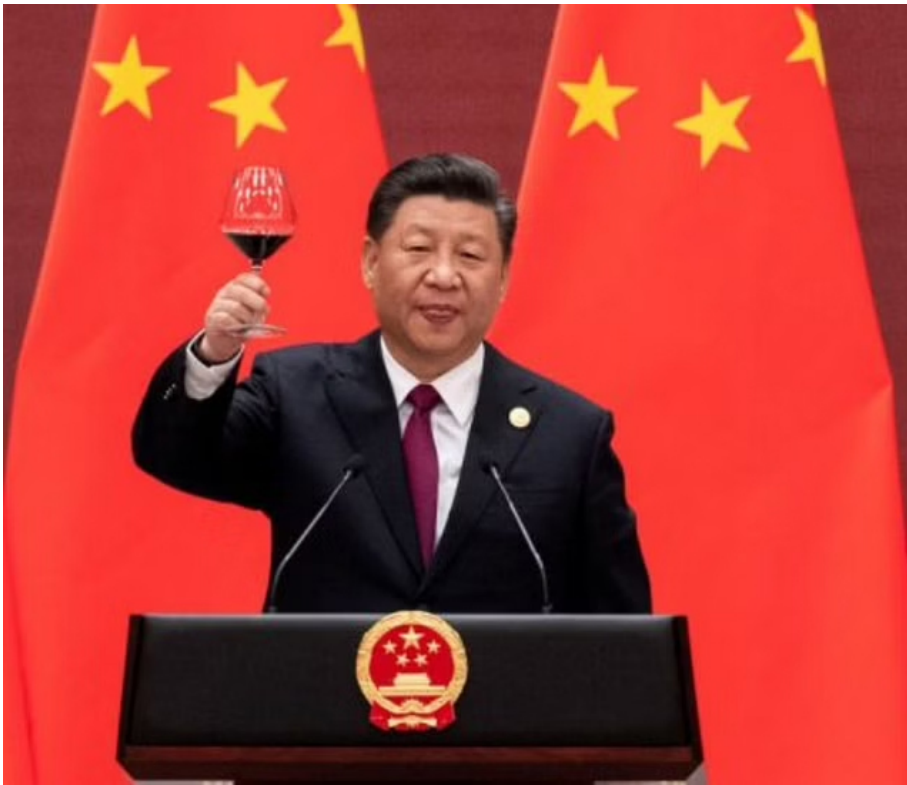


WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON IN CHINA??

<https://www.2thepointnews.com/what-the-heck-is-going-on-in-china/>



Something weird is taking place in China

but, as of this writing, nobody is quite sure what's happening. Social media has lit up with information, some of which is verifiable and some of which is pure speculation.

The most widely spread rumor is that there is a coup being carried out against Xi Jinping, but that's also the least likely thing to be taking place according to experienced China watchers.

We know that, on Saturday, there were fewer commercial flights over Beijing than usual. There've also been rumors that trains and buses into and out of Beijing have been canceled, and claims that military vehicles have been seen heading for Beijing, although there's no reliable provenance for that particular short video.

According to Newsweek, the most prominent source for the story is an Indian politician:

The rumor was also fueled by Indian politician Subramanian Swamy, who tweeted to his 10 million followers on Saturday: "New rumour to be checked out: Is Xi Jingping [sic] under house arrest in Beijing? When Xi was in Samarkand recently, the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party were supposed to have removed Xi from the Party's in-charge of Army. Then House arrest followed. So goes the rumour."

However, on Friday, Drew Thompson, a former State Department official located in Singapore, wrote an extended and credible Twitter thread challenging the rumors:



Drew Thompson 唐安竹 · Sep 23, 2022



@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

I wake up to DMs, and find a twitter feed full of unverified rumors about Xi Jinping under arrest in a palace coup.

It appears to be a complete falsehood at this point, but the spread of the rumor indicates belief in its plausibility.



Drew Thompson 唐安竹

@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

The claimed source of the information is an "investigative journalist" named Zhao Lanjian who tweeted that 60% of China's flights have been cancelled, which is an indication of a coup.

@ELuttwak might agree that flight cancellations are not the opening phase of a coup.

7:48 PM · Sep 23, 2022



Drew Thompson 唐安竹 · Sep 23, 2022



@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

Replying to @TangAnZhu

I don't follow "Zhao Lanjian" on Twitter, and when I looked for his account, I could not find it.

Falungong media is amplifying the rumor which makes it suspect too.

Zhao has written several articles for New Tang Dynasty TV, which is a Falungong outlet.



Drew Thompson 唐安竹

@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

The rumor that Xi Jinping has been arrested has legs because it is such a sensitive political moment in China, and the recent trials (and convictions) of long-serving senior officials creates a hothouse atmosphere.

7:48 PM · Sep 23, 2022





Drew Thompson 唐安竹 · Sep 23, 2022



@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

Replying to @TangAnZhu

Open discussion of opposition to Xi makes the rumors plausible. Despite the lack of evidence that Xi faces internal opposition, speculation persists. This enhances plausibility of the rumor, or hope for some, that Xi gets arrested.



Drew Thompson 唐安竹

@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

Former Party School professor Cai Xia's recent flawed article in Foreign Affairs enhances plausibility that Xi could fall victim to a coup. She argues that Xi faces significant internal opposition due to political oppression and bad policies.

She is now a dissident in exile.

7:48 PM · Sep 23, 2022





Drew Thompson 唐安竹 · Sep 23, 2022



@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

Replying to @TangAnZhu

A palace coup in a time of political pressurisation is not implausible. Gorbachev and Yeltsin were detained during the USSR-Russia transition period.

A coup is not an anathema to China either. Emperor Guangxu was arrested by Dowager Empress Cixi when he attempted reforms.



Drew Thompson 唐安竹

@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

Assessments that Xi Jinping is concerned about coups are not new either. It was a persistent theme in 2015.

Some rumors spread that Xi slept in a different bed each night like Arafat.



asia.nikkei.com

Power struggle has Xi leery of coup, assassination attempts

We bring you the Asian business, politics, economy and tech stories others miss.

7:52 PM · Sep 23, 2022





Drew Thompson 唐安竹 · Sep 23, 2022



@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

Replying to @TangAnZhu

The involvement of the Central Guards Bureau in a coup adds to the authenticity of a rumor. [@ELuttwak](#) would agree that palace guards play important roles in the outcome of a coup.

Like every leader, Xi replaced his guards in 2015.



scmp.com

Is Xi Jinping protecting himself from an internal threat? China pr...
President Xi Jinping has reshuffled the Central Security Bureau that is directly responsible for the safety of top Chinese leaders, three...



Drew Thompson 唐安竹

@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

A coup against Xi Jinping is always possible, but the rumors spreading today don't sound like today is the day.

It might be wishful thinking on some people's part. It might be the horrors of Twitter's algorithm.

But it does not sound true to me, not at this point.

7:58 PM · Sep 23, 2022



There's more, and you can read the whole thread here. By Saturday, Thompson thought he had tracked down the original source of the rumor:



Evan Feigenbaum · Sep 24, 2022

@EvanFeigenbaum · [Follow](#)

Sigh. Folks, he's going to be standing on a stage at the 20th CCP Congress in a few weeks. You heard it here first.



Drew Thompson 唐安竹 @TangAnZhu

I wake up to DMs, and find a twitter feed full of unverified rumors about Xi Jinping under arrest in a palace coup.

It appears to be a complete falsehood at this point, but the spread of the rumor indicates belief in its plausibility.



Drew Thompson 唐安竹

@TangAnZhu · [Follow](#)

Rumours of coups are not novel.

This one was a Falungong disinformation campaign over the last two days that took off overnight. A bit jarring to be woken by DMs shaking my phone on a Saturday morning asking if I'd heard.

4:59 AM · Sep 24, 2022



Meanwhile, Gordon Chang also thinks it's unlikely that Xi is falling prey to a coup. However, given the oddities being reported about transportation around, into, and out of Beijing, Chang thinks that something is going wrong in China:

"There's been a lot of smoke — that says there is a fire somewhere," Chang told "[Saturday Agenda](#) ." "We don't think that there has actually been a coup; but at this point there have been some extremely troubling developments at the top of the Communist Party, as well as the top of the People's Liberation Army, which reports to the party.

"So something is terribly wrong."

[snip]

"Xi Jinping has jailed three figures, some of them for life sentences; so that by itself roils the situation. But the mere fact that someone is trying to destabilize the regime — and that's really, I think, the source of these rumors — says that at this point, the regime itself is going through turmoil," Chang said.

“They’re going to have their 20th national congress, which starts on the 16th of next month; and that’s where Xi Jinping either gets or doesn’t get his unprecedented third term as general secretary of the party: in other words, China’s ruler. And that means, I think, that we see some senior figures figure that they can try to give Xi Jinping a punch in the gut before then.”

Chang makes sense. China’s Zero COVID policy has been destabilizing, and there have been drastic problems in China’s real estate market, which makes up 30% of China’s economy. Xi may have as tight a grip as ever on power, but the entire Chinese infrastructure seems unstable.

On the one hand, China looks like an overwhelming behemoth, with a foot on every continent, money in every industry, and spies in every government.

On the other hand, there’s always been a paper tiger quality to China’s managed economy. It’s been built on shoddy products, stolen technology and patents, and a lot of slave labor. It’s had the look of capitalism but, as long as it’s been managed from the top down, it has the instability of any socialist economy.

Things may be getting very interesting very soon. As I’ve said before, I’d love to see China’s wings clipped but, just as an American collapse would be bad for the world, were China suddenly to implode that would choke off the world’s supply chain and that’s not very good for any of us.

Andrea Widburg is Deputy Editor of American Thinker

Copyright ©2024 **2 The Point News** unless otherwise noted.