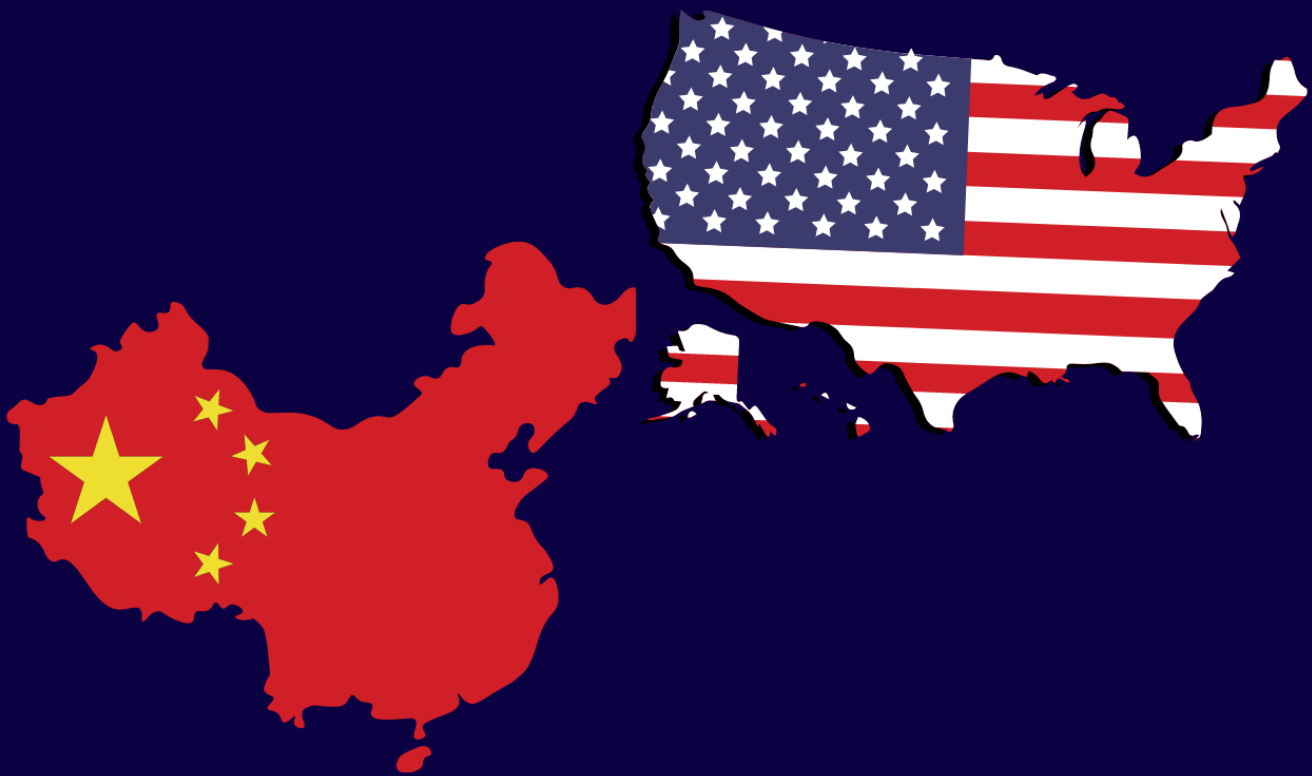


# U.S.-China White Paper: A Four-Point Strategy to Enhance U.S. Competitiveness and Leadership



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July 2023



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## Foreword

*In 2005, amid debate over a Chinese state-owned oil company's proposed acquisition of Unocal, Members of Congress recognized the need for a forum to learn about China, hear from diverse experts and discuss pressing issues in the bilateral relationship. These conversations and experiences led me to develop an outline of a China strategy, including policies the United States should adopt. It does not reflect the views of the U.S.-China Working Group (USCWG) or its members.*

*In December 2019, I first published a white paper that included policy proactive and reactive recommendations, provided opportunities for cooperation and called upon U.S. policymakers to get our own house in order. This framework is still relevant and should continue to serve as a guide for developing U.S. policy.*

*However, the bilateral relationship has changed greatly since the last update in December 2021:*

- *China's continued crackdown in Hong Kong made a mockery of "one country, two systems." The national security law that Beijing imposed on Hong Kong eliminated any pretense of semi-autonomy for Hong Kong and violated Hongkongers' human rights by eroding freedom of press, expression and assembly and eliminating judicial independence. With prosecutions of democracy activists under the national security law ongoing, China's crackdown is having profound consequences for Hong Kong residents, Hong Kong's treatment under U.S. law and Hong Kong's role as a global financial hub.*
- *China abandoned its "zero-covid" policy on December 7, 2022, and a month later, reopened its borders to the world for the first time in nearly three years. Yet, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) failure to shore up its pandemic response has had devastating consequences for the Chinese people, as the official death toll is a significant undercount.<sup>1</sup>*
- *Hate crimes and racism against Asian-Americans continued to rise in the United States.<sup>2</sup> These tragic crimes, almost certainly underreported, make clear that elected officials who criticize the CCP must do so in clear language that does not risk feeding hatred against Asian-Americans.*
- *The U.S.'s global image as a defender of democracy has diminished. The rejection of the 2020 election results by former President Trump and prominent Republicans set an example for anti-democratic movements around the world, including in Brazil. Events like these allow CCP leaders and pundits to portray democracy as inherently unstable and violent.*
- *President and General Secretary Xi Jinping further consolidated power at the CCP 20th Party Congress, appointing loyalists to powerful positions in the Politburo and its Standing Committee. At the same time, the work report signaled that CCP leadership views the strategic environment as increasingly hostile, with unknown consequences for global stability, regional security and China's domestic policy.<sup>3</sup>*
- *The U.S. House of Representatives established a bipartisan Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the CCP.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-hidden-covid-catastrophe>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9168424/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202210/t20221025\\_10791908.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202210/t20221025_10791908.html)

## Four Principles for U.S. Policy in Competing with China

In the past, I observed that there are three distinct species of China hawks in Congress: national security hawks, economic hawks and human rights hawks. Under the Trump administration, their interests were aligned. In Congress, this built a consensus view of China as a strategic competitor, which the Biden administration has translated further into policy.

Instead of flocks of hawks, I now see distinctions within this consensus as to the appropriate policy response to China's increasing competitiveness. A more useful classification now divides Members into three distinct camps:

- **Punishers**, who seek to harm China for lost jobs, stolen intellectual property, COVID-19 or other offenses;
- **Decouplers**, who wish to sever the bilateral relationship partially or entirely; and
- **Salvagers**, who view engagement with China as necessary to achieving U.S. policy goals.

China's leadership criticizes the U.S. "Cold War mentality" as an "obstacle to peaceful coexistence," thus absolving China of responsibility for increased bilateral tension.<sup>4</sup> Although these criticisms are self-serving, U.S. policymakers should be aware that approaching the competition with China as a repeat of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry fails to reflect the interconnectedness of the U.S. and China and oversimplifies the bilateral relationship. In addition, seeking to divide the world into competing blocs will alienate countries who want to engage with the U.S., repelling potential partners.

**Instead, I argue for a four-pillar strategy oriented around simple guiding principles:**

- Recognizing existing areas of conflict and competition;
- Expanding the playbook to include both offensive and defensive measures to compete with China;
- Identifying areas where cooperation is in both nations' interest; and
- Getting our own house in order.

The advantages of this framework are clear. First, it can be applied across multiple policy areas. Second, many of the investments and reforms suggested by this framework will boost U.S. global competitiveness, not just vis-à-vis China. Finally, this strategy can be made more effective when the U.S. works with allies, partners and international organizations, consistent with the Biden administration's approach.

## The Challenge

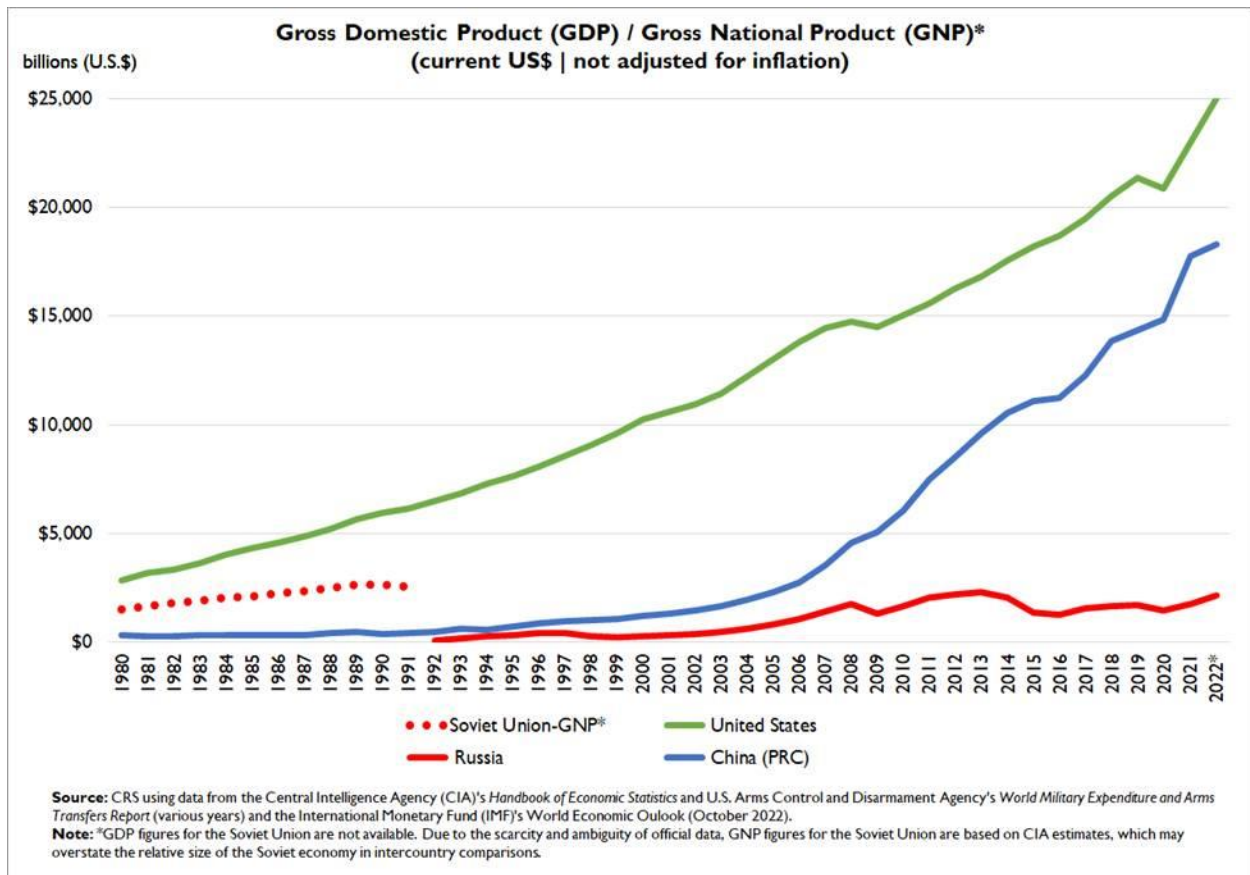
China's emergence as a global power and its growing economic, diplomatic and military influence continue to affect U.S. interests. The U.S.-China relationship also has significant implications for other countries around the globe. Foreign leaders are concerned about the impact of an increasingly confrontational U.S.-China relationship on their nations, given the two nations' economic and military might. Countries want to maintain constructive ties with both the U.S. and China, not be forced to choose between them.

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Wang Yi Expounds on China-U.S. Peaceful Coexistence," September 23, 202, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb\\_663304/wjbz\\_663308/activities\\_663312/202209/t20220924\\_10770956.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/activities_663312/202209/t20220924_10770956.html).

China has an integrated, whole-of-society strategy and playbook for advancing its interests and values across the Indo-Asia-Pacific, Eurasia and elsewhere. China is implementing this strategy and playbook with determination, patience, deep pockets and tactical flexibility. As others have remarked, China is playing a long game.

In many areas, China’s whole-of-society strategy poses a fundamental challenge to U.S. values, including human rights, rule of law and other features of the post-WWII international order. It is unlike any challenge the U.S. has previously faced. China’s leadership seeks to legitimize CCP rule at home and shape the global order on favorable terms. While supportive of authoritarian principles, it does not strive to export communist rule, as the Soviet Union once did. And China is different from the Soviet Union’s threat because of its economic strength and integration into the global economy (see below).



When dealing with China, the Biden administration has little wiggle room from Congress on issues fundamental to U.S. interests, including on human rights and technology competition. Hawks in Congress correctly identify the chief problems: intellectual property (IP) theft, forced tech transfers, distortionary support for state-owned enterprises, forced joint ventures, repression of Uyghurs, Tibetan Buddhists and other religious minorities, erosion of rights in Hong Kong, threats against Taiwan, and aggression in the South China Sea and the region.

The United States must develop, resource and implement its own integrated strategy and playbook for defending and promoting the post WWII international order and advancing U.S. interests and values. U.S. policymakers must create robust diplomatic, informational and economic approaches. A strategy to

compete with China that relies too much on the U.S. military will not succeed. Partners in the Indo-Pacific do not doubt the U.S. prioritizes security in the region but see China as more economically and politically influential.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, developing countries want the U.S. to respect them as partners, not treat them like pawns.

Faced with increased competition from China, too many policymakers have responded by going on the defensive. Like a football team with only a defensive playbook, this strategy is incomplete. American prosperity is tied to domestic strength and global engagement. If the goal of U.S. strategy is to slow China's growth or change China's system of government, it is doomed to failure. On education, trade, technology, security and diplomacy, decoupling the United States from China threatens American prosperity by also isolating the U.S. from the world economy. Instead, the United States needs to get its own house in order, invest in global competitiveness and engage with the world.

Ultimately, the best that a reactive strategy can achieve is a draw, which would not serve U.S. interests and values. Consequently, the strategy and playbook must include proactive elements for advancing U.S. interests, improving American competitiveness and championing U.S. values.

This white paper outlines features of an integrated, whole-of-government, proactive U.S. strategy and playbook for competing with China and globally. As the bilateral relationship is dynamic, this document will continue to evolve.

## Applying the Four-Pillar Strategic Plan

The four principles in this strategy are the basis for an outline of policy priorities across important issues:

### 1. National Security

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) is growing in strength and capability. The PLA has ramped up its pressure and assertiveness towards Taiwan and neighbors including India. China's continued expansion and militarization of disputed landforms in the South China Sea enhances China's anti-access/area denial capabilities in the region. China has also invested in shipbuilding, space operations, nuclear weapons and delivery systems and emerging technology. Further, the PLA's 2015 reorganization and establishment of a Strategic Support Force (SSF) shows the PLA correctly understands the centrality of information operations in the event of a future military conflict with the United States.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, Russia's unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine (which began in 2014) has reshaped global narratives. First, the conflict has demonstrated the resolve and bravery of the Ukrainian people in defending their homeland. Second, the Biden administration has rallied and maintained an unwieldy coalition to support Ukraine militarily, economically and diplomatically. Finally, the invasion has demonstrated the extent and limitations of the Sino-Russian "no limits" partnership. And although any conflict over Taiwan would be quite different for geographic, economic and tactical reasons, the parallel is impossible to avoid.

Given these developments, national security may seem ill-suited to the Four Pillar model. However, this framework is directly applicable and can help guide defense policy and investments. Identifying areas of

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB10137.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10137.html); <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/The-State-of-SEA-2023-Final-Digital-V4-09-Feb-2023.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/china-perspectives\\_13.pdf](https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/china-perspectives_13.pdf)

conflict and competition is the critical first step. While the competition is broad, it is most acute in certain geographic areas, like the East and South China Seas, broader Western Pacific and in critical domains including space, cyberspace and the electromagnetic spectrum. In fact, the bilateral relationship is already openly in conflict in cyberspace.

In national security, expanding the playbook means building partnerships and investing in capabilities that force China to react to the United States, rather than the other way around. To paraphrase former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, we need to be the ones to keep our adversaries up at night. While there may be few areas of outright cooperation in national security, there are important issues where both countries' interests align. Neither wants conflict on the Korean Peninsula, and both countries want to avoid miscalculation that could lead to war. And neither country should be eager to enter an expensive and destabilizing arms race.

Finally, getting our own house in order means capacity-building, modernization and diversifying the supply chain. Since the 1990s, the defense sector has consolidated from 51 to 5 aerospace and defense prime contractors. A 2022 Department of Defense (DoD) report revealed the readiness consequences of this consolidation: the number of suppliers for critical systems have all declined dramatically, with 90% of missiles now coming from just three sources.<sup>7</sup> Congress has challenged the DoD by requiring retention of platforms that would be ill-suited for high-end conflict. While the shift from counterinsurgency to great power competition is virtually a cliché at this point, it is a valuable conceptual framework for enhancing training, establishing spending priorities, determining force posture and building readiness.<sup>8</sup>

### Recommendations

- To improve training, the DoD should:
  - Expand training concepts that assume conflict will occur in a contested electromagnetic spectrum environment.
  - More fully integrate cyber operations with kinetic operations in major exercises.
  - Develop war games where Red team capabilities are based on an assessment of PLA capabilities in five years. Remember, the DoD learns more from losing war games than from winning.
  
- To better understand the PLA, Congress should:
  - Continue to receive regular updates from the DoD on the status of China's military development and the SSF, with a focus on the SSF Network Systems Department.
  - Support targeted military-to-military and security studies exchanges, though challenging in the current environment. Exchanges benefit the U.S. because the PLA is more opaque than the U.S. military.
  
- To reduce the risk of miscalculation, the administration should:
  - Maintain high-level military-to-military channels for crisis communication. The 2023 balloon incident revealed the depths of mistrust and lack of communication between governments and militaries.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2937898/dod-report-consolidation-of-defense-industrial-base-poses-risks-to-national-sec/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://warontherocks.com/2020/05/the-pentagon-should-train-for-and-not-just-talk-about-great-power-competition/>

- Explore a bilateral or trilateral arms control dialogue. While the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal is far larger than China's, China is expanding and modernizing its nuclear forces. A dialogue could promote strategic stability and give valuable insight into PLA force posture and doctrine.
  - Invest in Nuclear Command, Control and Communication modernization.
  - Integrate the Nuclear Posture Review and Missile Defense Review into a more holistic Strategic Stability Review.
  - Include in the Strategic Stability Review an assessment of the entanglement of strategic and non-strategic systems, and whether this dynamic increases the potential for miscalculation and inadvertent escalation in the event of a crisis.<sup>9</sup>
- To prepare for great power competition, Congress should:
    - Learn lessons from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including:
      - Invest in munitions and forward stockpiling. The inability to surge production to aid Ukraine has revealed additional areas for investment.<sup>10</sup>
      - Field low-cost, modular unmanned systems. Shorten the acquisition time for commercial systems.
      - Enhance U.S. ability to quickly respond to humanitarian crises.
    - Increase readiness and improve the military's ability to return critical assets to the fight by investing in shipyards and depots, which the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) assessed as being in "fair-to-poor" condition.<sup>11</sup>
    - Allow the DoD to retire legacy systems ill-suited for conflict with a peer military.
    - Invest in systems that can operate within a contested Anti-Access/Area Denial environment, such as long-range, low-cost unmanned air systems.
    - Continue to reduce the cost of space launch and shorten the timelines for launch with competitive contracting, low-cost satellites and modular technologies. That means fewer high-cost, uniquely configured satellites.
    - Ensure special operations forces, which have played an outsized role in counterterrorism missions, are subject to appropriate oversight and are focused and resourced for great power competition. This includes diversifying the force and skills of special operations forces, having a clear strategy of success in the Asia-Pacific and strengthening the oversight role of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict.
    - Conduct a real re-balance to Asia, focusing on military, economic, diplomatic and development presence.<sup>12</sup>
  - To strengthen the defense industrial base, Congress should:
    - Continue to conduct supply chain reviews from raw materials to systems integration. The aim of this review will be to identify supply chain vulnerabilities, including reliance on potential adversaries and potential single points of failure in production.
    - Increase the budget for the Defense Protection Act Title III office to target investments in critical supply chain capabilities that are limited in the U.S. and allied countries.

<sup>9</sup> <https://carnegieendowment.org/programs/npp/nuclear-entanglement>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/03/08/us-weapons-manufacturing-ukraine/>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/navy-dry-dock-closures-make-bad-problem-worse;](https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/navy-dry-dock-closures-make-bad-problem-worse)

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11466>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/13/opinion/china-taiwan-afghanistan.html>



- Support policies which reduce barriers for small and medium enterprises seeking to do business with the DoD.
- Ensure research funding complements, rather than duplicates, existing private sector research, and expand partnerships to leverage private sector technology advancements.
- To foster and strengthen international partnerships, the DoD and Congress should:
  - Ensure that cooperative training and joint exercises are correctly framed as building capacity and interoperability, not just countering China. Adopt a tailored approach to exercise design and public messaging that is receptive to the military needs and political situation in each country.
  - Strengthen partnerships in military-funded research with countries with advanced militaries and research bases, including the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) and Singapore.
- To promote cross-Strait stability, Congress and the Administration should:<sup>13</sup>
  - Maintain “strategic ambiguity” while re-stating U.S. policy towards Taiwan, including the “One China” Policy, guided by the Three Joint Communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act, as well as the Six Assurances.
  - Take steps to continue to deter China from changing the status quo on Taiwan, both through ensuring a credible conventional military deterrent and through high-level political assurances that the U.S. will not seek to meaningfully change the status quo if China does not.
  - Support senior-level meetings between the United States and Taiwan.
  - Continue to support arms sales, training and other measures that strengthen Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities and increase Taiwan’s resilience to coercion or threats of force from the People’s Republic of China (PRC), consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act.
  - Develop response options for current and potential PLA gray zone tactics against Taiwan.
  - Make the voices of Taiwan’s people central to policy discussions. Remember, Taiwan is not the prize in a game of great power tug-of-war—it is a vibrant, thriving democracy of 23 million people and any conflict would be devastating to their lives, freedom and prosperity.

## 2. Development and Diplomacy

Enhancing U.S. soft power is critical to increasing U.S. competitiveness vis-à-vis China. In this space, the Biden administration has seized a rare opportunity. Across Europe and Asia, many countries’ unfavorable views of China are at or near historic highs.<sup>14</sup> China’s use of economic coercion, targeting of religious and ethnic minorities and aggressive rhetoric has damaged China’s global standing and provoked both government and corporate backlash.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the global perception of the U.S. improved after President Biden took office.<sup>16</sup> President Biden’s more able diplomatic style proved a welcome contrast for many countries to former President Trump’s confrontational approach and to China’s abrasive Wolf Warrior Diplomacy.

<sup>13</sup> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/23/taiwan-afghanistan-china-biden-us-reputation>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/06/30/large-majorities-say-china-does-not-respect-the-personal-freedoms-of-its-people/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.csis.org/analysis/beijing-suffers-major-loss-its-hostage-diplomacy>

<sup>16</sup> <https://morningconsult.com/2023/02/21/biden-more-popular-than-trump-abroad/>

However, China still possesses a deep reserve of international goodwill driven in part by its role as the world's largest lender to emerging economies.<sup>17</sup> As of December 2022, China had signed Memoranda of Understanding with at least 144 countries under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>18</sup> The scale of China's loans eclipses that of all other bilateral creditors; China's loan commitments total an estimated \$159 billion in Africa and \$138 billion in Latin America.<sup>19</sup>

For China, BRI generates long-term investment opportunities for Chinese companies and banks in emerging economies and helps alleviate domestic production overcapacity.<sup>20</sup> China also derives strategic benefits from lending abroad. The promise of economic investment and opportunities has enticed countries to renounce their recognition of Taiwan and to develop partnerships like the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

Yet, for BRI partners, these projects have also helped address real infrastructure needs, with fewer strings attached than World Bank, U.S. or E.U. proposals. As such, the U.S. strategy to counter BRI has to be about more than just patronizingly warning countries against Chinese investment. The U.S.' continued framing of China's "debt trap" diplomacy not only serves to alienate us from developing country partners but is also an oversimplification.<sup>21</sup> Rather than seizing critical natural resources and infrastructure from debtor countries when they fall behind on paying back loans, China has renegotiated some debts and repayment periods. However, China's BRI loans pose legitimate concerns for debtor governments as many contracts lack transparency and contain cross-default clauses which limit project renegotiation.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, China uses lending programs to achieve strategic aims, not solely to extract wealth or resources.

As the world's largest creditor to 17 severely debt-distressed, low-income countries<sup>23</sup>, China must do more to provide debt relief. China's initial collaboration with G20 countries and multilateral banks in the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) has been a positive development that could lay a foundation for future smarter, coordinated investments among the G20 in emerging economies. However, to adequately address debt distress for African and Latin American countries, China's cooperation with the U.S. and other Paris Club creditors and multilateral banks must improve.

The U.S. and like-minded partners also need to commit to robust development assistance and to becoming better partners for recipients of aid. Competing with China in emerging economies does not mean the U.S. should try to match Chinese investment dollar for dollar. Instead, the U.S. must draw on its comparative strengths: advanced health care and digital infrastructure technologies, a strong private sector with the capacity to invest abroad, the success of micro-financing initiatives and economic cooperation agreements like Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinteco.2021.103539>

<sup>18</sup> <https://greenfdc.org/countries-of-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri/?cookie-state-change=1677704394824>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.bu.edu/gdp/chinese-loans-to-africa-database/>; [https://www.thedialogue.org/map\\_list/](https://www.thedialogue.org/map_list/)

<sup>20</sup> <https://hdl.handle.net/10356/78227>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2021/02/china-debt-trap-diplomacy/617953/>

<sup>22</sup> [https://docs.aiddata.org/ad4/pdfs/How\\_China\\_Lends\\_\\_A\\_Rare\\_Look\\_into\\_100\\_Debt\\_Contracts\\_with\\_Foreign\\_Governments.pdf](https://docs.aiddata.org/ad4/pdfs/How_China_Lends__A_Rare_Look_into_100_Debt_Contracts_with_Foreign_Governments.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://greenfdc.org/brief-chinas-role-in-public-external-debt-in-dssi-countries-and-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-in-2020/>

In meetings with senior government officials from countries in the Indo Pacific, I have repeatedly been told that they value U.S. presence in the region. However, they also strive to maintain positive relations with China. Countries around the world are closely watching the U.S.-China relationship and are wary of being caught in the crossfire of the competition.

### Recommendations

- To strengthen U.S.-China people-to-people exchanges and knowledge:
  - Restore Fulbright programs in China, which also builds U.S. expertise on China, consistent with my Restoring Fulbright Exchanges with China and Hong Kong Act (118<sup>th</sup> Congress; [H.R. 2381](#)).
  - In bilateral discussions with China, prioritize increasing journalists' access to China.
  - Reinstate Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act (MECEA) travel to China for members and staff. Ensure all MECEA delegations receive pre-travel defensive and policy briefings and post-travel debriefings.
  
- To better compete with China's BRI:
  - Deliver on the promises of the G7's Build Back Better World Partnership to present low- and middle- income countries with attractive, high-quality infrastructure project alternatives to BRI.
  - Coordinate trade, investment, and development strategies with key political-economic allies, such as the European Union and Japan. When doing so, designate one country as the project lead to eliminate bureaucratic redundancy.
  - Re-evaluate World Bank lending to China. China cannot be both a recipient and one of the largest contributors of development financing.
  - Accelerate aid programs and improve public diplomacy so the U.S. gets more credit for its contributions. For example, China had success in vaccine diplomacy because it provided vaccines first and with clear branding. On the other hand, the U.S. provided vaccines much later and through multilateral structures. Thus, even though U.S. vaccines were more effective, China was seen as a more effective partner for countries in crisis.<sup>24</sup>
  - Streamline the timeline for U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) project approval.
  - Increase U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) staffing and urge DFC to prioritize financing for information and communications technology projects, consistent with my Prioritizing Digital Infrastructure Financing Act (117<sup>th</sup> Congress).
  
- To reinvigorate the Foreign Service:
  - Expand the size of the Foreign Service and open more consulates to increase the U.S. on-the-ground presence
  - Reduce barriers and work to recruit more diverse personnel.
  - The administration should send to the Senate nominees for key diplomatic posts and the Senate should expeditiously conduct confirmation hearings to reduce the number of vacant posts.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/us-china-vaccine-diplomacy-lessons-from-latin-america-and-the-caribbean/>

- To respond to and deter PRC economic coercion, the U.S. should:
  - Highlight examples to warn partners about PRC economic coercion.
  - Create a U.S. mechanism to provide relief for targets of PRC economic coercion, similar to the European Union’s Anti-Coercion Instrument.<sup>25</sup>
  - Coordinate relief among international partners for countries targeted by the PRC.
  
- In Africa, both the U.S. and China are viewed positively, with significant support for emulating China’s development strategy.<sup>26</sup> To strengthen U.S. partnerships in Africa:
  - Increase funding for USAID programs, including Power Africa and Trade Africa.
  - Incorporate the African Union as a permanent member of the G20.
  - Encourage greater U.S. trade with and investment in Africa. Emphasize the high quality of U.S. goods and services and the transparent and non-corrupt nature of U.S. business practices. Work to increase U.S. business familiarity with market opportunities in Africa.
  - Ensure U.S. policy does not treat Africa as a monolith. Countries have unique needs, political cultures and histories. U.S. initiatives that are country- or region- specific will be more successful and better received. Examples include:
    - Angola: Reinvigorate USAID Public-Private Partnerships to address infrastructure needs and help diversify the Angolan economy.
    - Burkina Faso: Assist the government of Burkina Faso with provision of government services, to build stability, improve the lives of citizens and isolate violent extremist organizations.
    - Cameroon: Work with Cameroon to improve public health by strengthening laboratory, surveillance, emergency management and workforce capacity to prevent, detect and respond to disease outbreaks.
    - Egypt: Increase funding for USAID’s Agricultural Resilience Initiative in Ukraine to lower record inflation for Egyptians and improve food security – Egypt heavily relies on wheat and fertilizer imports from Ukraine and Russia.<sup>27</sup>
    - Kenya: Establish a U.S.-Kenya free trade agreement to strengthen economic ties, provide market access for U.S. and Kenyan businesses and support regional integration in the East African Community.
    - Nigeria: Increase funding for Fulbright, Mandela Washington Fellowship, TechWomen and the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs to boost U.S.-Nigeria people-to-people exchanges, women’s participation in the Nigerian economy and educational opportunities for Nigeria’s growing population.
    - Rwanda: Ensure assistance programs in Rwanda also address needs of rural communities, including enhancing agricultural productivity and improving rural health.
    - Senegal: Provide opportunities, such as microfinancing, support for Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises and technical assistance for entrepreneurs, to create new, quality jobs for Senegal’s young population (median age is 19 years).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_23\\_3046](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_3046)

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad489-pap3-africans\\_welcome\\_chinas\\_influence\\_maintain\\_democratic\\_aspirations-afrobarometer\\_dispatch-15nov21.pdf](https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad489-pap3-africans_welcome_chinas_influence_maintain_democratic_aspirations-afrobarometer_dispatch-15nov21.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-12/egypt-s-hunt-for-wheat-takes-on-new-urgency-as-stockpiles-shrink>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/senegal/>

- South Africa: Build from South Africa’s Afrigen partnership with the U.S.’ National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to further strengthen health care R&D collaboration.
- China’s ties with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are stronger than ever before. China’s trade with Latin America increased from \$12 billion to \$430 billion between 2000 and 2021. China is now the biggest trading partner in nine countries in the region, replacing the U.S. in some cases.<sup>29</sup> To strengthen U.S. partnerships in the region and counter China’s rising influence:
  - Support LAC countries in the East Pacific with their efforts to repel illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by the PRC.<sup>30</sup> The U.S. should incorporate Argentina, Chile and Peru into the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Conservation Corridor (CMAR) to aid regional conservation efforts in the ocean and offer opportunities for the U.S. Coast Guard to assist with counter-illegal fishing operations.<sup>31</sup>
  - U.S. elected officials and diplomats must refrain from referring to LAC as “America’s backyard”. The metaphor serves to alienate governments in the region and fails to depict the relationship as one based on partnership.
  - The U.S. is further ineffective when it frames its policies and reason for cooperation with LAC as just a migration issue. Strategic engagement in the region should be country specific and address broader development needs. Examples include:
    - Brazil: Renew U.S.-Brazil cooperation on environmental initiatives including fighting deforestation and illegal logging and decarbonization.
    - Colombia: Support rural development by building tertiary roads, strengthening Colombian land titling efforts and enhancing law enforcement in accordance with the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission 2020 Report’s recommendations to Congress.<sup>32</sup>
    - Ecuador: Bolster trade ties and investments in sectors such as telecommunications, infrastructure and energy. Legislation like the United-States-Ecuador Partnership Act of 2022 (117<sup>th</sup> Congress) is a good first step.
    - Honduras: Instead of simply warning against using PRC-based Huawei’s equipment, the U.S. should help Honduras build digital infrastructure that lowers mobile data costs. For Hondurans, in 2021, 1GB of data cost approximately \$16.67 — a staggering 8.71% of average monthly income.<sup>33</sup>
    - Mexico: Support the Mexican government’s reforms to create an environmentally sustainable and resilient Mexican economy. Disadvantaged groups, including indigenous populations, are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/chinas-economic-power-grows-in-latin-america/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/09/26/world/asia/china-fishing-south-america.html>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/7415287/coast-guard-conducts-counter-illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-iuu-fishing-operations>

<sup>32</sup> <https://mronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/AA2A3440265DDE42367A79D4BCBC9AA1.whdpc-final-report-2020-11.30.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> <https://a4ai.org/a4ai-2021-mobile-broadband-pricing-usd/>

- To enhance U.S. global health leadership:
  - Recommit to vaccine diplomacy, because of other infectious diseases.
  - Establish and resource a public-private fund for Global Health Security Agenda implementation to address infectious disease threats, consistent with the bipartisan Global Health Security Act (117<sup>th</sup> Congress).
  - Increase funding for surveillance of zoonoses, which threaten agriculture, economies and public health in the event of spillover into human populations.
  
- To enhance U.S. leadership in human rights, Congress and the administration should:
  - Bolster and resource the administration’s anti-corruption agenda while tackling corruption in the United States.<sup>34</sup>
  - Be forceful in calling out human rights violations in all countries, not just U.S. rivals.
  - Pass the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (117<sup>th</sup> Congress).
  - Work to build global coalitions, particularly with Muslim nations, to increase economic and reputational consequences for China’s continued repression of its Uyghur population.
  - Reduce barriers for Uyghurs seeking asylum in the U.S., consistent with the bipartisan Uyghur Human Rights Protection Act (118<sup>th</sup> Congress; [H.R. 3934](#)).
  - Closely scrutinize China’s enforcement of the national security law in Hong Kong and coordinate condemnations of abuses with partners.
  - Pass the Hong Kong Safe Harbor Act (117<sup>th</sup> Congress), to provide refugee status and expedited processing for individuals fleeing Hong Kong because of a fear of persecution for their political actions.
  - Significantly increase the cap on annual refugee admissions.
  - Reject China’s attempts to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama.

### **3. Jobs, Business, Investment and Trade**

President Biden began his administration amid great disruption in the U.S. economy and global trade. The labor market was in disarray, with President Trump’s disastrous COVID-19 response contributing to an economy with 3 million fewer Americans employed than at the start of his administration. And despite bipartisan recognition of China as a strategic competitor, President Trump withdrew the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) without a plan for U.S. economic influence in the region. This deprived the U.S. of preferential access to rapidly growing markets, forfeited America’s seat at the negotiating table where the rules of the road for the future of trade are being shaped and reduced U.S. influence in the region. Critically, it also reduced the economic heft of a high-standard regional counterweight to China’s economic model.

The Biden administration inherited the remnants of a harmful and ineffective trade war with China. While President Trump increased duties on potential partners, China reduced duties for others, further isolating the U.S.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, the trade war harmed U.S. exporters, workers and consumers and undermined global confidence in the U.S. commitment to trade. And even when companies chose to relocate operations out of China, they moved jobs to other markets in Asia, not the U.S.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/07/22/anti-corruption-agenda-for-middle-class-pub-84996>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.piie.com/blogs/trade-and-investment-policy-watch/trump-has-gotten-china-lower-its-tariffs-just-toward>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.amcham-shanghai.org/en/article/amcham-shanghai-releases-2021-china-business-report>

Faced with these challenges, the Biden administration has charted a remarkable course of recovery. Landmark legislation, including the American Rescue Plan, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act spurred the addition of 10.7 million jobs and enhanced U.S. global competitiveness. Having made these investments in American workers and infrastructure, it is time for the administration to develop an ambitious trade and economic engagement agenda.<sup>37,38</sup>

One element of a global trade agenda must be the green economy. On climate, China is a paradox. China is the largest investor in and market for renewable energy, has ambitious climate goals and is making leadership in green technology part of its economic agenda. At the same time, China is the world's largest emitter, is increasing its reliance on coal and has a woeful environmental record. Amid discussions about U.S.-China climate cooperation, the U.S. must also compete with China on green technology, green jobs and global environmental leadership. And U.S. leaders must avoid sacrificing other national interests to achieve an elusive climate accord with China. A climate strategy that combines competition and cooperation is more likely to yield reduced emissions and U.S. job growth.

### Recommendations

- To strengthen U.S. economic commitment to the Indo-Pacific, promote high-standard trade and grow jobs in the United States, Congress and the Biden administration should:
  - Join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).
- Joining CPTPP will present political and technical obstacles, though these are surmountable. More immediate steps to advance a global economic leadership agenda include:
  - Pass Trade Promotion Authority to enable the Biden administration to join CPTPP and pursue other serious multilateral and plurilateral trade negotiations.
  - Immediately begin negotiations on sectoral multilateral trade agreements, including digital trade and environmental goods. For digital trade, existing frameworks to build from include the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement between Chile, Singapore and New Zealand.<sup>39</sup>
  - Spearheading a global strategy for U.S. leadership on green trade, including
    - A free trade agreement for green technology.<sup>40</sup>
    - Greening trade, through investments in port infrastructure, renewable fuels, digitalization and electrification.
    - Establishing senior leadership positions at relevant federal agencies tasked with growing domestic manufacturing and trade opportunities for green technology.
  - Enact the bipartisan Global Small Business Network Act (116<sup>th</sup> Congress).
  - Strengthen and modernize Trade Adjustment Assistance. Calling the current program a fig leaf is an insult to fig leaves.

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-yellen-trade/domestic-investment-needed-before-new-trade-deals-u-s-treasury-pick-yellen-idUSKBN29Q2RZ>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/digital-trade-deal-ripe-for-the-indo-pacific/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/how-commerce-can-save-the-climate-green-free-trade-agreement>;  
<https://delbene.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3278>

- Develop a broad and inclusive agenda for hosting Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 2023 including environment, labor, infrastructure, small- and medium-sized enterprises and global health.
  - Increase funding for the Labor Office and the Environment and Natural Resources Office at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to strengthen enforcement of labor and environmental provisions in U.S. trade agreements.
  - Enact Rep. Castro’s PARTNER with ASEAN Act (118<sup>th</sup> Congress; [H.R. 406](#)) to enhance the diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and Southeast Asia.
- To increase U.S. global competitiveness, Congress and the Biden administration should build on the successes of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress:
    - Rapidly and effectively implement the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Doing so will create jobs, bolster competitiveness and position the U.S. as a leader in tackling climate change. The U.S. cannot have a big-league economy with little league infrastructure.<sup>41</sup>
    - Coordinate CHIPS and IRA implementation with allies, as they safeguard their own semiconductor supply chains and increase investments in green technology.
    - Invest in American workers, including by increasing the number and fields of labor-backed apprenticeships, while preserving the high standards of existing apprenticeship programs. My American Workforce Investment in Next Generation of Students Act (117<sup>th</sup> Congress) would achieve this by establishing a 2-2-2 six-year pathway from high school to community college to an apprenticeship in an in-demand field.
  - To increase pressure on China to change economic practices:
    - Increase coordination between the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) and other nations’ foreign investment review bodies.<sup>42</sup> Sharing lessons learned about deceptive business practices and threats to national security will help develop a more coherent global framework for attracting foreign investment while safeguarding jobs and advanced technology.
    - Strengthen and coordinate export controls that protect sensitive technologies with other countries that are global leaders in advanced technology.

#### 4. Technology

Technology is arguably the most interconnected of the policy areas evaluated in this White Paper. U.S. leadership in emerging technologies will be a powerful job creator. Many new and emerging technologies have military applications that will give the more advanced nation a real advantage on the battlefield. Advanced technology manufacturing and innovation requires an educated, trained workforce. And while free and open technologies operating within a clear legal framework can be a powerful tool to advance human rights, authoritarian regimes can use these same technologies to surveil and oppress.

Along with human rights, technology competition with China is one area where the administration will get little leeway from Congress. On a bipartisan basis, Members of Congress largely agree that national

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<sup>41</sup> [https://larsen.house.gov/uploadedfiles/iija\\_2nd\\_district\\_report\\_v5\\_stakeholder\\_version.pdf](https://larsen.house.gov/uploadedfiles/iija_2nd_district_report_v5_stakeholder_version.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-bought-italian-military-drone-maker-without-authorities-knowledge-11636972513>; <https://www.jonesday.com/en/insights/2021/01/significant-changes-to-australias-foreign-investment-framework-commenced-on-1-january-2021>



security and economic strength are dependent on U.S. leadership in technologies like 5G, 6G, AI, robotics and biotechnology.

### Recommendations

- To promote democratic and open technology standards that respect privacy and the rule of law:
  - Congress should pass Rep. DelBene’s Information Transparency and Personal Data Control Act (117<sup>th</sup> Congress), or similar national data privacy standard legislation. Doing so will protect Americans’ data, avoid a patchwork system of state-by-state standards and establish a clear U.S. privacy baseline for international negotiations.
  - The administration should work with like-minded allies and partners to develop a global strategy for leadership at global standards-setting bodies, consistent with Rep. Walberg’s Promoting United States Wireless Leadership Act (118<sup>th</sup> Congress; [H.R. 1377](#)).
  - USTR should pursue a multilateral digital economy agreement in collaboration with academia and private and public sector stakeholders (see earlier recommendation).
  - Build from the Clean Network to provide technical and financial assistance to countries seeking to build high-standard telecommunications networks.
  - DoD should continue adoption of secure 5G in its telecommunications infrastructure and start planning for NextG technologies.
  - Agency stakeholders, including the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should begin coordinating on NextG technology to deconflict any potential spectrum issues.
  - The Joint Artificial Intelligence Center (JAIC) should expand the AI Education Strategy from pilot program to a Department-wide education initiative so servicemembers and civilians across the DoD have a basic understanding of AI, its strengths and limitations.
  
- To advance U.S. leadership in crucial disruptive emerging technologies:
  - Congress should advance immigration and education policies that attract the world’s talent, including by expanding visas and establishing pathways to citizenship for students. (See Education section and linked CSET report for further information.)
  - Increase funding for the SBA’s Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs to help companies and researchers bridge the valley of death to turn innovative ideas into commercial products.

## 5. Education

To compete with the PRC in emerging scientific fields such as AI, robotics, quantum computing and nanotechnology, the U.S. must educate and train a workforce with the skills necessary to succeed in tomorrow’s global economy. This means that the two nations also compete across education, from K-12 schooling through advanced degrees. But the U.S. motivation for investing in schools must be about more than some abstract sense of competing with China. Policymakers must prioritize education to provide greater opportunity for America’s youth and to close equity gaps<sup>43</sup> in U.S. education.

The United States is in a strong position as an admired leader in science, innovation and education. In China and worldwide, parents dream of sending their children to study in the United States. International student enrollment in the U.S. has already rebounded from record lows in the pandemic.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-postsecondary/news/2021/04/06/497888/building-college-educated-america-requires-closing-racial-gaps-attainment/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.iie.org/news/us-sees-strong-international-student-enrollment-rebounds/>

However, there are warning signs. In 2019, Chinese universities produced 49,498 PhDs in STEM fields compared to 33,759 from U.S. universities.<sup>45</sup> The PRC is investing heavily in education and tasking universities with building “schools of future technology.” As Chinese universities continue to improve, they will become increasingly appealing destinations for talented international students, academics and researchers. China’s Young Thousand Talents initiative, which offers significant financial and research support for graduate scientists, has been successful in recruiting western-educated Chinese scientists to return to China.<sup>46</sup>

This competition is about more than prestige. Identifying, attracting, nurturing and retaining top talent is essential to American security and prosperity. Consider that Huawei’s leadership in 5G is partially due to breakthroughs in information science achieved by a Turkish researcher who studied at Caltech and MIT.<sup>47</sup>

While the threat of academic espionage is real, it is manageable. Policymakers must be careful not to exaggerate the threat or jeopardize the free and open academic model that has made the United States the global leader in education and research. Many proposed countermeasures, like prohibiting Chinese students from studying in STEM fields or even more extreme restrictions, are xenophobic, un-American and would do far more harm than good.<sup>48</sup> Instead, the United States should pursue a “small yard, high fences” approach that protects the most sensitive research. In addition, a well-resourced competitor, like China, can obtain sensitive academic research by recruiting lead researchers to its own institutions or via cyber espionage, rather than in-person spying.

Going further, the United States should make it easier for foreign students to stay in the United States. The fact that the world’s brightest students want to attend American universities to pursue an education is a massive strategic advantage in terms of intellectual capital, soft power and exposing young people to American society. Consider the reverse scenario: if the brightest young Americans were studying in China, our top concern would be that China would incentivize and recruit them to stay. The United States can employ a “brain drain” strategy by attracting more Chinese students to use their talents and skills in the United States. More than 70 percent of international PhD graduates from U.S. universities want to remain in the United States after graduation, for China, that figure is over 80 percent.<sup>49</sup>

There is also much the United States can do to get our own house in order on education in general, not just STEM. There is an alarming gap in civic knowledge and skills among U.S. students. Only half of Americans can name the three branches of government.<sup>50</sup> But civics is about more than understanding our system of government. Only 11 states require service learning, and seven in ten high school seniors say they have never written a letter to voice an opinion.<sup>51</sup> In an era of disinformation, conspiracy theories and social media radicalization, civics education and community engagement are vital skills and an essential component of building a resilient society.

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<sup>45</sup> <https://cset.georgetown.edu/publication/china-is-fast-outpacing-u-s-stem-phd-growth/>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abq1218>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/huawei-5g-polar-codes-data-breakthrough/>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.expressnews.com/politics/article/bill-ban-undocumented-students-texas-universities-17832820.php>

<sup>49</sup> <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf22300/report/temporary-visa-holder-plans>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/americans-civics-knowledge-drops-on-first-amendment-and-branches-of-government/>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/the-need-for-civic-education-in-21st-century-schools/>

## Recommendations

- To address concerns about academic espionage without undermining the free and open academic model:
  - Enhance cyber threat sharing between the federal government and universities.
  - Expand support for STEM research to better monitor and prevent IP theft and data abuse.
  - Ensure that federal grants to universities for sensitive research have strict cybersecurity requirements.
  - Protect free speech on campus by enhancing coordination between higher education and the federal government to protect Chinese students in the United States from surveillance and harassment, including by revoking visas for students “informing on” their peers.<sup>52</sup> In many cases, the true victims of Chinese agents’ surveillance are Chinese students themselves.
  - Continue to investigate student visa violations, particularly cases in which visa holders misrepresent or fail to disclose material affiliations with the PLA or CCP.
  - Increase transparency and reporting around gifts from foreign sources.
  - Broadly, ensure that the approach to combating academic espionage is a scalpel, not a hatchet.
  
- To attract the world’s brightest minds:
  - Ensure U.S. consulates have the personnel and resources necessary to process visa applications, including student visas.
  - Encourage Public Affairs Officers at U.S. embassies to enhance outreach to promote the United States as a destination for higher education.<sup>53</sup>
  - Government leaders and prominent Americans should publicly support international students and promote the United States as a welcome destination for higher education.
  - Congress should provide a streamlined pathway to permanent residence (a “green card”) for all advanced degree graduates, not just doctoral STEM graduates. This pathway should include scrutiny of the academic rigor of the program to address concerns about diploma mills becoming green card mills.
  - Increase funding for programs that expose young people to U.S. education and values, including Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative, Young African Leaders Initiative, the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange and Future Leaders Exchange programs.
  - Enhance efforts to attract international students, particularly from areas of the world with young populations, including Africa, LAC and Southeast Asia.
  
- To improve civic life:
  - Congress and states should encourage civic education, combining knowledge of the U.S. system of government with a broader curriculum of service and community engagement.
  - Congress and states should ensure school districts have sufficient funding for clubs, after-school activities and other programs to promote interpersonal engagement, consensus building and leadership skills in young people. In 2022, 24.7 million children

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<sup>52</sup> <https://www.propublica.org/article/even-on-us-campus-china-cracks-down-on-students-who-speak-out>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2021/11/15/international-students-increase-following-pandemic-declines>

were unable to access afterschool programs, with affordability, lack of safe transportation and availability identified as major factors.<sup>54</sup>

- As part of a comprehensive strategy to combat rising loneliness in Americans, Congress should increase funding for libraries, which are free workspaces, centers of learning and communal meeting spaces.<sup>55</sup>
- To increase the number of young Americans learning about other cultures and representing the U.S. abroad:
  - Congress should appropriate funding to double the number of slots for foreign language and area studies across the federal government. This doubling of slots should include programs such as Fulbright, Boren, Gilman, and Project Go for ROTC students.
  - Congress and states should bolster funding for K-12 foreign language education, especially for Mandarin. While English is mandatory in Chinese schools for children starting at age 6, only 420,000 children under the age of 18 in the U.S. are learning Mandarin.<sup>56</sup> A higher competency in Mandarin would improve U.S. understanding of China and make better American diplomats, investigators and researchers.
- To increase access to STEM education:
  - Increase funding for STEM partnerships, so students outside major research institutions have access to cutting edge fields, like robotics and machine learning. The Robotarium at Georgia Tech is an excellent model to replicate.
  - Encourage development of classroom modules that expose K-12 and undergraduate students to fundamental concepts in AI. This model builds from Finland's "Elements of AI" course and a similar initiative I secured at the Department of Defense.<sup>57</sup>

## Getting Our Own House In Order

This paper highlights steps the U.S. can take, within each issue area, to better compete with China through domestic investment and reform. These efforts should be paired with comprehensive measures to get our own house in order. The recommendations in this section are actions the U.S. should take regardless of China. But these actions all have a direct nexus to U.S.-China competition, revealing that there are few debates that are exclusively domestic.

### Recommendations

- Pass voting and democracy reform, like the For The People Act (117<sup>th</sup> Congress) and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (117<sup>th</sup> Congress). While it is an oversimplification to frame U.S.-China competition as democracy vs. autocracy, the U.S. frequently seeks to draw contrasts between our open political system and China's single party rule. While democracy in the U.S. is not as robust as it is in other countries, Congress can bolster democracy and voting by:<sup>58</sup>
  - Reducing the role of money in politics.
  - Replacing partisan gerrymanders with a non-partisan or independent process for redistricting and reapportionment.

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<sup>54</sup> <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Afterschool-COVID-19-Parent-Survey-2022-Brief.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/news/researchers-call-national-public-health-effort-prevent-loneliness>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.lingoace.com/blog/the-state-of-chinese-language-learning-in-the-us/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://larsen.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=1554>

<sup>58</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/country/united-states/freedom-world/2023>

- Updating and reinvigorating the Voting Rights Act to protect citizens nationwide from racially discriminatory election administration, whether in intent or in effect.
- Increasing voter turnout by reducing barriers to voting, including by expanding the use of early voting and vote-by-mail. My America Votes Act of 2023 ([H.R. 861](#)) would combat voter suppression and make it easier for American of all backgrounds and political beliefs to vote.<sup>59</sup>
- Pass comprehensive immigration reform. The deeply flawed immigration system hampers the U.S. in the global competition for the world’s best and brightest. Investments like BIL and CHIPS+ will be limited in their efficacy if the U.S. lacks the necessary workforce. And creating pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants will help remedy decades-long injustices. In addition, the U.S. needs to strengthen the right to asylum, protect asylum-seekers and establish humane conditions at land ports of entry.
- Take commonsense steps to address domestic crises. China’s diplomats and propagandists are growing increasingly vocal in criticizing the U.S. for domestic issues. Doing so serves several functions. These arguments blunt U.S. criticism of China on human rights, COVID-19 transparency and other issues. And these officials are also seeking to discredit U.S. global leadership generally.<sup>60</sup> Policymakers should take urgent action to reduce the toll of gun violence, promote police accountability and reduce censorship in the classroom. Doing so will not win over Chinese propagandists—they can always invent new criticisms. But this agenda can help win back global admiration of the United States.

## Conclusion

Faced with increased competition from China, too many policymakers have responded by going on the defensive. Like a football team with only a defensive playbook, this strategy is incomplete. American prosperity is tied to domestic strength and global engagement. If the goal of U.S. strategy is to slow China’s growth or change China’s system of government, it is doomed to failure. On education, trade, technology, security and diplomacy, decoupling the United States from China threatens American prosperity by also isolating the U.S. from the world economy. Instead, the United States needs to get its own house in order, invest in competitiveness and engage with the world.

This China Strategy White Paper is clear-eyed about the threats and challenges China poses and contains both defensive and offensive “plays” to increase U.S. competitiveness and global leadership. The advantage of this strategy, with a larger focus on skills, education, innovation and multilateral relationships, is it enhances American competitiveness, not just vis-à-vis China, but worldwide.

As co-chair of the U.S.-China Working Group, I authored this white paper to sketch a strategy to better compete with China. The paper is limited in scope, addressing several key policy areas. Other issues worthy of greater attention include China’s digital RMB, the dollar’s role as the global reserve currency, social media, building stronger ties with Oceania and self-censorship by U.S. companies doing business in China. The paper represents my views only but is the product of my review of a variety of scholarship

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/editorials/fight-voter-suppression-improve-participation-with-america-votes-act/>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202205/1266967.shtml>

on China and extensive conversations with leaders in academia, think tanks, labor, government, international relations and industry.

### **Acknowledgments and Further Reading**

In addition to the cited works in this document, my strategy draws from themes and arguments raised by many experts in their fields. Though I do not subscribe to all the views advanced in the links below, you may find the additional reading material here compelling as you think about U.S. policies and priorities in competing with China:

[Atlantic: Why the U.S. Will Outcompete China](#)

[Brookings: The need for civic education in 21st-century schools](#)

[Brookings: The deception and detriment of US-China cultural and educational decoupling](#)

[Brookings and Yale Law: The Future of US Policy Toward China](#)

[CSIS: Deny, Deflect, Deter: Countering China's Economic Coercion](#)

[CSIS: Chinese State Capitalism](#)

[Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2023: United States](#)

[GOP China Task Force Report](#)

[Hass, Ryan, Stronger: Adapting America's China Strategy in an Age of Competitive Interdependence](#)

[National Science Institute: Promoting 5G and Future Technology Development](#)

[RAND: Regional Response to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific](#)

[Stop AAPI Hate: The Blame Game: How Political Rhetoric Influences Anti-Asian Scapegoating](#)

[U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission: 2021 Annual Report to Congress](#)

[Wang, Dan, China's Hidden Tech Revolution](#)