

POLICY *focus*

RECIPES FOR RATIONAL GOVERNMENT

MAY 2020

Facing Down the Rising Threat of China

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What You Need to Know

For decades, U.S. policy toward China has centered on the hope that engagement, aid and trade would encourage the reform of China's repressive communist regime. The idea was that access to America, and exchanges on many levels, would help inspire a peaceful evolution in China from a destitute tyranny to a prosperous, open and responsible partner in world affairs.

That approach has failed. China has become far wealthier, enjoying an economic rise since the 1990s unrivaled in modern history. But politically China carries on as a brutal tyranny, leveraging its access in order to infiltrate, pilfer, manipulate and subvert America and our democratic allies.

Among China's 1.4 billion people there have been many signs over the years of tremendous yearning for freedom and democracy, but the ruling Communist Party has displayed no interest in giving up its monopoly on power. China has increasingly been channeling its growing resources and reach into the Communist Party agenda to become the world's dominant power by the year 2049 — the 100th anniversary of Mao's founding of the communist People's Republic of China.

The coronavirus pandemic, which began late last year in the Chinese city of Wuhan, has thrown into sharp focus the rising threat that China poses to America and our allies. China's handling of the outbreak has been a blitz of lies, misdirection, and malign intent. While the world has been reeling from the pandemic, China has been seeking ways to exploit the resulting chaos and costs to others, accelerating its plans for dominance.

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Why You Should Care

There is still a window to head off China's ambitions of global dominance. But that window is closing fast.

- **Control of Critical Goods:** America over the past few decades has become dangerously dependent on China for the manufacturing of many critical goods. The current China-spawned coronavirus pandemic, in which China at the outset dangerously misled the world, nearly monopolized the global supply of protective medical gear, and then threatened to withhold critical medicines from export to the U.S., has clarified that even tougher measures are urgently needed.
- **Military Might:** China has been a nuclear power for decades, and is rapidly modernizing its arsenal and building up its military, including its space program, and an ocean-going navy that just a generation ago was a largely coastal force, negligible in world affairs. Today, China's growing fleet increasingly threatens freedom of navigation in vital South China Sea shipping lanes, and is equipping and training to confront the U.S. fleet.
- **Foe of Freedom:** The Chinese government oppresses its own people, with no regard for free speech, freedom of assembly, or privacy. Ubiquitous surveillance, censorship, and a system of "social credit" help to keep people in line. Whistleblowers and political dissidents sometimes simply disappear.

More Information

A colossal tragedy of our time is the rise of China, not as a responsible member of a liberal world order, but as a huge, disruptive, repressive and predatory player. China's expanding ambitions and aggressive actions are fast translating into a showdown with the U.S., leader of the free world and keeper since World War II of what is now an increasingly imperiled Pax Americana.

Almost three decades after the 1991 Soviet collapse that ended the Cold War, there are elements here of a new Cold War, in which China has replaced the USSR as the chief threat to America, and to freedom around the globe — a threat made all the more dangerous because China is wealthier, more populous and more capable on many fronts than was the bellicose but bankrupt USSR.

Since President Xi Jinping rose to power, becoming China's Communist Party General Secretary in 2012 and President in 2013, he has openly advertised his goal of transforming China into the dominant world power. Styling himself as a modern improvement on Mao, Xi has ratcheted up China's already severe repression at home, and in 2018 had the term limits lifted on his presidency, effectively digging in as president- and dictator-for life. Xi is 66 years old, relatively young by standards of China's politburo thugs gone before. His continuation as ruler bodes ill for the coming decade.

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Economy and Trade

China's economic rise dates back to the "reform and opening" introduced in 1978 by Deng Xiaoping, who emerged as China's ruler following the death in 1976 of Mao. Deng scrapped the collectivist policies that had beggared China, and under such slogans as "to get rich is glorious," allowed people to set up businesses and earn profits. By the 1990s, China's economy was taking off, at home and in world trade. The next big inflection point was China's admission in 2001 to the World Trade Organization, which brought massively enhanced access to world markets.

Today, the economies of America and China are intricately entwined, via trade and investments. For size, China's economy today rivals America's, though with more than four times the U.S. population, China's per capita gross domestic product (close to \$10,000 as of 2018) is still just about one-sixth that of the U.S. (close to \$62,000). China's old communist charade of income equality is gone; China today is home to more than 200 billionaires, as well to some people still enduring extreme rural poverty.

What has remained constant, however, is the Chinese Communist Party's sway over all citizens of China, rich or poor. The CCP dictates that all businesses — including major corporations operating out of China worldwide — serve first and foremost the strategic interests and directives of China's regime. This lends itself to the predatory pricing, debt-trap diplomacy and other stratagems with which China wields erstwhile private business deals to entrench and expand its reach. This has been the animating force behind China's huge investments in strategically useful real estate abroad, which Xi has dubbed the Belt and Road Initiative. This is why the Trump administration has moved to block China's giant telecom company, Huawei, from pursuing a foothold in the U.S.

With approximately 28 percent of all global manufacturing taking place inside its borders, China is the world leader, after surpassing the U.S. in 2010, in manufacturing output. Although specialization of economies and free trade have enormous benefits, Americans have realized during the coronavirus pandemic that dependence on foreign suppliers for critical goods that support our healthcare system or other critical industries can amount to a national security risk.

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The Military Threat

While the U.S. still fields the world's most powerful armed forces, China today has the world's largest military, with more than two million active service personnel. When Xi became president, seven years ago, he stressed his desire for a "strong military," to achieve what he describes as "the great revival of the Chinese nation." His policies emphasized the modernization of the military, and the expansion of its reach, which today entails, for instance, sophisticated cyber warfare forces, a blue-water navy with two aircraft carriers now in service and a third under construction, and the development of hypersonic missiles, capable of evasive action while traveling at super high speeds.

China has already used its growing maritime capabilities to bully and threaten Japan and Taiwan. Under Xi, China has also ramped up its territorial grabs in the South China Sea, building artificial islands, topped with military bases, from which it is positioned to control shipping traffic along vital routes connecting East Asia with the Middle East and Europe.

A whopping display of China's growing military muscle took place on Oct. 1 of last year, when Xi celebrated the 70th anniversary of Communist China with a massive military parade through Tiananmen Square, featuring everything from impeccably drilled foot soldiers to nuclear missiles. Reporting on the occasion, *The Wall Street Journal* noted that the parade "sent a clear message to Washington: In military terms, the U.S.'s technological advantage is shrinking fast."

A Human Rights Hell

When China crushed the 1989 Tiananmen uprising by slaughtering its own peaceful protesters in the heart of Beijing, enough was caught on camera to horrify the world. Since then, China has done plenty to ensure that its atrocities take place without international witnesses. But China remains one of the world's worst abusers of human rights. A telling example is China's late Nobel Peace laureate, Liu Xiaobo, who took part in the 1989 Tiananmen protests, and in 2008 wrote a manifesto calling for an end to one-party rule. Liu spent years in prison, before receiving a last-minute medical parole to die of cancer in 2017, at the age of 61.

China's recent experiments in repression include the establishment of brain-washing concentration camps for Uyghur Muslims in the western part of the country, along with the more traditional prisons and labor camps to which dissidents can be consigned. The news industry is monopolized by the government, with its prolific propaganda campaigns. There is pervasive censorship, including the so-called Great Firewall to control internet access. Critics of the government tend to disappear, as happened with a number of courageous Chinese bloggers reporting earlier this year on the government abuses of people locked down in Wuhan under the coronavirus quarantine.

Under Xi, China has made pervasive and highly intrusive use of such technology as facial recognition to beef up its already enormous domestic security apparatus. People are tracked on camera, through spending apps, and in almost every interaction, while the authorities assign them scores for "social credit" — doling out rewards and punishments depending on how faithfully they follow the CCP dictates.

China's regime regards such basic rights as free speech, or freedom of assembly, as threats to its power, and punishes those who try. China has increasingly extended this kind of brute force repression to the former British colony of Hong Kong, despite China's treaty promise that for 50 years after the 1997 British handover, Hong Kong would retain all its former rights and freedoms, bolstered by universal suffrage. China has reneged on all of that, and currently, with the world distracted by the coronavirus pandemic, has been rolling right over its promise of

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“one country, two systems,” to demand that Hong Kong’s 7.5 million people knuckle under to the edicts of Beijing.

China’s next likely target is Taiwan, home to a thriving Chinese democracy that illustrates a vital truth: there is no need to sacrifice freedom, Beijing-style, in order to achieve prosperity. People can have both. That message is anathema to the tyranny in Beijing, which seeks to seize Taiwan, either by subversion from within, or if necessary by force.

What Can Be Done?

- It is urgent that the U.S. reframe its policies toward China, scrapping engagement as the main premise, and reconfiguring our interactions on the assumption that as long as the Communist Party remains in power, China will not be wooed toward liberal ways. China is a foe, ruled by a ruthlessly ambitious dictator who intends America ill, and we should deal accordingly.
- A top priority is the rebuilding of the U.S. military, to better serve as a deterrent to China’s predatory ambitions. This is vital, not least, to standing by democratic Taiwan, and the example it sets for all of China.
- For all the enormous benefits of free trade, the U.S. for security reasons can no longer afford to rely on China for anything of strategic importance, or allow Beijing to pilfer our technology and investments. It is urgently important that American business relationships with China be reviewed in light of China’s hostile intent, and, as appropriate, be wound down, severed or blocked.
- We can expose the truth behind China’s torrents of propaganda, and in doing so, talk past China’s government, to the 1.4 billion people who live under the soul-crushing rule of China’s one-party state. Their freedom, when that day comes, would be the world’s, and America’s, great gain.

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What You Can Do

Get Informed

Learn More About China. Visit:

- [U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission](#)
- [Hudson Institute on China](#)
- [Citizen Power for China](#)

Talk to Your Friends

Help your friends and family understand these important issues. Tell them about what's going on and encourage them to join you in getting involved.

Become a Leader in the Community

Get a group together each month to talk about a political/policy issue (it will be fun!). Write a letter to the editor. Show up at local government meetings and make your opinions known. Go to rallies. Better yet, organize rallies! A few motivated people can change the world.

Remain Engaged Politically

Too many good citizens see election time as the only time they need to pay attention to politics. We need everyone to pay attention and hold elected officials accountable. Let your Representatives know your opinions. After all, they are supposed to work for you!

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ABOUT INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM

Independent Women's Forum (IWF) is dedicated to building support for free markets, limited government, and individual responsibility.

IWF, a non-partisan, 501(c)(3) research and educational institution, seeks to combat the too-common presumption that women want and benefit from big government, and build awareness of the ways that women are better served by greater economic freedom. By aggressively seeking earned media, providing easy-to-read, timely publications and commentary, and reaching out to the public, we seek to cultivate support for these important principles and encourage women to join us in working to return the country to limited, Constitutional government.

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