



STATE OF THE GAME

BUILDING PACAF'S COMPETITIVE MINDSET

FEBRUARY 2021

AN INSECURE OX

As the world celebrates the Lunar New Year, China shows its insecurity by restricting celebrations of Western holidays.

On 12 February, Chinese people around the world welcome the “Year of the Ox.” Chinese New Year, or the Lunar New Year, is a culturally significant holiday celebrated by approximately 20% of the world. In a typical year, hundreds of millions of people traverse China during this holiday period in what is often called “the world’s largest migration.”

While the Lunar New Year remains the most celebrated holiday in China, Western holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving have gained popularity in China since the early 2000s—a trend making President Xi Jinping’s regime uneasy. Since 2014, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has made a concerted effort to strategically promote particular aspects of traditional Chinese culture while restricting the celebration of Western cultural holidays. Some cities ordered government employees to report public Christmas displays and celebrations, effectively banning the holiday in the name of “maintaining stability.”

In 2017, the China Communist Youth League in Anhui wrote that “Christmas is China’s day of shame” and represents an invasion by the West.

In 2020, a dorm manager landed in hot water for gifting residents with chocolate on Thanksgiving Day. The college’s official response stated: “The school does not promote (celebrations) of Western holidays with religious connotations and strictly prohibits religious activities on campus.” Policies like this are encouraged by the CCP’s heavy-handed campaign against non-Chinese holidays.

Conversely, Americans are free to celebrate holidays and traditions from all faiths and cultures. While the Lunar New Year is not a U.S. federal holiday, it is widely celebrated around our country, with cities like San Francisco, Boston, and New York hosting official celebrations and parades that draw thousands of multi-cultural participants.

History teaches that the wholesale exclusion of other cultures is rarely sustainable, and the PRC’s obsession with maintaining a culture that is free from certain outside influences confirms both Xi’s insecurity and need to exert control. Unsurprisingly, the CCP’s campaign against foreign cultures is inconsistent; Chinese netizens have joked the CCP should also ban the Western ideology of Marxism.



First held in 1851, the Lunar New Year celebration in San Francisco, California is the oldest and largest event of its kind outside Asia.

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

PRC-Russia bomber patrol provides PACAF with opportunity to validate decades-long bilateral relationships.

In December, F-15Cs and a KC-135 from the 18th Wing at Kadena Air Base, Japan, as well as aircraft from the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) and Japanese Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF), quickly [responded](#) to Chinese and Russian aircraft flying together in airspace monitored by the United States and its allies. The ROKAF and JASDF (Koko-Jeiti) expertly handled the response in the vicinity of their airspace, while PACAF responded to the aircraft farther afield. This mission was only possible because the United States and its allies and partners share information and train regularly to conduct intercepts.

In contrast to PACAF's dedication to cultivating relationships with dozens of partners in the interest of maintaining peace and stability throughout the region, in the past year, the People's Republic of China (PRC) elected to provoke crises with multiple neighbors. The most brutally egregious of these transgressions occurred in June 2020, when Chinese troops wielding spiked clubs attacked and killed 20 Indian troops in the Galwan Valley along a disputed border referred to as the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This was the first [fatal](#) confrontation between the two nuclear powers since 1975, and rapidly led to further deterioration of all aspects of their relationship. The PRC's aggressive acts of territorial encroachment threaten to throw the international order out of balance.

Why It Matters: Our many engagements and training events show that we stand ready to partner with all nations that seek to maintain peace and the rules-based international order, while the PRC acts like an ox in a china shop.

COUNTERING DISINFORMATION IN CHINA IS A DANGEROUS BUSINESS

Accurate information and transparency are critical to fighting the pandemic, but China punishes those who challenge the state-approved narrative.

"If you have not lived in China recently it might be hard to imagine just how much of a line you are crossing when you publicly criticize Xi Jinping."

-BBC China Correspondent

On 28 December 2020, the PRC [sentenced](#) a journalist to four years in prison for challenging China's official narrative surrounding its response to the outbreak of the pandemic. Zhang Zhan was convicted for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," specifically in her interviews with overseas media during the early days of the epidemic in Wuhan. She is not the first Chinese citizen to be punished for criticizing the PRC's suppression of information relating to the pandemic; others were detained or placed under strict state surveillance.

To combat the pandemic, journalists are relied upon to share transparent, science-based information with the public—not counterfactuals intended to appease the government. With China's [less expensive yet less effective](#) vaccine and disregard for the truth, concerns remain over how the PRC will manage the spread of COVID-19 as hundreds of millions of people are still [expected](#) to travel over the Lunar New Year. By treating truth-telling and criticism as a crime, the PRC is stifling anyone who challenges its narrative, potentially harming its citizens and—should the holiday period spur a massive outbreak—the world.



A monthly review of competition thoughts and activities from PACAF's

STRATEGIC COMPETITION TEAM