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**ANTI-CHINESE PROTESTERS ARRESTED AS POLICE BREAK UP RALLY IN KYRGYZSTAN, WHERE FEAR AND ANGER AT BEIJING'S INFLUENCE GROW**

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South China Morning Post (15 September 2019)

Kyrgyz police detained more than a dozen people on Thursday as they dispersed a hundreds-strong anti-Chinese rally in the capital, Bishkek, the biggest public protest to date in Central Asia against Beijings growing influence in the region.

Angry protesters who gathered on the central square demanded curbs on work permits for Chinese citizens as well as a reduction of Kyrgyzstans debt to China and called for other measures to reduce the Chinese presence, including a ban on Kyrgyz-Chinese marriages.

After the rally ran beyond its allotted time, dozens of protesters started moving towards a building which houses the president and parliament, at which point police started detaining some people and squeezing others out of the square.

Police declined to say how many people they had detained. A reporter at the scene saw them lead away more than a dozen.

Anti-Chinese sentiment has grown in the former Soviet republic of six million people since an incident at Bishkeks main power plant a year ago caused a five-day blackout following its upgrade carried out by a Chinese firm. The firm has not been officially charged with any wrongdoing.

Hostility towards Beijing has also been fuelled by reports of mass detentions of ethnic Kyrgyz alongside fellow Turkic Muslims including Uyghurs and Kazakhs in Chinas western province of Xinjiang.

Beijing has defended its so-called vocational education training centres, which it says are part of a de-radicalisation programme in Xinjiang.

In 2016, three Chinese embassy staff were injured when a suicide bomber rammed the gates of the building in his car which then exploded. Bishkek blamed the attack on Uyghur militants.

In a statement, Kyrgyz First Deputy Prime Minister Kubatbek Boronov said that protesters had been misled by fearmongering and that the annual net influx of Chinese to Kyrgyzstan had been fewer than 1,000 people in the last two years.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/world/russia-central-asia/article/2182604/anti-chinese-protesters-arrested-police-break-rally>

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