just for the sake of taking them.

Japan’s Ruling Party Elects a New Leader

The change of power in Japan is significant as the former prime minister, Suga, stepped down after just a year in the office. However, Kishida’s campaign is very similar to that of Shinzo Abe, who served 8 years in the position. Thus, this election may not have significant effects on the perception of Japanese political stability. Furthermore, Kishida is a proponent of a rules-based order in East Asia and Abe’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific framework. Thus, he will most likely look favorably upon U.S. FONOPS in the region, as well as strengthening ties with the U.S. to achieve those goals. Kishida has expressed a desire to continue the advancement of Japanese defense capabilities, but frames this through continued U.S. support of deterrence measures and the mutual defense treaty that exists between the two. Kishida seems poised to balance deterrence and diplomacy, putting the U.S. in a good position by having an ally of similar goals so close to a major competitor such as China. The trend seems to be the continued U.S.-Japan alliance strength and commitment to ensure security and prosperity in the region. The Center for Strategic and International Studies comes to these conclusions, with great research on previous political environments in Japan and international relations experience, thus these conclusions seem reliable going forward.

North and South Korea Restore Military Communication Hotlines

Hotlines are a positive signal between North and South Korea that neither side want immediate conflict. This is especially relevant after North Korea expressed distaste for U.S. exercises with South Korea recently and testing multiple defense systems in the last few weeks. Hotlines can provide a check on miscalculation, serving as a last effort for diplomatic resolution before weapons are launched. Thus, the U.S. should be excited that this preventative measure has been put in place. Furthermore, it shows that U.S. operations in South Korea are not a threshold for no cooperation with North Korea, as the hotlines were created despite those actions. This could mean these operations can and will continue, or that the ones that have previously happened will not lead to conflict. This may show a greater trend of better relations on the Korean peninsula, but North Korea's military buildup makes this trend seem a bit utopian, and one act does not always signal an overall posture. However, this is a good sign.

Middle East

[Erdogan Might Be Too Sick to Keep Leading Turkey](#)

Erdogan's failing health opens the door to Turkey's chief of staff Akar taking his place and strengthening the Turkish military. This change would be negative for the United States, as Akar, like Erdogan, is highly nationalistic and holds a strong anti-Western mentality. Akar led the failed coup in 2016, which the U.S. condemned. Thus, if Akar came to power, U.S. Turkey relations would start off on a shaky foundation. Likewise, the U.S. has relied on Turkey as military ally against terrorism for years, yet Akar's anti-Western views might lead to a change in Turkey's military assistance to the U.S.

[Israel Accuses Iran of Cyprus Attack Plot After Suspect Arrested](#)

As a strong ally of Israel, the United States holds an interest in any attempted action taken against Israel. If Iran is truly responsible for this incident, the United States' response to such action would be critical to further relationships between Israel and the US and between the US and Iran, seeing as current Iranian and US relations are unstable at present.

[Reconciliation agreement weakens opposition in Deraa, Syria](#)

The ceasefire between Russia and Syria had implications for the U.S., who had recently agreed to transport gas through Syria to Lebanon, which is suffering from an electricity crisis. Thus, the Russia-Syria agreement allows for more open government communication with foreign countries operating in the region. However, this agreement leaves openings for Iranian-backed militias and thus violence to grow in Syria, posing serious problems for U.S. personnel stationed in Syria, who seek to keep Iranian terrorists out of southern Syria.

[Washington welcomes news of direct talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, official says](#)

Such talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran are crucial to the United States' involvement concerning their Middle Eastern partners. Saudi Arabia and Iran have been enemies from the shadows for decades, each fighting each other in proxy wars and assisting other warring countries to cripple each other. As an ally of the US, Saudi Arabia's talks with Iran present opportunities for growth between the United States and Iran, especially after Trump pulled out of the Obama-era nuclear deal and placed heavy sanctions on the country. Such peace talks also prove crucial to Iran's current development of nuclear weapons and will affect the country's decisions on how such weapons will be used.

[What's Behind Fresh Tensions on the Iran-Azerbaijan Border?](#)

Tensions between Iran and Azerbaijan pose a threat to whatever peace has been maintained between the two countries up until now and could have implications for the United States. The U.S. is an ally of Azerbaijan and has committed to assisting the country with its security. Thus, Iran's military exercises on the border, though allegedly not a threat, could prompt action on the part of the U.S. The Three Brothers-2021 of Turkey, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan responded with their own military exercises, which could lead to heightened displays of power between Azerbaijan and Iran, seeing as Pakistan is a nuclear power, and Iran is creating nuclear weapons. Iran's desire to be seen as a strong player in the Middle East could prompt more military exercises close to Azerbaijan's border, seeing as the Three Brothers-2021 do not recognize Iran as a future threat to the region. Allegations concerning Israel's involvement on the side of Azerbaijan also affects the U.S., as now two American allies could become involved in an escalating conflict with Iran, whose own relationship with the United States is negative.

[What to Make of Qatar's First-Ever Popular Vote](#)

Qatar relies on the U.S. for security and is one of Qatar's top investors in oil and natural gas. These new elections provide Qatar with a more modern face, which greatly increases its image in the eyes of the United States. This electoral decision also increases competition between Qatar and the UAE, another strong ally of the United States. In this light, the United States would benefit economically from an increased competition from these countries, both of which provide the U.S. with oil and natural gas. Thus, this competition could lead to lower costs for oil and natural gas for the United States.

Europe

[EU Might Consider Military Training Mission for Ukraine](#)

After Ukrainian foreign and defense ministers contacted the European Union in July, some EU members are considering the formation of the “EU Military Advisory and Training Mission Ukraine.” This initiative is intended to come as support from EU and NATO members to Ukraine in the light of the alleged Russian military buildup in eastern Ukraine. However, some member nations such as Greece, Italy, and Cyprus are said to be against such a military mission and against Ukrainian admittance to NATO as it may further strain tensions with Russia.

Poland calls for enhanced EU-NATO cooperation amid Russian buildup

The Polish President has called for a renewed and strengthened team effort between the EU and NATO in reaction to an increasingly aggressive Russia. President Duda stated that in order to better combat Russian expansionism NATO and the European Union need to work in tune with one another on their defense policies. This comes at a time when Ukraine has petitioned NATO to become a member not long after the Russian annexation of Crimea. While in Washington D.C., the NATO Secretary-General spoke with President Biden about how Ukrainian membership would allow other member nations to assist with security-sector reform and anti-corruption

Delegates Voice Concern Over States Engaging in Arms Race Instead of Aiding Efforts to Contain COVID-19, as First Committee Begins General Debate

The United Nation’s High Representative warned that the “continual growth in global military—almost \$2 trillion in 2020--spending has fed into cycles of insecurity and mistrust” in its most recent Disarmament and International Security Committee meeting. A number of representatives implored nations with high military expenditures to instead focus their efforts on poverty and Covid-19. Over the course of the debate, the main subject matter was little else but nuclear reduction. Several representatives stated that the situation in countries such as China, and North Korea are deeply concerning due to their lack of commitment to a nuclear test ban and reduction strategies. Among China and North Korea, the Middle East region has also become a great area of interest in eliminating the possibility of nuclear proliferation.

Germany rejects Iran’s calls for partial unfreeze of assets to restart nuclear talks

Germany has rejected Iran’s pleas for the revocation of its assets being frozen by the US. The call comes as Iran seeks to restart the failed nuclear talks that took place in Vienna. Over \$10 billion in assets have been frozen after the election of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, but France, Germany, Russia, China, and the UK have sought to reengage in talks since being abandoned in 2018.

[Macron to Meet Biden at G20, Hopes to “Re-engage”](#)

President Macron and President Biden are expected to meet in Rome to discuss the recent events involving a military pact with Australia. The “re-engagement” is meant to come after Australia agreed to a security alliance with the United States to purchase U.S. designed submarines after declining a similar contract with France.

[Pandora Papers: Rich and Powerful Deny Wrongdoing After Dump of Purported Secrets](#)

A recent document has been released citing offshore financial records of several world leaders—most notably Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister of Czechia Andrej Babis, and King Abdullah II of Jordan. The vast majority of the records involve hundreds of millions secretly being moved around by world leaders and some large companies. In its entirety, the Pandora Papers contain some 11.9 million records. The files are supposedly linked to national leaders, politicians, and public officials in over 91 countries according to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), but the records have yet to be independently verified.

Terrorism

[Nigeria: Islamic State attacks surrendered rivals, Boko Haram](#)

This is an example of inter-jihadist fighting which is interesting, especially given that multiple groups are fighting one another. One example is the Taliban fighting ISIS-K in Afghanistan. While both groups have similar goals against the U.S. at first glance, there are significant divides that keep them from banding together and even cause conflict. Thus, this aids the U.S. and allied response to terror movements by keeping them dispersed and relatively localized, preventing an all-out unified attack that could be much more difficult to overcome or predict. However, this fighting creates the potential for a humanitarian disaster as civilians can easily be caught in the crossfire, as is the case in Nigeria. The U.S. should evaluate if aid should be provided in these cases and continue to pay attention to ensure this does not spill up into a civil war or conflict. Divided they stand, and that is a good thing for the moment.

[Taliban raid suspected IS hideout after bombing in capitol](#)

This past week, Taliban forces raided an Islamic State affiliate hideout in Kabul after they claimed responsibility for a bombing outside a mosque where Taliban officials went to mourn death of Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid’s mother. The bombing was one of the deadliest attacks since August 31st when Afghanistan was taken by the Taliban. At this time, five civilians are known to have died in the bombing, but

no numbers have been given as to how many have died in the Taliban's retaliatory raid. These attacks come at a time when the Islamic State has seen a resurgence in Afghanistan after a devastating bombing campaign from the U.S.

[U.S. intensifies talks to use Russian bases for Afghan counterterrorism ops](#)

Over-the-horizon ops and limited engagement in a country opens up the same set of circumstances as embroils the US in conflicts to begin with. If the US does this, it poses the risk to re-open the can of worms known as Afghanistan, but it does offer increased opportunities for dialogue with Russia. While the Russian offer is not altruistic, the more levels of engagement that the US and Russia can cooperate on, the fewer opportunities for conflict escalation will arise. Doing this will likely not mitigate the danger of terrorism rising from the ashes in Afghanistan, but it can contribute to reduced tensions in the great power competition sphere, as Afghanistan leaves a bad taste in the minds of Russians and Americans alike.

[ISIS: Man charged with terror plot after arrest at Heathrow Airport](#)

The arrest of this alleged terrorist has effects on the United States' foreign policies, mainly in that U.K is a strong U.S. ally and should assist the U.K. in this situation, namely keeping eye out for other potential terrorists who could've been working with Suleman to commit such attacks. The use of combined U.K. and U.S. forces working to assess this situation escalates the effectiveness of any searches for other group members.

Weapons and Technology

[Airshow China 2021: CASC unveils CH-817 micro-surveillance and attack VTOL UAV](#)

This drone is specifically suited, as the article says for dense jungle and mountainous terrain and for dense urban sprawl. This is eerily similar to the terrain found on the island of Formosa, now known as Taiwan. While not necessarily indicative, it does show where Chinese military doctrine and procurement lies in priorities.

[Russia Says it Launched Hypersonic Missile from Submarine for First Time](#)

This poses a risk to all US fleets, as a hypersonic missile that could get within several hundred miles could be a serious threat to Carrier Strike Groups, which would have very little time to respond. While the missile does have a nominal range of 600 plus miles, this is on a ballistic

trajectory and the far greater threat is within 300 or so. Fortunately, the usage of CSG against Russia is relatively limited, so its greatest threat would likely be in land attack usage in a war in the Baltics, for which the US would have very limited response.

New U.S. Navy 'Task Group Greyhound' To Hunt Russian Submarines

This new fleet structure is focused on preventing Russian subs getting too close to targets on the East Coast in case of all-out war, but also functions as a good screen and practice for hunting Russian subs a la Cold War. Subs represent the greatest threat to the continental US and currently only Russia truly has the capability to make that threat real, so this new structure is critical as a deterrence measure. While it doesn't mean too much in the way of changing policy, it illustrates the changes that are coming about as a result of renewed great power competition.

Mali receives helicopters and weapons from Russia

The United States maintains a small presence in West Africa to combat terrorism, and historically, whenever US and Russian mercenaries have been in the same place to combat terrorists, while some engagement and cooperation occurs, more often there is tension and conflict. Russian insertion of mercs to West Africa poses this same risk to US special forces in the country. Taking a strong side with the French on the issue of Mali may help to offset some of the extreme fallout over the AUKUS deal that screwed over France.

US Suspends Authority to Ship Nuclear Materials to China's CGN

While China's lack of natural energy resources certainly lends itself to the belief that most of their nuclear programs are civilian in nature, the likelihood that it is being utilized for more nefarious purposes is highly probable. By suspending these goods, China's nuclear arms buildup will be slowed but not stopped. Overall, regardless of whether China's arsenal is in the 200s or in the thousands, all it will take is a belief in success and a single warhead to do cataclysmic damage to the US so any and all attempts to mitigate nuclear proliferation is a must, so policies that enable this eventually should be explored.

US Navy to Apply Unmanned AI Technologies in Middle East

Much of US innovation is dependent on giving sailors not enough to accomplish the required mission, forcing innovation, which is both a bad and a good thing, as while these innovations are great, reliance on American ingenuity is less than ideal.

Russia to conduct mass testing of Uran-9 UGV in 2022

Unmanned ground assets compose a very interesting segment of Russian doctrine. On one hand, the use of expendable assets in great quantity is a particularly Russian concept, used to great effect in many of their wars, with the expendable asset typically being manpower. On the other hand, since manpower is a historical strength of the Russian Federation, the increased overhead costs of UGVs over manned vehicles hardly lends itself to their prioritization. Irrespective of this, what this means is that Russia is not simply concerned with having disposable ground units, but effective ones too, and this may be the start of a greater focus on UGVs complementing Russia's already very capable armored forces.

“The question shouldn't be what we ought to do, but what we can do” – Rory Stewart
