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MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?

The fallout of U.S. Middle East policy



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Pretexts for Intervention

Since taking office the Joe Biden administration has made no clear statement about U.S. Middle East strategy, indicating there will probably be no major changes for the time being, and the evacuation of U.S. troops from Afghanistan is unlikely to change the U.S. mindset.

Looking at history, the post-World War II objective of U.S. Middle East strategy was to counter the influence and perceived threat of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, U.S. Middle East strategy has turned to controlling the energy resources and maintaining dominance in the region.

The U.S. has to find an excuse for this purpose. It claims problems like dictatorship, corruption and disregard for human rights and freedom have led to social instability in the Middle East, creating a breeding ground for terrorists. This is used as a justification for the U.S. to interfere in the region's affairs and promote its values there.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 provided a pretext for the U.S. to get involved in the Middle East. During the

George W. Bush administration, the U.S. invaded two countries and bombed several others in the name of "War on Terror" in the Greater Middle East, and vowed to conduct the Greater Middle East Initiative with the aim of "democracy promotion." But facts have shown that the 20-year war has brought untold disaster to Middle East countries, and American democratic models are a poor fit in the region.

Why is U.S. Middle East strategy a failure? Because it is a destructive approach. The policy has thoroughly disturbed the balance of power in the Middle East, making the region a hotspot for conflict. From the Palestine-Israel conflict, the near disintegration of Iraq, to the Iranian nuclear issue as well as new conflicts such as the Syrian and Libyan civil wars following the political turmoil of 2011, each of these conflicts has had a huge impact on regional and international stability.

China must be vigilant of a destructive U.S. Middle East strategy. China closely follows developments in the region, as stability and development of the Middle East are in line with the interests of both the region and China. **BR**



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SCHOOL BELLS ARE RINGING

A fire drill conducted at a primary school in Changning District, Shanghai, serves as the first class of the new semester on September 1. Following one firefighter's instructions, students made their way along the escape route.

On September 1, primary and secondary schools across the country ushered in the first day of school amid anti-virus measures.



Beautified Trees

Visitors appreciate a tree hole painting at a park in Shanghai on August 31. The park has had its tree holes painted to attract new visitors.

Urban Renewal

China will take measures to prevent large-scale demolition of buildings during the upgrading of cities, the country's urban-planning authorities said on August 31.

The country will avoid tearing down existing buildings on a large scale unless those buildings are illegal or designated as dangerous by professional agencies, while historical buildings should be preserved, said Huang Yan, Vice Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, at a press conference.

Huang said that while many local governments have started to introduce policies for urban renewal in line with the Central Government agenda,

some plans seemed to have run counter to the original intention, such as those on demolishing old towns and districts or cutting down old trees on a large scale.

All localities should carefully plan their urban-renewal programs, taking into account the situation of each city and avoiding increasing hidden debts to local governments, Huang said.

After decades of rapid development, China's urbanization has entered a new phase of development, with the urbanization rate at over 60 percent.

During this new stage, city development should focus on optimizing structure, improving functionality and enhancing quality, Huang said.

Stricter Regulations

Chinese authorities issued a circular on August 30 urging further management and education for artistic performers across the country.

Noting problems including tax evasion in the performance industry, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism stressed that artistic performers should strengthen their legal awareness. Artistic performers should be educated in terms of laws on copyright and tax, said the document.

The commercial events of artistic performers, especially of those serving in public institutions, should be brought under strict management, the document said, noting that performers involved in illegal or unethical

activities will be banned from the performing business.

Illegal and unethical acts by performers should be reported and dealt with as soon as possible, it said.

The document urged artists and performers to carefully consider the social influence of their works and their personal conduct.

It said a review and assessment mechanism for performers' morality should be established and improved, stressing that artists and performers should be constantly reminded of the rules and moral standards.

Ethylene Project

A new ethylene project started production on August 30 in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, according to the Dushanzi Petrochemical Company of PetroChina, China's largest oil and gas producer.

Located in the city of Korla, southern Xinjiang, the project is expected to have an ethylene production capacity of 600,000 tons per year.

"Construction of the project began in April 2019, with an investment of 8.04 billion yuan (\$1.24 billion). It is currently the largest refining and chemical project invested by PetroChina in southern Xinjiang," said Xu Wenqing, General Manager of the Dushanzi Petrochemical Company.

To protect the ecosystem in southern Xinjiang, the project has adopted global cutting-edge technologies to reduce oxynitride emissions, far below the national emission limit. Meanwhile wastewater reuse will be over 95 percent.

The project, which will provide 1,200 jobs, will help lay the foundation for the development of industrial chains in southern

Xinjiang, where industries are relatively underdeveloped.

The annual output value of the project is estimated at 5 billion yuan (\$774 million) and nearly 700 million yuan (\$108.3 million) of taxes will be paid per year, the company said.

Preventing Addiction

The National Press and Publication Administration (NPPA) has released a notice on preventing minors from becoming addicted to online games.

Online game providers can only offer one-hour services to minors from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, as well as on official holidays, according to the document made public on August 30.

It also urged the strict implementation of real-name registration and logins, saying that online game providers must not provide any form of game service to users who fail to register and log in using their real identification.

Press and publication administrations at all levels have been asked to supervise the implementation of related measures and deal with companies that fail to put measures in place.

Minors' addiction to online games has drawn much attention

recently, an official with the NPPA said, adding that the newly released notice is meant for minors who are still in the developmental stage physically and mentally, and have poor self-control.

A limited amount of gaming time for minors is understandable and acceptable as some online games can play an active role in their development, like sports, programming or chess, the official said.

The official said that parents and minors can decide by themselves how long the children will play other games that are conducive to minors' growth, but not online games.

The NPPA has pledged to carry out a special campaign in primary and middle schools, and efforts will be made to strengthen communication among the online gaming industry, parents, teachers and schools to create a better environment for the healthy development of minors.

Peacekeeping Drill

The Chinese military is holding its first multinational peacekeeping live exercise, "Shared Destiny-2021," from September 6 to 15 at a training base of the People's Liberation Army in Queshan County of Henan Province.



5G Gathering

A coffee-brewing robot is displayed at the venue of 2021 World 5G Convention in Beijing on August 31. The convention kicked off that day, with over 1,500 industry experts, scholars and entrepreneurs from 20 countries participating online and offline.

More than 1,000 troops from China, Pakistan, Mongolia and Thailand will participate in the drill. They cover infantry, rapid response, security, helicopters, engineering, transportation, and medical services.

With the joint operation of multinational peacekeeping forces as an exercise scenario, the exercise will promote practical cooperation among peacekeeping troop-contributing countries and enhance the capability of peacekeeping standby forces

to perform tasks, Tan Kefei, a spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense, said at a press conference on August 26.

Battlefield drills of reconnaissance, security guard patrol, armed escort, civilian protection and epidemic response are to be held during the operation.

Tan said that the Chinese military would continue to increase its UN peacekeeping operation participation and remain a staunch force for world peace.



Succulent Industry

A farmer takes care of succulents in Baofeng, a county in Henan Province on August 31. The county has developed succulent planting in recent years to increase farmers' income and promote rural vitalization.

Logistics Performance

The logistics sector maintained its recovery momentum and showed better performance in the first seven months of 2021, compared with the pre-pandemic level in 2019, according to a report from the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

The value of social logistics reached 179.2 trillion yuan (\$27.7 trillion) in the period, up 14 percent year on year, it showed.

The average growth rate of the January-July period in 2020 and 2021 came in at 7.1 percent.

The combined revenue of the logistics sector reached 6.8 trillion yuan (\$1.05 trillion), a rise of 20.8 percent from a year ago.

Subsidized Housing

More than 80 million units of government-subsidized and renovated housing have been built, improving the living conditions of more than 200 million people, Wang Menghui,

Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, told a press conference on August 31.

Among the different types of government-subsidized housing, the rental housing is built to mainly address the concerns of new dwellers and young people in big cities, while shared-ownership housing is mainly designed for people who cannot afford commercial housing, Wang said.

China vowed to tackle housing problems in large cities at the tone-setting Central Economic Work Conference in December 2020, listing the development of rental housing as one of its key economic tasks for 2021.

Overseas Investment

China Investment Corp. (CIC), the country's sovereign wealth fund, reported a net annual return of 14.07 percent from its overseas investments on a U.S. dollar basis last year.

That put its net annualized

10-year overseas return at 6.82 percent, 128 basis points higher than its target, according to an annual report published by the company.

Founded in September 2007, CIC was established as a vehicle to diversify China's foreign exchange holdings. It has three subsidiaries—CIC International, CIC Capital and Central Huijin.

CIC International and CIC Capital are responsible for overseas investment activities, while Central Huijin undertakes equity investments in the domestic market.

CIC's total assets had expanded to \$1.2 trillion by the end of 2020, with net assets standing at \$1.1 trillion, the report said.

Currently, CIC's overseas portfolio consists of public equity, fixed income, alternative assets and cash products.

Faced with the unprecedented challenges amid COVID-19, CIC has remained consistent in its strategic focus, positioned as

a long-term institutional investor and saw strong performance despite global headwinds, Peng Chun, Chairman and CEO of CIC, said in the report.

The company has also continued to find new ways to deploy capital overseas, strengthened its outbound investment partnerships and pushed ahead with new bilateral fund initiatives, according to Peng.

Fund Industry

The fund industry, now managing assets topping 60 trillion yuan (\$9.27 trillion), has become an important force in serving the real economy and wealth management, Yi Huiman, Chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, said on August 30.

By the end of July, assets under management of public offering funds had surged 160 percent from the end of 2016 to

NUMBERS

(\$1=6.5 yuan)

Performance of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in January-July

(All growth rates are y.o.y.)

Revenue

Total



Of centrally administered SOEs



Of local SOEs



Profits

Total



Of centrally administered SOEs



Of local SOEs



23.5 trillion yuan (\$3.6 trillion), ranking fourth globally, Yi told a representative conference of the Asset Management Association of China.

In the same period, the volume of private equity funds and venture capital funds tripled to 12.6 trillion yuan (\$1.9 trillion), the second highest in the world, while that of private securities funds doubled to 5.5 trillion yuan (\$850.8 billion).

The fund industry has played a positive role in major capital market reforms by attracting medium to long-term funds, boosting market stability and improving the quality of listed companies, according to Yi.

As of the end of June, up to 10.8 trillion yuan (\$1.6 trillion) of stocks were held by funds, accounting for 12.5 percent of China's primary A-share market, up 4.3 percentage points from the end of 2017.

Yi said the fund industry has also contributed to China's

old-age pension system reform, as well as innovation and entrepreneurship. By the end of June, some 3.6 trillion yuan (\$556.9 billion) of pensions had been entrusted to the hands of fund managers, accounting for more than 50 percent of the total sum entrusted for investment.

In the meantime, private funds' principal of equity investment reached 7.6 trillion yuan (\$1.17 trillion), about 87 percent of which had gone to small and medium-sized firms, hi-tech companies and startups. Fund investment into the green sector has topped 480 billion yuan (\$74.2 billion).

Manufacturing PMI

The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for the manufacturing sector edged down to 50.1 in August, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on August 31.

A reading above 50 indicates

expansion and below that mark, contraction.

While the reading remained in the expansion zone, it slid from 50.4 in July, due to domestic COVID-19 clusters and recent floods, Zhao Qinghe, a senior statistician with the NBS, said.

The sub-index for production stood at 50.9, down 0.1 percentage point from a month earlier, according to NBS data. This indicates the stable expansion of production in the manufacturing sector, Zhao explained.

The NBS data also showed that market demand has weakened with the sub-index for new orders down 1.3 percentage points from July to 49.6. Analysts attributed the dampened demand to the off-season effect on the manufacturing industry in August, as well as the high base in the previous period.

The data also showed that the PMI for the non-manufacturing sector came in at 47.5 in August, down from 53.3 in July. The figure

fell below the boom-bust line for the first time since March last year, according to the NBS.

A breakdown of the data shows that the sub-indexes for sectors including road and air transportation, hotels, catering, culture, sports and entertainment dropped below the threshold.

Market Entities

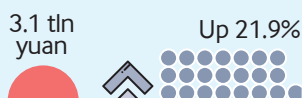
In the first half of the year, 13.95 million market entities were established, basically returning to the expansion pace before the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Xiong Maoping, deputy head of the State Administration for Market Regulation.

The data showed that around 9.46 million individual businesses were added, growing 28.1 percent year on year, which helped stabilize the job market.

China has striven to enhance policy-based support to stimulate the vitality of market entities to ensure they survive and thrive.

Taxes and fees

Total



Of centrally administered SOEs



Of local SOEs



Debt-to-asset ratio

Average

64.3%

Down 0.2 percentage point



Of centrally administered SOEs

66.9%

Of local SOEs

62.6%



0

100

(Source: Ministry of Finance)



REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Members of a Chinese delegation pay their respects to Chinese soldiers killed in the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53) at a ceremony in Incheon on September 1. The Republic of Korea returned the remains of 109 Chinese soldiers to China this year



ESTONIA

Alar Karis speaks at a parliamentary session in Tallinn on August 31. Karis, the sole candidate, was elected Estonian president that day



TURKEY

A child celebrates the 99th Anniversary of Turkey's Victory Day at the Atatürk Mausoleum in Ankara on August 30. On this day in 1922, the Turks defeated the Greek forces in the Battle of Dumlupınar, the final battle in the Turkish War of Independence



THAILAND

A hair salon in Bangkok on September 1. The Thai Government started easing its lockdown and curfew measures that day, allowing restaurants and retail operators to resume operations with strict social distancing and COVID-19 protocols in place



INDIA

A man carries his child as the family waded through a waterlogged road in the northeastern state of Assam on August 28. Severe floods wreaked havoc in the states of Bihar and Assam, heavily affecting people and damaging crops



RUSSIA

Fireworks illuminate Moscow's skies during the opening of the Spasskaya Tower International Military Music Festival on August 27. The annual event ended on September 5



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ LEGENDARY VOLLEYBALL COACH RESIGNS

Lang Ping announced that she stepped down as head coach of China's national women's volleyball team on September 1.

Lang, one of the most famous Chinese volleyball players in the 1980s known for her fierce spikes, returned to the national team as head coach in 2013. The first time she took up the post was back in 1995.

Since 2013, the 60-year-old legendary coach has led China to victory in the Rio Olympics and taken home two World Cup championship titles, one World Championships silver and one bronze.

Nevertheless, China failed to venture beyond the group stage in the Olympic Summer Games Tokyo 2020. Lang apologized to Chinese audiences and voiced her willingness to quit the job on July 31.



Protection of Minors

People's Daily
August 26

The Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress adopted the Personal Information Protection Law on August 20. The new law classifies the personal data of any minor under the age of 14 and stores it as sensitive personal information. Furthermore, it requires personal information processors to develop the specific processing rules. This legislation on the cyber protection of minors' data is welcomed by the public, especially parents of students.

According to the Annual Report on

the Internet Use of Chinese Minors, in 2020, the number of minor netizens in China exceeded 183 million, with an online penetration rate of 94.9 percent. More than one third of pupils had the habit of going online before school, and this figure remained on the rise.

China highly values the online protection of minors. In 2019, the Provisions on the Cyber Protection of Children's Personal Information as formulated by the Cyberspace Administration of China put forward the specific requirements for all relevant parties on how to protect children's personal information.



Ancient City, New Vitality

Outlook
August 30

Spanning over 3,100 years, the city of Xi'an, once known as Chang'an, was the capital of 13 dynasties and kingdoms from the Western Zhou Dynasty (about 1100–771 B.C.) to the Tang Dynasty (618–907).

Xi'an never stops embracing the world. In the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), royal emissary Zhang Qian (164–114 B.C.) visited the western regions, opening up the

“The extreme China policy of the previous U.S. administration has caused serious damage to our relations, and this situation has not changed. It is continuing. It goes against the fundamental interests of the Chinese and American people and the wishes of the international community.”

Qin Gang, Chinese Ambassador to the U.S., at the Welcome Event by the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations Board of Directors, on August 31

“Open cooperation in science and technology is a major trend, and China will accord importance to scientific and technological innovation from a global perspective.”

Li Meng, Vice Minister of Science and Technology, at the World 5G Convention in Beijing on August 31

Silk Road to the world. During the culturally flourishing time of the Tang, markets running from the East to the West accommodated business people from all over the world. In 2021, Chang'an, the China-Europe freight trains starting from Xi'an, are operating smoothly, fully integrating into the city's new development paradigm.

Over the past decade, the population of Xi'an has increased to 10 million. Xi'an has developed from an industrial town to the first city in northwest China with a GDP of 1 trillion yuan (\$154 billion).

Meanwhile, modern-day Xi'an features more opportunities and wider prospects. Given its 20-plus national missions, Xi'an has been turned into a new focal point of reform and opening up and the China (Shaanxi) Pilot Free Trade Zone has been established.

Its industries today are more high-end and cutting-edge. Xi'an promotes economic advancement through scientific and technological innovations as well as mechanism modernization.

Cultures in the 21st century have become more fashionable and inclusive. No matter the usage of hi-tech on the ancient city wall or the restoration of time-honored restaurants, Xi'an integrates its ancient imagery into a modern street view, redesigning the city's development pattern.

Working Overtime

Beijing Youth Daily
August 27

The Supreme People's Court of China and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security jointly released the second batch of common labor dispute cases referring to some companies' "996" overtime work rules. The new release comes against the backdrop of certain Internet firms announcing the cancellation of the so-called "longer-shorter week," which means employees have to work a six-day week every other week.

In one of the released cases, a parcel de-

livery company stipulated that the working hours were "996," from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week, proving a serious violation of the lawful provisions on the maximum limit of working hours. Zhang, an employee of the company, refused to work overtime and was subsequently fired. The labor arbitration body then ruled that the company involved in the case should pay 8,000 yuan (\$1,200) in compensation for the illegal termination of Zhang's labor contract.

Any attempt to thwart employees' rights to protection is doomed to fail. The cases also give workers an increased sense of security and guide them to protect their rights according to law.

EXPLOSIVES EXPERT DIES AT 97

Zheng Zhemín, an academicien of both the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a winner of the State Scientific and Technological Award, died from an undisclosed illness at the age of 97 in late August.

Zheng obtained his Bachelor of Science degree from Tsinghua University in 1947, and earned his Ph.D. from the California Institute of Technology under the guidance of Qian Xuesen, aka the father of China's missile and space programs.

After returning to China in 1955, Zheng joined the CAS, proposed the basic theories for explosive mechanics and developed the technologies behind the explosive forming of underwater soft foundations and the treatment thereof.

His theories on explosive mechanics have been applied to solve practical problems in a wide range of engineering projects.



"Supporting Hong Kong's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative is an important measure taken by the country to carry out high-level opening up. It is also a significant way for the mainland and Hong Kong to complement each other and achieve common growth."

Commerce Minister **Wang Wentao**, addressing the sixth Belt and Road Summit in Hong Kong via video link, on September 1

"As the largest emissions trading system in the world, this [launching its national carbon trading market] is an important step in China's push to reach carbon neutrality before 2060, a goal which requires tens of trillions of dollars in investment to achieve."

Beate Trankmann, United Nations Development Program resident representative in China, in an article published in *China Daily* on September 2



JOHN

COVER STORY

RISE AND FALL

Two decades of interference leave a shattered
Middle East and an exhausted U.S.

By Wen Qing