

## Options in Brief

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### Option 1: Press for Democratic Values

China and the world are at a crossroads. People in the United States must ask themselves what kind of China they hope to see emerge from this period of transition. Do we want a democratic China that respects human rights and shares many of the values that underpin our own society? Or a China that oppresses its people and sneers at democracy? The United States cannot flinch from its commitment to the values of democracy and human rights. The United States is China's largest export market. Our country holds the key to China's economic success. By applying the leverage we hold, the United States has an opportunity to promote a new generation of Chinese leaders that recognizes the necessity of creating a more open, democratic society.

### Option 2: Promote Stability and Trade

China's government is walking a tight-rope. As China's economy grows rapidly in the coming decade, new political movements will emerge that will challenge the authoritarian communist government. A breakdown of political order in China could harm the U.S. economy and would increase the threat of war in the region. Our country has a large stake in China's economic health. China is already our second-largest trading partner, and the future holds the potential for more growth. The United States must take steps to ensure that China safely reaches a future of stability and prosperity. As Chinese society evolves, its government should know that it can count on our help.

### Option 3: Contain China

China and the United States are on a collision course. China has become an economic powerhouse. In the coming years, China may overtake the United States to become the world's most powerful country. It has the largest population in the world, expanding military power, and a leadership that is committed to restoring China's greatness. China has already begun flexing its muscles in the international arena. The United States must take steps to contain China's might. Our military presence and system of alliances in East Asia must be a top foreign policy priority. Trade must be monitored to ensure that it does not contribute to the further modernization of China's military. We may wish for a world of peace and harmony, but reality tells us to keep up our guard.

### Option 4: Keep Our Distance

China is neither an irresistible opportunity nor a looming military threat to the United States. China is not the next frontier of democracy, a boundless market for U.S. exports, or a hostile superpower. Rather, China is a country with an uncertain future that is far from our shores. As such, it should not rank as a leading concern for people in the United States. We must resist the temptation to meddle in international affairs that have little impact on the lives of people in the United States. Greater involvement in China's affairs will ultimately drain our country's resources, while doing little to strengthen U.S. security.

## Option 1: Press for Democratic Values

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China and the world are at a crossroads. The changes taking place in China today will determine the nature of international relations in the twenty-first century. People in the United States must ask themselves what kind of China they hope to see emerge from this period of transition. Do we want a democratic China that respects human rights and shares many of the values that underpin our own society? Or a China that oppresses its people and sneers at democracy? The choices demand a clear understanding of what is at stake.

The United States cannot flinch from its commitment to the values of democracy and human rights. The leaders of China's democratic movement are counting on us to take a firm stand against Beijing's authoritarian dictatorship. The people of Tibet and the Uighurs of the Xinjiang region are looking to us to help stop the Chinese government's campaign to wipe out their cultures. The United States is China's largest export market. Our country holds the key to China's economic success. By applying the leverage we hold, the United States has an opportunity to promote a new generation of Chinese leaders that recognizes the necessity of creating a more open, democratic society. China has experienced remarkable economic progress since the late 1970s. The hard-line communists that held China back are in retreat. The country now stands ready to take on the challenge of political reform. Our responsibility is to help the people of China urge their government forward.

### What policies should we pursue?

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- Link China's record on human rights to our willingness to cooperate on economic and trade issues.
- Place Beijing's treatment of political prisoners and policies toward ethnic minorities and women at the top of the U.S.-China agenda.
- Ban imports of Chinese goods produced by prison labor.
- Require that U.S. companies operating in China take steps to protect the fundamental human rights of their employees.
- Insist that China honor its pledge to maintain a free press and other democratic institutions in Hong Kong.

### Lessons from U.S. foreign policy

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Our most trustworthy allies and trading partners—the countries of Western Europe, Japan, and Canada—are nations that share our commitment to democratic values and human rights. After World War II, the world's leading democracies joined together to stand up to the menace of Soviet communism. The alliance of democracies held together

for four decades largely because its members were united by the acceptance of a common political system. The United States may be able to avoid conflict with an undemocratic government in Beijing, but we cannot expect to enjoy close relations until China enters the community of democratic nations.



## Option 1 is based on the following beliefs

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- As the world's leading democracy, the United States has a moral responsibility to promote democratic values worldwide.

- Although China's military is growing, China does not pose an immediate military threat to the United States. Persuading China to accept basic democratic principles and fundamental rights will help lower

tensions between Beijing and Washington and reduce the risk of conflict.

- The Chinese economy's dependence on exports to the U.S. market gives the United States substantial leverage in influencing China's direction.

## Arguments for

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1. Promoting the values of democracy and human rights in China will strengthen the cause for reform throughout the world, especially in East Asia.

2. Supporting China's reformers now will cement our ties to a generation of politicians that eventually will rise to prominence in China's government.

3. Taking a firm stand against Beijing's abuses of human rights and oppression of minorities and political opponents will serve as a warning to dictatorial governments around the world.

## Arguments against

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1. Promoting human rights will spark an anti-American backlash in countries that do not share our values, especially in East Asia.

2. Restricting Chinese exports to the United States will lead Beijing to raise its own trade barriers against U.S. products, thus allowing our economic competitors to expand their share of the Chinese market at the expense of U.S. companies.

3. Harshly criticizing the Beijing government will cause China to retaliate by blocking U.S. initiatives in the UN and other international organizations.

4. Focusing U.S. policy on promoting democratic reform in China will distract our leaders from the urgent need to contain China's power and influence.

5. Imposing economic penalties on China will punish companies from Taiwan and Hong Kong that have invested heavily in China.

## Option 2: Promote Stability and Trade

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China's government is walking a tightrope. As China's economy grows rapidly in the coming decade, new political movements will emerge that will challenge the authoritarian communist government. The Chinese government must balance this rapid economic growth with these new political forces. If China falls into disorder, the entire world faces uncertainty and even danger. A breakdown of political order in China could harm the U.S. economy and would increase the threat of war in the region. The United States must take steps to ensure that China safely reaches a future of stability and prosperity.

Our country has a large stake in China's economic health. China is already our second-largest trading partner, and the future holds the potential for more growth. China is a crucial market for U.S. aviation, telecommunications, and other high-tech industries. U.S. consumers benefit from low-cost imports made in China. The importance of our relationship with China demands that the United States proceed with understanding and caution in dealing with Beijing. Trying to impose our values on the Chinese will only spark an anti-American backlash. Attempting to back Beijing into a corner will heighten international tensions and could trigger a crisis inside China that would have worldwide repercussions. We should take measures to strengthen the economic ties between our two countries. As Chinese society evolves, its government should know that it can count on our help.

### What policies should we pursue?

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- Develop a partnership with China in international efforts to control the spread of nuclear weapons.
- Encourage China to assume a larger role in international organizations.
- Allow China to take a gradual approach in resolving its trade differences with the United States.
- Avoid pressing China publicly for human rights and democratic change.
- Encourage Taiwan to reach an agreement with Beijing on its eventual reunification with China.

### Lessons from U.S. foreign policy

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The history of U.S.-China relations has been marred by misunderstanding and hostility. From the earliest days, the two sides have failed to see each other as equals. The Chinese viewed people in the United States as uncivilized "barbarians," while the U.S. public looked on the Chinese as backward and corrupt. During the first half of the

twentieth century, the United States missed an opportunity to offer China a way out of turmoil and instability. With the triumph of Mao Zedong in China, relations turned confrontational. Circumstances today allow for a fresh start, with the understanding that an equal partnership between the United States and China would benefit both countries.



## Option 2 is based on the following beliefs

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- A China in turmoil would spark problems worldwide and heighten international tensions.
- Using trade measures to achieve foreign policy goals in other areas,

such as human rights, creates mistrust and harms international trade.

- 1.4 billion people experiencing dramatic economic change are likely to demand political change and threaten the stability of the country.

## Arguments for

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1. Building a trusting relationship with Beijing will ensure China's cooperation in the UN and other international organizations.
2. China's leaders will reward U.S. cooperation by expanding business opportunities in China for U.S. companies.
3. Promoting China's prosperity and stability will eventually lay the foundations for democratic reform, as has been the case in Taiwan, South Korea, and other East Asian countries.

## Arguments against

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1. Turning our back on democratic reformers in China and oppressed groups will allow the government in Beijing a free hand to crush its opponents and give tyrants around the world a green light to crack down on supporters of democracy and human rights.
2. Cooperating with China will come back to haunt us when a Chinese superpower challenges U.S. interests.
3. Lending U.S. support to Beijing's policies will provoke China's leaders to act aggressively in East Asia, especially against Taiwan.
4. Ignoring China's violations of international trade standards will worsen our country's trade deficit with China, rob U.S. companies of their markets, and cost thousands of U.S. workers their jobs.
5. Giving up on democratic and economic reforms in China will undercut momentum for reform in other countries that are undergoing important changes.

## Option 3: Contain China

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China and the United States are on a collision course. China has become an economic powerhouse. In the coming years, China may overtake the United States to become the world's most powerful country. It has the largest population in the world, expanding military power, and a leadership that is committed to restoring China's greatness. China has already begun flexing its muscles in the international arena. Nearly two centuries ago, the French leader Napoleon warned that the world would tremble when China awoke. Now, the United States must prepare to deal with the implications of his prediction.

The United States must take steps to contain China's might. Let us base our policies on a clear understanding of the principles that guide China's leaders. First, we must recognize that China is not going to become a democracy or respect human rights any time soon. It is a waste of time to make this a priority for U.S. policy. Second, China has built up 150 years of resentment against the West. Now that China's leaders have an opportunity to reassert their influence in international affairs, over the long term we should expect confrontation, not cooperation, from Beijing. Given this reality, the United States should construct a barrier to Chinese expansion, especially in the Americas. For over one hundred years we have been like a big brother to the region, guiding it to democracy and looking out for mutual interests. We must maintain this commitment to the Americas as China threatens to shift the balance of power. Our military presence and system of alliances in East Asia must be a top foreign policy priority as well. Trade must be monitored to ensure that it does not contribute to the further modernization of China's military. We may wish for a world of peace and harmony, but reality tells us to keep up our guard.

### What policies should we pursue?

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- Increase the size of our navy to meet the rising military challenge coming from China.
- Strengthen our country's long-term commitment to defend Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and other U.S. allies in East Asia.
- Press for the admission of Taiwan to the UN and other international organizations.
- Prohibit imports of goods produced at factories owned by the Chinese army.
- Counter China's growing influence in Africa by strengthening alliances, increasing diplomacy, and making more investments in the region.

### Lessons from U.S. foreign policy

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U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War demonstrated that firmness and perseverance pay off in international affairs. For four decades, the United States wove together a network of alliances and maintained a strong military to contain the spread of Soviet communism, especially in Europe. By

the mid-1980s, our stand against communist aggression had convinced Soviet leaders that continued confrontation was pointless. Taking the same resolute position toward Beijing today is the best insurance against future international conflict.



## Option 3 is based on the following beliefs

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- China's leaders are determined to reassert their influence in world affairs and see the United States as an obstacle to achieving their goals.
- The establishment of a wide-ranging Chinese sphere of influence in East Asia poses a grave threat to U.S. interests.

- The expansion of Chinese influence into the Americas challenges U.S. influence in the region.
- Democratic governance and ideas about human rights are unlikely to make inroads into China for decades to come.

## Arguments for

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1. Containing China's military power will reduce the security fears of China's neighbors in East Asia, especially Japan and Russia, and prevent a regional arms race.

2. Identifying China now as a long-term threat to the United States will allow our country's military planners and foreign policy analysts to devise a well-coordinated strategy to respond to the challenge.

3. Maintaining a strong military presence in East Asia will convince China's leaders that bullying their neighbors is too risky to consider.

## Arguments against

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1. Taking a hostile stance toward China will close the door to Chinese cooperation in controlling the spread of nuclear weapons, addressing global environmental problems, and maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula.

2. Turning our back on democratic reformers in China will undermine democratic movements throughout the world, especially in East Asia.

3. Pressuring Beijing will contribute to the breakdown of order in China, triggering an outpouring of tens of millions of Chinese refugees and setting the stage for a dangerous civil war.

4. Restricting exports of technology that might be used for military purposes to China will prompt retaliation from Beijing and leave U.S. companies shut out of the fastest-growing market in the world.

5. Containing China will ultimately lead to a confrontation between the United States and East Asia.

## Option 4: Keep Our Distance

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China is neither an irresistible opportunity nor a looming military threat to the United States. We should be careful not to become too involved in the politics of a country whose future we cannot affect. China is not the next frontier of democracy, a boundless market for U.S. exports, or a hostile superpower. Rather, China is a country with an uncertain future that is far from our shores. As such, it should not rank as a leading concern for people in the United States.

The United States must not allow U.S.-China relations to distract our country from the enormous challenges we face here at home. We must resist the temptation to meddle in international affairs that have little impact on the lives of people in the United States. Greater involvement in China's affairs will ultimately drain our country's resources, while doing little to strengthen U.S. security. We should concentrate our energy on issues that matter most to people in the United States, such as increasing homeland security, reducing our debt, and improving our schools. Finally, we should take measures to protect U.S. industries from the flood of cheap imports that are produced in China's sweatshops and prisons. The last thing we need is a new set of commitments abroad.

### What policies should we pursue?

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- Reduce our military presence in the region. Withdraw U.S. troops from South Korea and Japan.
- Avoid getting entangled in Taiwan and China's disputes.
- Impose trade penalties on China in response to Chinese violations of copyright laws and other international trade standards.
- Raise import tariffs on Chinese products that threaten the economic health of U.S. industries.
- Encourage Japan to increase its foreign aid spending in East Asia and to take the lead in resolving regional crises.

### Lessons from U.S. foreign policy

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False hopes have often led the United States down the wrong path in our country's involvement abroad. U.S. relations with China in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were clouded by missionaries who imagined that the power of Christianity would transform East Asia and by merchants who saw China

as a vast market for U.S. goods. Both groups were wrong. Since World War II, naïve efforts to establish democratic institutions in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and other regions have cost thousands of U.S. lives and billions of dollars. Following the same course in China will inevitably backfire.



## Option 4 is based on the following beliefs

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- Political developments in China have little impact on the great majority of people in the United States.
- Pursuing lofty foreign policy goals, such as promoting democratic values and

human rights, undermines U.S. trade interests and efforts to protect our own economy.

- The United States lacks the power to influence a country as large and remote as China.

## Arguments for

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1. Minimizing our involvement in East Asia will allow the United States to invest more resources in tackling our problems here at home.
2. China's rapid economic growth can't last forever. We shouldn't allow the U.S. economy to be so dependent on a country with an uncertain economic future.
3. By not entangling ourselves in China's affairs, the United States will avoid becoming the target of blame for future setbacks in China.

## Arguments against

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1. China's economy is too large and too closely linked with our economy to ignore.
2. Upsetting the balance of power in East Asia will force our allies in the region, including Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, to increase military spending and even develop nuclear weapons.
3. Opening up new trade disputes with Beijing will lead to deepening mistrust in U.S.-China relations and ultimately harm U.S. business interests in China.
4. Ignoring developments in China will deprive Chinese reformers of vital support as their country undergoes a critical period of change.
5. Cutting our ties to East Asia will be viewed internationally as a major defeat for U.S. values and economic interests.

## Supplementary Resources

### Books

Cohen, Warren I. *America's Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). 344 pages.

Hua, Yu and Barr, Allan H. *China in Ten Words* (Pantheon, 2011). 240 pages.

Osnos, Evan. *Age of Ambition: Chasing Fortune, Truth, and Faith in the New China* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015). 416 pages.

Schell, Orville and Delury, John. *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-first Century* (New York, NY: Random House, 2013). 496 pages.

Shambaugh, David. *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). 432 pages.

Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001). 747 pages.

Steinfeld, Edward S. *Playing Our Game: Why China's Rise Doesn't Threaten the West* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010). 280 pages.

Vogel, Ezra F. *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). 876 pages.

### Online Resources

Asia Society—China File  
<<https://www.chinafile.com/>>

Columbia University—Asia for Educators  
<<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>>

Council on Foreign Relations—  
Timeline: U.S. Relations with China  
<<http://www.cfr.org/publication/17698/>>

PBS—China from the Inside  
<<http://www.pbs.org/kqed/chinainside/>>

The New York Times—China Page  
<<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html>>

The New York Times—Sinosphere  
<<http://www.nytimes.com/column/sinosphere>>