

# China Joins the Chaos

by **George Friedman** - October 20, 2023

Amid the chaos of several wars and the trainwreck that is the U.S. House of Representatives, there would appear to be few things left unsaid. What appears to be obvious is frequently false. In this case, our attention must be drawn to China, which, in the middle of an economic crisis, is moving its society in a strange direction it calls a grid system.

China is increasing its monitoring of citizens. This is a countrywide effort managed by the Chinese Communist Party. Neighborhoods and regions have been divided into grids, and in many cases, residents of the grids have been recruited to go door to door, inspecting the living spaces in houses and reporting their findings to authorities. China has long conducted inspections of homes, but the organization of these inspections allows for more detailed searches. The monitors' task is to visit houses regularly and collect information on people, places, events, objects and emotions. In particular, they are inspecting computers for sites visited and content viewed. The grid workers are members or supporters of the CCP.

The degree of inspection, the large number of people tasked with monitoring and the wide range of subjects intended to be monitored indicate intensifying unease within the CCP. Economic dysfunction, political struggles (including the disappearance of senior party leaders) and dissatisfaction among citizens have led to a massive increase in monitoring in terms of both the number and the depth of searches. It is not clear what punishment might be meted out to those deemed unreliable, but monitoring will likely be zealous, with people rated on the findings related to key issues.

Attempts to observe a large population on this scale are rare. In indicating tension in China, it puts in motion a process that begins with resignations, moves to fear and results at a certain point in anger. We are a long way from that, except that it is clear the CCP senses danger and is prepared to devote resources and risk anger to stamp it out. The rest of the world still views China as a successful power, but the CCP is signaling that it sees its greatness as flawed.

This may be a brief observation, but it is worth noting.

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