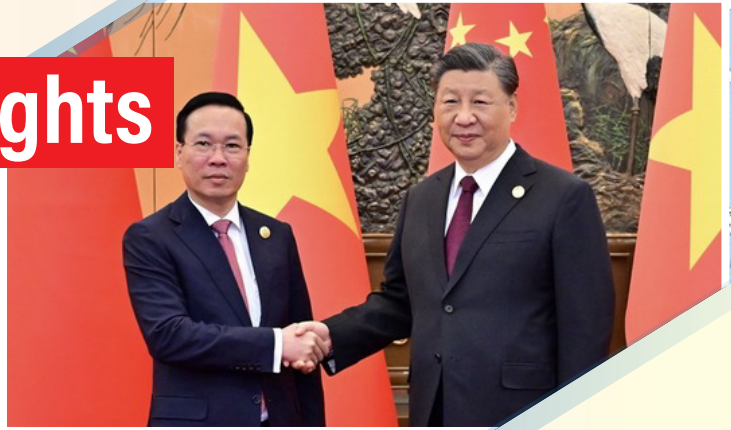


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Indo-Pacific Insights

CGS Centre for Governance Studies



A Bi-Weekly Roundup of Key Events

China and Japan Report Ships' Confrontation Near Disputed Islands

October 17

China Replaces 'Tibet' with 'Xizang' in Diplomatic Documents

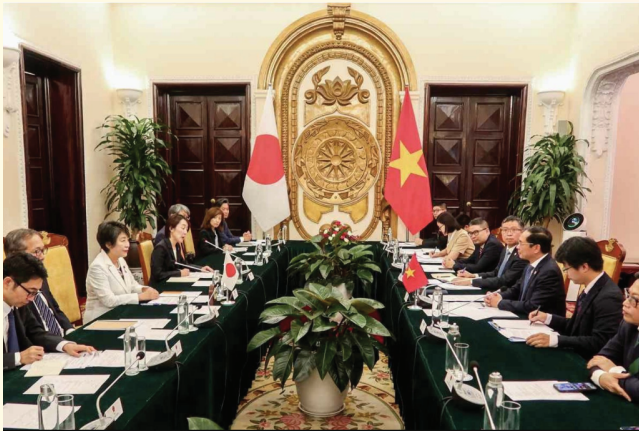
In a politically-driven move, China has replaced 'Tibet' with 'Xizang' in official diplomatic documents. This change aims to prevent the Dalai Lama from reestablishing the right to speak about Tibet. The move is seen as an effort to promote China's control over the autonomous region. International observers argue that the alteration is misleading and an attempt to reshape the historical and geographical context of Tibet. Tibetan scholars call for the international community to maintain the established term 'Tibet' and not concede to the CCP's efforts to rewrite history.



Chinese and Japanese coast guard vessels had a standoff in the East China Sea around disputed islands. China claimed to repel Japanese ships entering what it calls Diaoyu, urging Japan to cease "illegal activities." Japan, which controls the islands named Senkaku, ordered Chinese vessels to leave the waters and protected Japanese fishing boats, highlighting the long-standing tension over this uninhabited area.

October 18

Japan and Vietnam Plan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership



Japan and Vietnam are set to elevate their bilateral relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the highest level possible. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is expected to announce the strengthened cooperative framework during discussions with Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong. Japan is considering including the Vietnamese military in its Official Security Assistance framework, increasing defense ties to address regional concerns, particularly China's maritime expansion. This move signifies both nations' commitment to deepening economic and security bonds and advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Chinese Navy Ships Visit Middle East



The 44th detachment of People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy warships arrived at the port of Shuwaikh in Kuwait for a 5-day goodwill visit. The naval task group comprises the Type 052D destroyer Zibo, the Type 054A frigate Jingzhou, and the Type 903 replenishment ship Qiandaohu.

October 19

Philippines Suspends Military Exchange with China Over South China Sea Incident



The Philippines has suspended its military exchange program with China following an incident in the South China Sea where the Chinese coast guard used water cannons against Philippine ships. The confrontation occurred in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone near the Spratly Islands. Tensions have been rising in the region, with incidents such as laser targeting and ship blockades reported in the past year. The military exchange program, initiated in 2007, has been halted in response to the latest incident.

China Expands Nuclear Arsenal to Over 500 Warheads

A new report from the US Defense Department reveals that China has increased its nuclear warhead stockpile to over 500 as of May this year, up from approximately 400 the previous year. The report suggests that China is on track to surpass earlier projections, with estimates that they may possess more than 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030. Additionally, China's navy continues to expand its fleet of vessels, surpassing the U.S. in numbers. Concerns are also raised about China's growing missile capabilities, particularly Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles.

October 20

China Imposes Export Restrictions on Graphite



Following the recent U.S. restrictions on the export of AI chips to China, China has announced its own set of export restrictions on certain types of graphite. Graphite is a crucial component in electric vehicle (EV) battery production. These restrictions impact high-purity synthetic graphite and natural flake graphite products, reflecting global pressure on China's industrial practices.

Philippines Begins Superficial Repairs on BRP Sierra Madre

The Philippines has initiated "superficial repairs" on the BRP Sierra Madre, which is grounded in Ayungin Shoal. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is delivering materials for the repairs to enhance living conditions for personnel stationed there. China expressed objections to the Philippine resupply mission, claiming it was conducted without permission and involved illegal delivery of construction materials.

Xi Urges Vietnam Not to Forget Friendship Roots

Chinese leader Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of remembering the "original intention" of the traditional friendship between China and Vietnam during a meeting with Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong. The two nations have a long history of relations dating back to 1950, despite a brief war in 1979. The meeting comes as Vietnam elevated its ties with the United States to a comprehensive strategic partnership in September, adding to the complex dynamics of regional influence among Southeast Asian nations.

Thailand Abandons Chinese Submarine Deal

Thailand's Defense Minister announced the country is canceling its order for Chinese submarines as the specified German engines are unavailable due to German restrictions. Instead, Thailand will order a Chinese frigate, and the submarine project is being shelved but not canceled.

The decision comes amid controversy surrounding the submarine deal, which bypassed approval from legislative bodies and was questioned for its suitability in Thailand's shallow territorial waters.

October 22

Philippine and Chinese Ships Collide During South China Sea Resupply Mission

During a resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal (Ayungin Shoal) in the South China Sea, a Chinese Coast Guard vessel (CCGV 5203) reportedly collided with the AFP-contracted resupply vessel Unaiza May 2 while performing blocking maneuvers, revealed a statement of the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea. Additionally, a Philippine Coast Guard vessel, MRRV 4409, had its port side bumped by a Chinese Maritime Militia vessel, 00003 (CMMV 00003), approximately 6.4 nautical miles northeast of Ayungin Shoal.

South Korea, Japan, and the US Conduct First Joint Air Exercise



The South Korean air force, along with the United States and Japan, conducted a trilateral aerial exercise near the Korean Peninsula. This marks the first joint exercise of its kind involving all three countries. The exercise aims to boost defense cooperation in response to North Korea's escalating missile and nuclear threats. The exercise involved fighters from the three countries escorting a U.S. B-2 strategic bomber, which landed in South Korea following a commemorative flight and joint drills with South Korean fighter jets.

October 23

Philippines Protests Chinese Actions in West Philippine Sea

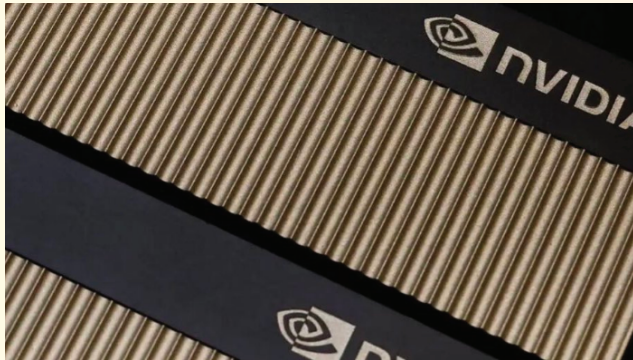
The Philippines has filed a diplomatic protest with China over the collision between Chinese vessels and Filipino ships during a resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal. The Philippines asserts that the incident, which occurred in the country's exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, constitutes a violation of its sovereignty. Meanwhile, China blames the Filipino vessels for the collisions and calls on the Philippines to remove the BRP Sierra Madre from Ayungin Shoal. The situation highlights ongoing tensions in the South China Sea.

Japan and South Korea Express Concern Over China-Philippine Incidents in South China Sea

Both Japan and South Korea have expressed concern over recent incidents between Chinese and Philippine vessels in the South China Sea. Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated it "opposes any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force" and believes the issue is of concern to the international community. South Korea voiced its concern over "unilateral actions that raise tensions" in the South China Sea and threaten the safety of crew members. These statements come after the Philippines and China blamed each other for the incidents near Ayungin Shoal.

October 24

U.S. Orders Nvidia to Immediately Halt Chip Shipments to China



Nvidia has been ordered by the U.S. government to stop shipping some high-end artificial intelligence (AI) chips to China without licenses immediately, following new semiconductor export restrictions. The U.S. Department of Commerce issued tighter export controls on AI chips effective November 16, but Nvidia was informed the rules would apply as of October 24 to products that exceed updated processor performance caps designed or marketed for data centers. The move affects sales of the A800, H800, and L40S chips, which the company had offered as alternatives to the China market after earlier AI chip export restrictions were imposed in 2022.

October 25

US Aircraft Carrier Conducts Flight Operations Off Luzon, Philippines

The US aircraft carrier, USS Ronald Reagan, conducted flight operations off eastern Luzon as part of its visit to the Philippines. The visit is seen as a symbol of the partnership and alliance between the two countries. The USS Ronald Reagan had previously conducted flight operations in the South China Sea, which drew criticism from China. Tensions have been escalating in the region, with recent incidents involving Chinese ships and Philippine vessels near Ayungin Shoal.

October 27

UN Overwhelmingly Calls for Aid Truce Between Israel and Hamas



The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution, drafted by Arab states, that overwhelmingly called for an immediate humanitarian truce between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas. The resolution also demanded aid access to the besieged Gaza Strip and the protection of civilians. While the resolution is not legally binding, it carries significant political weight. It received 121 votes in favor, with 45 abstentions and 14 votes against, including Israel and the United States. The General Assembly's move came after the Security Council had failed four times in the past two weeks to take action.

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