

MSC 68th Student Conference on National Affairs
“Hanging in the Balance: American Leadership in Global Crisis” Texas A&M University

Policy Proposal

“Confronting the Competition”

Facilitator: COL Nate Crow, USA

TO: National Security Advisor Jake J. Sullivan

FROM: Sarah Beason, William Dean, Ben Ford, Khale Hollomon, Adrian Jasso, Ben Mayo, Alec Ngov, Davis Saunders, Mark J. Snyder, Mikaela Sullivan

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION: National Security Council

SUBJECT: Strategic Measures to Counter the Chinese Threat

DATE: 11 February 2023

Introduction

As the most recent U.S. national security strategy laid out, “The People’s Republic of China harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit...”¹ With Chinese power and influence predicted to reach its peak this decade, the United States must be prepared for unpredictable escalation. Deterring the PRC requires different measures than the U.S. has employed deterring historical threats, and must include both internal and external balancing measures.

Background

In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward, along with ongoing economic liberalization since the 1980s, the People’s Republic of China is no longer a developing country. Though it had long been a pariah state, in 1979 the PRC was recognized by the United States and diplomatic relations were established. Its growth in the past 50 years has been astronomical, with life expectancy, population, GDP, and military strength all increasing at unprecedented rates². The prevailing belief had been that through this growth the country would liberalize politically. Instead, the Communist Party has solidified internal control³ and is now expanding outward. This brings China closer to conflict with its neighbors (The Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Japan, & Taiwan) as the PRC has declared its intent to become a regional hegemon.

Simultaneously, China developed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a political tool, while also creating an economic ecosystem that the Chinese control. China is the primary trading partner for approximately 130 countries around the world. The Chinese population faces demographic troubles which will result in a decreasing working age population⁴. Currently, the PRC lacks the ability to produce advanced semiconductors while Taiwan produces the most advanced chips in the world. Civil unrest over zero COVID and the Chinese housing market collapse have resulted in an increasingly unsatisfied middle class.

Problem analysis

The People’s Republic of China is a resurgent power. The world has become increasingly reliant on Chinese products in the global economy. The PRC has used this economic growth to coerce other countries to align with its view of the world order. As the PRC continues to demonstrate its capability and desire to establish global dominance, their threat to the United States and our allies grows. China has created a vast trade network, establishing global reliance on the success of their economy. At the same time through the Belt and Road Initiative, the PRC attempts to secure access to food and natural resources while also increasing their sphere of influence. Ultimately, the BRI serves to bolster China’s ability to continue to grow their economy while establishing a network of countries indebted to the Chinese government.

China's increase in military spending supports their bold desire to gain control of the Indo-Pacific region, providing them with the force needed to accomplish an aggressive power grab. Through the use of intelligence and espionage, the Chinese Communist Party is attempting to influence the opinion of the American population towards policies that favor China⁵. China has been able to pursue their national interest by means of the American public willingly handing over their right to privacy to the CCP⁶.

While there is no doubt that China's rising influence and power is a global threat, they are not a nation without weaknesses. Their rapid population growth over the past century has reached its apex and entered a long period of decline⁷. Their unprecedented average annual GDP growth has slowed⁸. China may be peaking, and as a potential decline looms on the horizon, they become increasingly incentivized to escalate while they are still capable. It is imperative we recognize that China may be entering a prolonged period of instability.

Recommendations:

The United States should take action to ensure the preparation of the American people for a threat from the PRC. This internal balancing will act as the first half of our proposed deterrence strategy:

- 1) In order to combat the recent struggles in recruiting, The U.S. military should improve its image with additional pro-military media such as the Top Gun films, and by revamping secondary education programs such as JROTC and Civil Air Patrol.
- 2) Implementation of in-depth user safety training within federal entities, public schools, industry, and other job platforms can educate citizens on best practices for keeping personal information secure online. Additionally, informing the U.S general public about the dangers posed by foreign data-sharing applications such as TikTok is crucial. We must press for privacy control on such applications, as it is essential in preparing our technological user base.
- 3) The United States should capitalize on its opportunity to host both the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup. Sports diplomacy is subtle, while effective in promoting our values on the world stage.

President Biden's first national security strategy states, "we will work in lockstep with our allies and partners and with all those who share our interests." This provides the foundation for the second half of the proposed deterrence strategy, external balancing. The support of our allies will act as a complement to what the United States can do on its own. We wish to emphasize concrete objectives:

- 1) It should be a longstanding goal to encourage a mutual defense pact between South Korea and Japan. These two countries could provide a counterweight to Chinese military capabilities in the region if they are able to overcome historical differences and distrust. The US should sponsor and host diplomatic efforts to this end.

- 2) The Belt and Road Initiative has provided the PRC with access to foreign naval bases in the region, known collectively as their string of pearls. These naval bases enable force projection and extend the reach of the PRC's Navy. The United States must also invest in the region with its own version of the BRI so as not to allow China to encircle the South China Sea and Indian Ocean.
- 3) We encourage further weapon sales to Taiwan, especially those that might enable the so-called porcupine defense strategy. Short of recognizing Taiwan, America must support their self-defense capabilities in any way possible. In addition, we must continue to bolster our military posture in the Western Pacific with additional basing agreements such as the recently concluded EDCA with the Philippines.

Conclusion

The United States must act proactively in the expectation that the PRC will lash out as its power apexes. The American civilian population needs to acclimate to the realities of a new cold war. At the same time, acting in concert with allies is the most effective strategy to contain and deter the PRC abroad. Both existing and evolving partnerships will be necessary to address the economic and the security issues presented by an unpredictable China. The proposed internal and external balancing measures are best suited to meet our deterrence objectives.

Works Cited

1. "National Security Strategy." *The White House*, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.
2. Murphy, Dawn C. "China's Population Destiny: The Looming Crisis." *Brookings*, 30 September 2010, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-population-destiny-the-looming-crisis/>.
3. Miazland, Lindsay. "China's Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang." *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-xinjiang-uyghurs-muslims-repression-genocide-human-rights>.
4. Fox, Justin. "China's Working Population Is About to Get Much Smaller." *Bloomberg.com*, 18 July 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-07-18/china-s-working-population-is-about-to-get-much-smaller>. Accessed 11 February 2023.
5. FBI. (2020, July 10). *The China Threat*. FBI. Retrieved February 11, 2023, from <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/the-china-threat#:~:text=The%20counterintelligence%20and%20economic%20espionage,the%20FBI%27s%20top%20counterintelligence%20priority>
6. Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency. "China Cyber Threat Overview and Advisories | CISA." *US-CERT*, 2023, <https://www.cisa.gov/uscert/china>.
7. "China Population Growth Rate 1950-2023 | MacroTrends." *Macrotrends*, 2023, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CHN/china/population-growth-rate>.
8. World Bank. "GDP growth (annual %) - China | Data." *World Bank Data*, 2023, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=CN>.