

China Business Weekly

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法兰德斯
中国商会

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VCKK

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FCCC/EUCBA ACTIVITIES

China Dinner: The Picanol Journey in China – 24 February 2022, 18h30, Ghent



After a long period of virtual events, our chamber is once again pleased to be able to put on some live events at which we can all once again meet one another in person. Our second event is an informal dinner which will take place on **February 24, 18h30** at Cercle Royal La Concorde, Kouter 150 in Ghent.

Mr. Johan Verstraete, Vice President Weaving Machines, Picanol Group is our guest speaker, and he will talk about Picanol's experiences in China.

He will have much of interest to say, so you are strongly encouraged to sign up to join us at the dinner, which always prove very popular with our Members. **There are limited seats**, so we can have a small group to enable people to share their experiences and to network.

Program:

18h30-19h00: Registration and networking.

19h00-19h05: Welcome by Ms. Gwenn Sonck, Executive Director, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce.

Speech & Dinner: Picanol's experiences in China, by Mr. Johan Verstraete, Vice President Weaving Machines, Picanol Group, and Board Member, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce.

Panel discussion and closing remarks: Mr. Kurt Vandeputte, Senior Vice-President Government Affairs, Umicore and Chairman, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce.

21h30: Finish

Practical information:

Date and time: February 24, 2022, 18h30-21h30

Location: Cercle Royal La Concorde, Kouter 150 in Ghent; Parking: Kouter

Price for Members: €75, + 21% VAT **Price for non-Members:** €95, +21% VAT

We will follow government guidelines, so we ask every participant to bring a Covid Safe Ticket.

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HEALTH

Xian lockdown continues as cases rise to 1,663 since December 9



Since December 23, Xian, the capital of Shaanxi province with 13 million inhabitants and home of the terracotta warriors, has been locked down after a Covid-19 outbreak. The number of cases in Shaanxi province has increased to more than 1,700 on January 3, insignificant compared to Western countries, but alarming for China, which is still pursuing a zero-Covid strategy. The number of cases in Xian reached 1,663.

The infections are of the Delta strain, not Omicron. Tighter, stricter and more accurate policies and measures should soon be taken to help curb the spread of the coronavirus, said Liu Guozhong, Shaanxi Communist Party Secretary. "Xian is the decisive destination in the fight against the pandemic and only when the outbreak in Xian has been put under control can we fundamentally reverse the passive situation in the entire province," Liu stressed. "Other cities should support Xian's fight against the pandemic when the situation in their cities have been brought under control," Liu said at a work conference. Yang Lianchang, Deputy Director of the Shaanxi Provincial Health Commission, said the epidemic situation in Xian and Shaanxi province is still in a critical period, as there were new cases detected in local communities, and the risk of community spread still exists. Several city-wide nucleic acid tests have been conducted. On an inspection tour in Xian, Vice Premier Sun Chunlan urged relevant departments to introduce more resolute and decisive measures to quickly contain the spread of the coronavirus in Xian.

Xian is the third Chinese city with a population of over 10 million to impose a Covid-19 lockdown, following Wuhan in early 2020 and Shijiazhuang in Hebei Province early last year. Xian Xianyang International Airport cancelled all domestic flights. Trains to multiple cities were also suspended. During the lockdown, each household was initially allowed to send one person every two days to go grocery shopping, but this policy was revoked until further notice. Free food packages were being distributed door-to-door. People, except those working in epidemic prevention and control and vital industries, should carry certificates issued by their communities if they have to go outside. Bus lines in the city have been suspended, and taxis and online ride-hailing

vehicles have been banned from medium- and high-risk areas and from operating outside urban areas. A total of 3,574 schools in Xian have been closed, affecting around 1.78 million students. Those who violate Covid-19 policies will be punished with a maximum of 10 days in detention and a fine of CNY500.

The outbreak in Xian spilled over into six other cities, including Beijing, where one case related to the Xian outbreak was reported. Beijing announced the limiting of family gatherings to 10 people, and strict controls on national conferences and training events. The Beijing government called on residents to spend New Year's Day and the Spring Festival in Beijing. Anyone returning to Beijing is required to present a negative nucleic acid test issued within 48 hours and a green health code.

Foreign high-tech manufacturers have seen only a limited impact on their operations in Xian. Samsung's two large factories in Xian have not been affected by the epidemic control with the implementation of a closed-loop management. The two factories manufacture 3D NAND high-end products, accounting for 42.3% of the company's flash memory chip (NAND) production capacity and 15.3% of the world's. In addition to being Samsung's NAND Flash production center, Xian is also a memory packaging and testing base for U.S.-based chip producer Micron, where the actual packaging and testing have not been affected.

The Beijing organizing committee for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games said that a "certain number" of positive Covid-19 cases will be highly possible during the Games, as a large number of people from different countries and regions will come to China. But Chinese medical experts said it is "unlikely" there will be large-scale outbreaks during the Games under the closed-loop management system, and other effective and strict anti-epidemic measures. Not all positive cases from the Games will be sent to designated hospitals for quarantine and treatment, as is now the case in China. Asymptomatic cases will be sent to special quarantine facilities, which the Organizing Committee has set up in all three Games areas. Those who have shown symptoms will be sent to Beijing Ditan Hospital or Zhangjiakou First People's Hospital. **Minimizing the spread of infection from within the closed loop to the city is the bottom line** of the prevention and control work, said officials at a press conference. All arrivals should follow the closed-loop management policy. They can use special buses to travel to and from the Games' sites, venues and workplaces, but they are banned from crossing the closed-loop. The event organizers will not sell tickets to overseas audiences in order to prevent the possible spread of Covid-19 and ensure the safety of all participants. A total of 1.274 billion Chinese are fully vaccinated, accounting for 85.64% of the population, which means the country is approaching herd immunity.

This overview is based on reports by the China Daily, Global Times and Shanghai Daily.

FOREIGN TRADE

China publishes white book on export controls



China's State Council Information Office (SCIO) released a white paper titled "China's Export Controls" to clarify the government's export control policies. The Export Control Law, enacted and implemented in 2020, was an important step to develop a full-fledged legal system for export control. China has actively fulfilled non-proliferation and other international obligations, adopted internationally-accepted practices, such as establishing an export control list, end-users and end-uses management, optimized license management, new enforcement methods, reinforced non-compliance penalties, and an improved compliance regime, officials of the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) said at a press conference.

In April 2021, the Ministry of Commerce also published the "Guiding Opinions on Establishing the Internal Compliance Program for Export Control by Exporters of Dual-use Items and the Guidelines for Internal Compliance for Export Control of Dual-use Items" to assist companies in improving their internal compliance systems.

The Ministry said that China would continue the policy of opening up and promote the trade of export-controlled items consistent with compliance requirements. The country will improve license management and end-user certificates according to international practices. At the same time, China will strengthen enforcement to tackle export control violations and promote international exchanges and cooperation. Multilaterally, China advocates that the United Nations, as the most universal organization in the world, should play a central role in initiating an open, inclusive and just dialogue

process and safeguarding the legitimate rights of developing countries to the peaceful use of technology.

Officials also said that some countries – referring among others to the United States – “have generalized the concept of national security, fabricated excuses, directed state power to intervene in the normal trade flow and market transactions, and frequently used export control as a tool to attack and bully other countries,” which has disrupted international supply chains. A second challenge is countries applying double standards on non-proliferation, and a third challenge is the need to enhance international coordination on export control. “China believes that in export control, the international community should move forward in a fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory direction, remain united and enhance cooperation, resist discriminatory practices, and join hands in tackling global issues and building a brighter future for humanity.”

China holds that all countries should firmly stand by the international system centered on the United Nations and the international order underpinned by international law, safeguard the authority of international treaties and mechanisms that uphold true multilateralism, and adopt a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable outlook on global security. The legitimate right of countries to the peaceful use of controlled items, or scientific and technological research, should not be obstructed.

MOFCOM reiterated that opening-up is one of China's basic national policies and expanding opening-up is the only path to high-quality development. China is still dedicated to expanding openness, speeding up the building of an open economic system at a higher level, and pursuing opening-up on all fronts. China will continue to share development opportunities with the rest of the world. China will not change its commitment to economic globalization and advance trade of export-controlled items that is consistent with compliance requirements.

One Chinese expert said that export controls will reduce security risks, noting that effective export controls can reduce security threats, prevent the risk of conflicts, ease tensions and create a stable and predictable international trade environment.

The White Paper on China's Export Controls can be accessed [here](#).

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

China issues new negative list for investment, freeing foreign investment in car manufacturing



China issued a nationwide negative list that drastically reduces barriers for foreign investment for the fifth year in a row, **scrapping restrictions on foreign ownership in passenger car manufacturing and further easing foreign investment in the production of key communications equipment.** The updated list could pave the way for China to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and reboot the stalled China-Europe Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI). In addition to the nationwide negative list, China also unveiled its 2021 negative list for foreign investment in pilot free trade zones. The number of items that are off-limits for foreign investors will be cut to 31 for the nationwide version, and 27 for the free trade zone version, a reduction of 6.1% and 10% respectively. In 2017, there were 93 and 122 items on the two lists. Jointly released by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), the lists took effect on January 1, 2022.

“China has not only fulfilled its pledge to the WTO, but has now also voluntarily relinquished certain special treatments accorded to developing nations. The new list is both a vote of confidence in the competitiveness of the domestic industry and an embodiment of China's image as a responsible nation, offering support to the rest of the world amid the repercussions of the pandemic,” Wang Yiwei, Director of the Institute of International Affairs at Renmin University of China in Beijing, told the Global Times.

One significant change is increased opening-up of the domestic manufacturing industry. Restrictions on foreign

ownership in passenger car manufacturing and on the establishment of two joint ventures in China for the production of the same type of vehicles will be lifted. In terms of radio and television equipment manufacturing, restrictions on foreign investment in the production of ground reception facilities and key components for satellite television and radio broadcasting will be scrapped.

The opening-up of the auto sector conforms to a plan the NDRC laid out in 2018, under which China would remove foreign ownership caps for companies making fully electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles in 2018, for makers of commercial vehicles in 2020, and the wider passenger car market by 2022. **The new rule on communication equipment manufacturing** represents a change from a complete ban in the last version to being fully open. With the development of the internet in China, demand is increasing for media companies to use more up-to-date and comprehensive solutions, which pushes the country to welcome larger companies, including international firms, as suppliers. Analysts expect companies, such as Japanese and German automakers Toyota and Volkswagen, media hardware firms like Sony and Canon, as well as EU tech companies such as Ericsson and Siemens, to increase investments in China. The terms for media equipment, among others, **could serve as a catalyst to reactivate negotiations on the CAI.** In 2020, China attracted a total of USD149.3 billion in foreign investment, ranking second in the world.

Under the negative list on free trade zones, restrictions on market research will be lifted, except collecting views on radios and TVs, and social research for foreign investment will be allowed. But the proportion of shares held by Chinese enterprises should not be less than 67%, and the legal representative should be a Chinese national. The new list also includes specific terms on the overseas listing of Chinese enterprises engaged in businesses prohibited by the negative list, as well as caps on foreign investors' shareholding in Chinese companies listed in the mainland through various means such as the Stock Connect, QFII and RQFII.

According to the new list, some restrictions on foreign investment are still in place, such as **a ban on investing in rare-earths, and the wholesale and retail of tobacco products.** The shares held by foreign investors in telecom value-added businesses must not exceed 50%, while the construction and operation of nuclear plants must be controlled by Chinese firms, the Global Times reports.

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CHINA NEWS ROUND-UP

Smart manufacturing plan announced

China announced a five-year plan for smart manufacturing, vowing that large manufacturers will basically achieve digitalization by 2025. The plan, released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) and seven other departments, came as countries such as the U.S., Germany and Japan are also boosting intelligent manufacturing. The White House in 2018 released a “Strategy for American Leadership in Advanced Manufacturing” to ensure the leading position of the U.S. in advanced manufacturing. In 2019, Germany presented the final version of its “National Industry Strategy 2030,” under which the first pillar is to “improve the framework conditions” for Germany as an industrial location.

By 2025, more than 70% of large-scale Chinese enterprises should be digitalized, and more than 500 demonstration manufacturing facilities will be built nationwide, according to the plan. The technical level and market competitiveness of intelligent manufacturing equipment and industrial software should be significantly improved, with market satisfaction rates exceeding 70% and 50% respectively. Currently, satisfaction regarding intelligent manufacturing equipment reaches 50%. According to the plan, research on key technologies such as artificial intelligence, 5G, big data and edge computing will be strengthened. “The development of intelligent manufacturing is related to the global position of China’s manufacturing industry in the future,” said the MIIT in a statement. Compared with leading countries such as the U.S., Germany and Japan in intelligent manufacturing, **China still needs to catch up in software and industrial infrastructure**, Zhang Xiaorong, Director of the Beijing-based Cutting-Edge Technology Research Institute, told the Global Times. “The industrial software, operating systems and equipment used in China are mainly from foreign brands. Foreign countries are advanced in related hardware and all kinds of production tools. China is lagging behind in core components like chips,” Zhang said.

MIIT also released a five-year plan for the robotics industry. China’s robotics industry will become a global center of technology innovation, manufacturing and application. The quality of complete robots and key components should reach leading international standards, the plan stated. China will establish three to five robotics industry zones and double robot output. The annual growth rate of the sector’s revenue should exceed 20%. China’s robotics industry has witnessed a boom in development in recent years, and China has been the world’s largest consumer of industrial robots for eight consecutive years. Industrial robots are used in 52 industries, including automobiles, electronics, metallurgy, light industry, petrochemicals and medicine, the Global Times reports.

China’s foreign trade estimated to have increased by 20% in 2021

China’s foreign trade is estimated to have grown in 2021 at an annual growth rate unseen for nearly a

decade, but growing uncertainties are likely to add pressure to both demand and supply in 2022, officials and experts said, as they urged the authorities to beef up efforts to support the upbeat momentum. Ren Hongbin, Vice Minister of Commerce, said at a news briefing in Beijing that China’s imports and exports of goods are **forecast to reach USD6 trillion in 2021, surging more than 20% year-on-year**, with the yearly added trade value of USD1.3 trillion equivalent to the combined growth in the past decade. China’s contribution to global exports and imports in the first three quarters reached record highs of 15% and 12.1%, respectively. However, facing multiple challenges that include softer overseas demand, surging raw material and logistics prices and a labor shortage, the foreign trade sector is suffering from “shrinking demand, supply shocks and weakening expectations”, Ren said.

Analysts have expressed concerns that the Omicron variant is likely to dent global economic recovery, and the pandemic’s impact on global industrial and supply chains is set to continue, leading to more uncertainties in overseas demand and higher trade costs, they said. Zhou Xuezhong, Researcher with the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), said weaker demand in developed economies due to the expected pullback of fiscal and monetary stimulus, will also likely have an impact on China’s exports. To shore up foreign trade growth, Ren said China will strengthen cross-cyclical adjustments.

Efforts will also be made to promote innovation and cultivate new fields of competitiveness, including expanding cross-border e-commerce pilot areas, improving overseas smart logistics platforms, and building more offshore trade hubs to increase digital trade. Green trade will also be promoted, according to Ren. Li Xingqian, Director General of the Department of Foreign Trade at the Ministry of Commerce, said the entry into force of the Regional Economic Comprehensive Partnership will unleash huge market potential and help China’s foreign trade to grow, the China Daily reports.

FDI increases 15.9% in first 11 months of 2021

Despite the worldwide economic slowdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, foreign investors have continued to invest in China in 2021. **In the first 11 months, foreign direct investment (FDI) into the Chinese mainland, in actual use, rose 15.9% year-on-year to CNY1.04 trillion**, the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) said. The figure has already surpassed the CNY1 trillion mark, more than the FDI in the whole of 2020, and confirming China’s place as a top investment destination. Progress was also made in the structure of foreign investment. During the January-November period, FDI into the services sector increased 17% year-on-year, and high-tech industries saw FDI inflows jump 19.3%, reflecting an optimized investment portfolio. China is opening up more sectors to foreign investors. In recent years, China has trimmed nearly two-thirds of the negative list for foreign investment.

German carmaker BMW recently announced its upgraded strategy for the Chinese market, with three new or upgraded plants planned to open in 2022. “What moves China today will move the world tomorrow. It is a perfect place and a great partner for the BMW Group to drive transformation,” Nicolas Peter, Member of the Board of Management of BMW responsible for finance and China affairs, said at a news briefing. “Next year, three new or upgraded plants will open in Shenyang and Zhangjiagang. We will soon be launching the second BMW battery electric vehicle from Shenyang. It is a fully electric 3-series, further enhancing China’s position as one of BMW Group’s top three new energy vehicle production bases in the world,” Peter added.

A report from French bank Société Générale estimated that to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, China’s green investment needs to reach CNY2.2 trillion per year in the current decade, and the amount will grow to CNY3.9 trillion in the period from 2031 to 2060. French multinational Schneider Electric has planned to build a green smart-manufacturing innovation center in Chengdu to enhance its competitiveness. “China’s carbon peaking and neutrality goals send a signal that only those who harness advanced energy conservation technologies and sound digital transformation will attain competitiveness and sustainable growth,” said Yin Zheng, Executive Vice President of the company, the China Daily reports.

Belgian chocolatier discovers Hainan

China’s tropical island province of Hainan is becoming famous for chocolate. World-class master chocolatier Pierre Marcolini played a big role in this transformation by launching “Grand Cru” Hainan chocolates in his online shops in June. “This is a fantastic Grand Cru. I feel a slight bitterness, very pleasant, without astringency, with notes of citrus and grapefruit. It is extraordinary,” said Marcolini. The Belgian chocolatier spoke to the China Daily via video link about his latest products made with beans grown in Hainan, a place he said he learned about by chance in 2017 in the International Journal of Food Properties, a magazine published in the United States. It said Chinese scientists had developed a new variety of cacao in Hainan, a place already known for tropical fruits.

Late in 2020, 500 kilograms of cocoa beans were shipped to Brussels from Wanning on the eastern coast of the island. “This is the first time China has exported its locally produced cocoa beans,” said Qin Xiaowei, Deputy Director of the Spice and Beverage Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS). After learning that Hainan is building the world’s largest free trade port and has enacted favorable tax-free policies on imports of raw materials and production equipment to encourage investment, Marcolini said he looked forward to visiting Hainan cacao plantations in person. He is considering opening a duty-free shop selling chocolates made with Hainan’s quality cocoa beans.

Mark Huestch, a descendent of an eminent family known for their chocolate business in the U.S., **said he was also impressed by the superb quality of the local beans** during a recent tour to inspect the planting and

fermentation process in Hainan. “Hainan cocoa beans have a very unique flavor, with strong red fruit and nut flavors,” Huestch said, adding that he would recommend chocolate products made with Hainan beans to U.S. consumers. However, “Hainan’s cocoa production cannot meet market demand,” said Li Fupeng, Director of the Cocoa Research Center of CATAS, located at the Xinglong Tropical Botanical Garden. **The Spice and Beverage Research Institute has reached agreements with international organizations, including Ghent University**, to promote exchanges in scientific and technological innovation, talent training and brand development.

The cacao cultivation area in Hainan reached some 667 hectares around 2004, but decreased to about 133 hectares mainly due to slack market demand and insufficient processing equipment and technologies, said Li. Reynin No 4 is China’s first cacao variety with independent intellectual property rights, reaching a yield of 1,600 kg per hectare, 3.5 times higher than the world average. Due to the limited planting area, Hainan is not yet in a good position to compete with big cacao growing countries in output. At present, China’s annual per capita consumption of chocolate is less than 0.1 kg, less than 10% of that in Western countries, but consumption is growing at 15% to 20% annually, the China Daily reports.

China called on to develop vital technologies

Experts and representatives from leading Chinese manufacturers called for **the development of vital technologies such as chips and robots** for China’s “root economy”, reaffirming the vital role technologies play in China’s economy, especially amid a high-tech blockade from the U.S. government. At the 6th China Manufacturing Day, they acknowledged that certain advanced technologies are still a weak spot in China’s transition from low-end manufacturing to one of high-end values, but they expressed confidence that China will continue to advance, given the country’s huge market potential and large investment in the sector.

Mi Lei, Founding Partner of Casstar, a Beijing-based core technology investment platform, used the metaphor of “root economy” to describe the vital role of core technologies in fueling the upgrade of domestic manufacturing. He said that although the output values of certain core technologies are not very large, they are vital to many downstream industries that can produce huge economic values. For instance, the semiconductor equipment industry can support downstream industries ranging from software to e-commerce. Therefore, it is wrong to neglect core technological development just because its revenue is not as high as some other industries, he said.

“No matter when and where China is at, we can’t forsake domestic companies’ autonomy, including the country’s independent brands and technologies, as well as their independent competitiveness,” Yang Qing, a documentary producer, said. Experts and industry insiders categorized core technologies into five areas, including space, life, and substances. Specifically, there are about two dozen of these core technologies, including rockets, batteries, robots, 3D printing, biological innovative medicine and

satellites.

Hu Qimu, Chief Research Fellow at the Sinosteel Economic Research Institute, told the Global Times that core technologies are still the “weak spot” of China’s manufacturing transition, as technological bottlenecks like new materials, chips and industrial software have kept domestic manufacturing from reaching the high-value stage. That’s especially true under the current circumstances as rising protectionism is casting shadows on the global trade environment, Hu said. The U.S. government has waged a tech crackdown on China, with a wide range of sanctions, including putting Chinese companies on a trade blacklist and cutting the flow of U.S. capital and placing tougher restrictions on Chinese companies listed in the U.S. Hu noted that China’s huge market provides a lot of profit-making opportunities for domestic companies, which then stimulates companies to make further investment in technical upgrading, the Global Times reports.

Huawei launches new products despite U.S. crackdown

Huawei Technologies, under a U.S. crackdown for more than two years, **launched new products including smartphones, watches, smart eyewear, laptops and the HarmonyOS Smart Cockpit** during a high-profile event in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. According to the Global Times, observers said this proves that Huawei is still thriving and moving forward, despite the U.S. ban that cut it off from accessing critical semiconductor chips and software. One of most eye-catching products launched during the event was **the Huawei P50 Pocket, its latest flagship foldable smartphone**. However, it lacks the 5G

function due to the U.S. chip ban, but features a strong rear camera with selfie algorithms, and it uses the big camera sensor to boost low-light performance. The smartphone is a rival to Samsung’s Galaxy Z Flip 3. Priced from CNY8,988 in China, the model’s launch shows that the company plans to maintain a solid presence in the premium segment, including that of foldable smartphones, following the earlier launch of Oppo’s Find N. Xiaomi and Vivo are also preparing to launch foldable smartphones. Huawei accounted for 64% of China’s foldable smartphone market this year. According to International Data Corp (IDC), in the first quarter of this year, Apple had a 72% share of the above-USD800 segment in China and Huawei had 24%.

Huawei also launched the watch D series, Huawei eyewear, the next-generation MateBook X Pro and electric vehicle AITO M5. Huawei’s products are powered by HarmonyOS – its self-developed operating system that replaces Google’s AndroidOS. “There are now more than 220 million Huawei devices running HarmonyOS, and shipments of HarmonyOS Connect devices increased by over 100 million in 2021,” Richard Yu, Huawei Executive Director and CEO of the Consumer Business Group and CEO of the Intelligent Automotive Solution Business Unit, said at the launch event. “Huawei has never stopped innovating in the face of seemingly endless supply constraints. We appreciate all the consumers and partners who have been with us all the way. We will continue to create more extraordinary products and experiences that live up to expectations. Winter will be over soon. Then we’ll embrace the spring,” Yu said.

Huawei reported revenue of CNY455.8 billion in the first three quarters of 2021, a significant 32% drop as its consumer business still suffered severely amid the U.S. chip ban.

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