National Security Division Report

Week ending 22, May 2020

In second inaugural address, Tsai lays out plans to prepare Taiwan for a changing global economy

- President Tsai Ing-wen calls for Taipei and Beijing to 'coexist over the long term', but analysts say her focus is mainly on domestic agenda
- Priorities include industrial and economic development, as well as reforms for social welfare, national security and modernised governance

(Courtesy of South China Morning Post) Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen will head into her second term with a renewed focus on building the island's economy and governance reform, analysts said, while navigating the challenges of cross-strait tensions with Beijing.

The leader of the democratic island laid out her priorities for industrial and economic development in an inaugural address on Wednesday morning, along with reforms for social welfare, national security and modernised governance.

Tsai, of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), emphasised the need to prepare Taiwan to weather global economic changes as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, for which Taipei's response has been held up as an international model.

"Thanks to our successful control of the pandemic, so far, Taiwan is able to maintain positive economic growth," she said. "This is rare in the world. However, we need to continue to take early action on economic relief and revitalisation, and do whatever it takes to maintain stable economic growth."

Read the rest here (Ctrl+Click to follow link)

A New U.S. 'Consensus' on China May Not Be as Solid as It Appears

(Courtesy of ChinaFile) The COVID-19 pandemic has brought ties between Washington and Beijing to their lowest level since the countries normalized relations in 1979, with many observers warning that they have entered into either "a new Cold War" or at least "a new type of Cold War." While the Trump administration was initially circumspect in its criticism of China's response, it has increasingly taken to blaming Beijing as the coronavirus claims more American lives and inflicts greater damage upon the U.S. economy. Beyond echoing widespread condemnation of the Chinese Communist Party for its initial targeting of doctors and journalists who tried to sound the alarm, it has temporarily suspended U.S. funding for the World Health Organization, which it charges with being unduly deferential to China; suggested that the virus originated in a lab in Wuhan that studies bat coronaviruses; and floated the idea of seeking reparations from Beijing.

The Wall Street Journal notes that "[a] review of the China policies of the Trump administration's 23 cabinet and cabinet-level officials reveals that nearly all of them have adopted adversarial policies toward China or curtailed cooperation with the country." *The Los Angeles Times* adds that "lawmakers [are] mark[ing] territory on ways to confront China. Sixty-two bills related to China have been introduced in Congress by Republicans and Democrats since Feb. 1, a dramatic increase in what had already been a steady uptick in China-related legislation since 2017." And the American public is souring on China as well; a survey this March by the Pew Research Center found that 66 percent view China unfavorably, "the most negative rating for the country since the Center began asking the question in 2005, and up nearly 20 percentage points since the start of the Trump administration." 62 percent of Americans, meanwhile, believe China's power and influence constitute a "major threat" to the United States, up from 48 percent in Spring 2018.

It had been growing more commonplace for observers to cite a new U.S. "consensus" on China well before the first case of the coronavirus was reported in Wuhan. With Beijing doubling down on authoritarian rule and pursuing a more coercive foreign policy, the argument ran, Washington had to renegotiate the terms of its interdependence and take a harder line on its foremost strategic competitor. As the pandemic wreaks havoc across the United States, that judgment has only grown more entrenched.

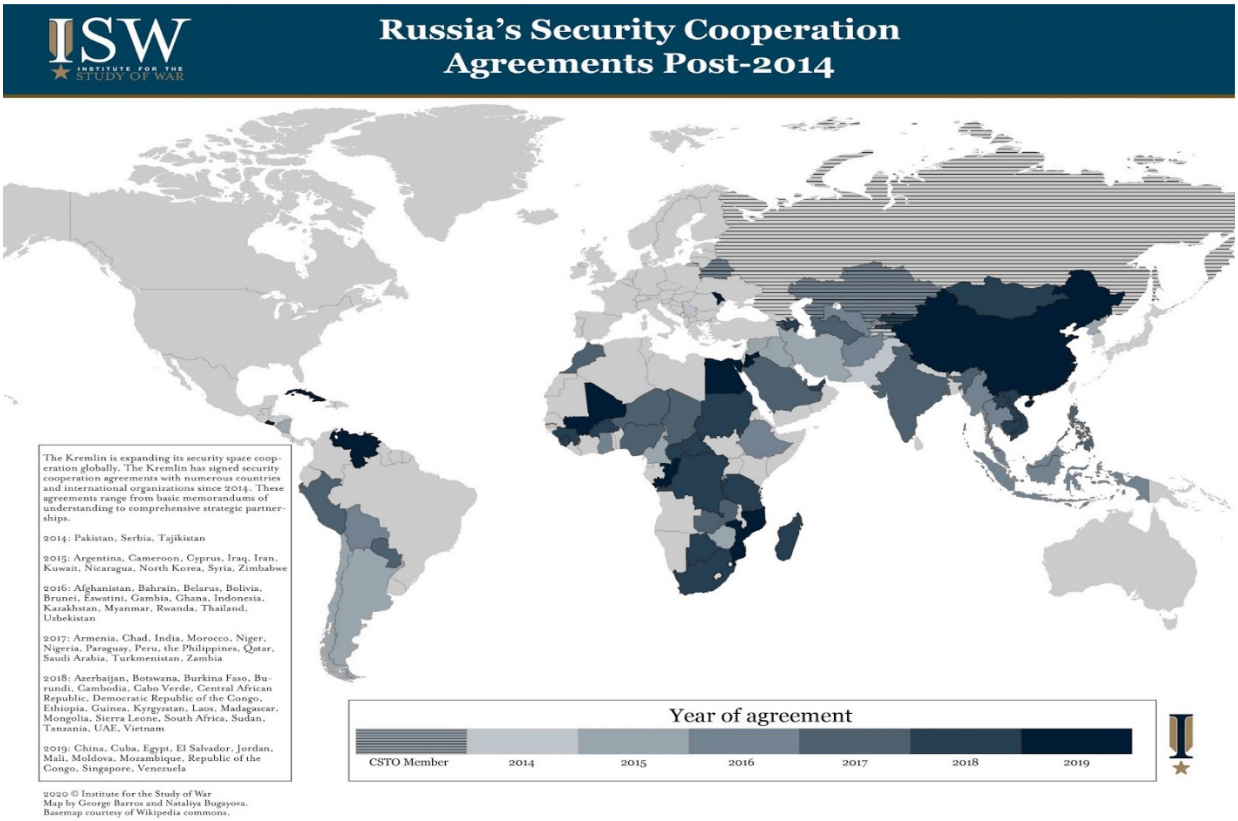
The presumption of a new consensus, though, may be premature: While many U.S. policymakers and analysts are disillusioned by China's growing repressiveness at home and assertiveness abroad, and accordingly supportive of efforts to "get tougher" on Beijing, they disagree significantly over how to proceed. Concluding that an erstwhile consensus has run its course is a prerequisite for cultivating a different one, but only when that judgment yields a clear policy direction can it be said that a new framework has emerged. The hardening of U.S. sentiment against China has had a paradoxical effect. Far from coinciding with the emergence of greater prescriptive cohesion, it has reinforced how far Washington is from settling upon the strategic objectives it seeks to achieve vis-à-vis Beijing, let alone from articulating a credible path towards their achievement.

Read the rest here

Russia in Review: Russian Security Cooperation Agreements Post-2014

(Courtesy of Institute for the Study of War) The Kremlin has signed over 90 agreements with 73 different countries and international organizations since 2014 - ranging from basic memorandums of understanding (MoU) to comprehensive strategic partnerships. The Kremlin classifies many of these agreements as either “military cooperation,” focused on joint training and educational exchanges, or “military-technical cooperation,” focused on expanding arms sales and equipment maintenance.

Most of the Kremlin’s agreements have limited substance and serve as non-binding calls to increase cooperation. Even basic agreements provide the Kremlin opportunities to participate in security conversations, cultivate global human networks, and develop potential avenues for future arms sales or the deployment of Russian personnel. The Kremlin has additionally signed numerous issue-specific agreements with individual countries. These security agreements focus on cooperation in counterterrorism, counter-narcotics, and anti-piracy operations, primarily as a stepping stone to an increased Russian presence and a way to engage other countries in the Kremlin’s geopolitical agenda. These agreements also include joint intellectual property (IP) protection, port visitation rights that increase the Russian Navy’s power projection capabilities, military deconfliction agreements, and cooperation between internal security services and civilian national security agencies. Finally, the Kremlin has signed several high-level strategic partnerships, primarily with states in the former Soviet Union.



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Lead Inspector General for Operation Freedom's Sentinel I Quarterly Report to the United States Congress I January 1, 2020 - March 31, 2020

(Courtesy of DoD IG) This Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) report to the United States Congress on Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) is the 20th quarterly report detailing the overseas contingency operation. The report summarizes significant events involving OFS and describes completed, ongoing, and planned Lead IG and partner agency oversight work. This report covers the period from January 1, 2020, through March 31, 2020.

Although U.S. and Taliban representatives signed an agreement on February 29 as a first step toward ending the conflict, a number of events occurred that raised questions over whether the peace process would take place. Taliban violence continued at high levels, even during a negotiated weeklong reduction in violence that led to the agreement's signing.

U.S. officials stated the Taliban must reduce violence as a necessary condition for continued U.S. reduction in forces and that remaining high levels of violence could jeopardize the U.S.-Taliban agreement. Even still, the United States began to reduce its forces in Afghanistan from roughly 13,000 to 8,600.
Operation Freedom's Sentinel began on January 1, 2015. U.S. forces conduct two complementary missions under OFS: 1) counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Khorasan, and their affiliates in Afghanistan; and 2) training, advising, and assisting the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces through the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission.

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Minot AFB showcases readiness during CSAF, CMSAF visit

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright visited Minot Air Force Base, May 14. The senior leaders saw how Minot AFB has remained mission-ready and resilient throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

"There is no more important mission than what's going on right here at Minot (AFB). We know that we are not going to get relief from this critical, nuclear mission despite COVID-19 challenges," Goldfein said. "And I couldn't be prouder of this team, and what we've seen today."

"We have done an incredible job of maintaining social distancing and keeping the infection rate low," said Col. Brad Cochran, 5th Bomb Wing commander. "I believe that's truly based on quick decisions we made months ago, our Airmen's efforts to stay disciplined, and by staying engaged and connected to the Center for Disease Control, local government and public health officials."

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POW/MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency made the following announcements.. Click on the links to read more:

May 15, 2020

USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Helton, F.)

May 19, 2020

USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Tushla, L.)
USS Oklahoma Sailor Accounted For From World War II (Smith, L.)
Marine Acccounted For From World War II (Galland, M.)

May 20, 2020

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Cavender, W.)
Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Cherry, R.B.)

May 21, 2020

Soldier Accounted For From Korean War (Hill, J.)

Staff Activity:

- National Security Policy Advisor (NSPA) Nick Riffel continues work on several award programs: Law Officer & Fire Fighter of the Year and Spirit of Service.
- NSPA Jeff Steele continues work on updating the National Security Commission roster, to include email addresses, for dissemination to Commission and Committee leadership. The goal is to improve communication among the Commission and to facilitate the conduct of business in the absence of the Spring NEC and National Convention, both cancelled.

- NSPA Jeff Steele continues work on the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures for the Legion's Military Equipment Program. The DoD provides rifles, blank ammunition & clips, and other military equipment to American Legion posts free of charge, to perform military funeral honors, parades, and other events. The Legion's 2019 Officer's Guide provides an overview of the program and procedures on pages 131-136, which is available here.
- On Tuesday, May 19, NSPA Jeff Steele participated in the Conservative Working Group weekly teleconference hosted by Republican leadership in the Senate.
- On Wednesday, May 20, NSPA Jeff Steele assisted with the preparation of talking points for the Legion's new National Guard campaign. National Commander Oxford is calling on the entire American Legion Family to send email messages in support of National Guard personnel deployed in the battle against the coronavirus pandemic. Click **here** to learn more and send messages to the White house and Congress.

Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security Division