

Part III: The U.S.-China Agenda

With about 19 percent of the world's population, the largest economy, a nuclear arsenal, and an increasingly powerful military, China is on track to become a global superpower sometime this century. For policy makers in the United States and elsewhere, relations with Beijing are a top concern.

What remains to be seen is what kind of China will take shape from today's uncertainty, and what repercussions that will have for U.S.-China relations. A strong, confident China could act as a force for peace and stability in East Asia and serve as an expanding market for high-tech U.S. exports. Or China could increasingly challenge the United States around the world, seeing U.S. interests growing in opposition to its own national interests. In contrast, a weak, unstable China presents another set of threats. An economic crisis in China could send shockwaves throughout the global economy, especially in East Asia. Tens of millions of refugees could flee their homes in China, with many headed to the United States. A collapse of political authority in China could create a global disaster.

In the last twenty years, issues surrounding fair trade, human rights, environmental issues, nuclear weapons proliferation, and China's relationship with Hong Kong and Taiwan have created tensions in U.S.-China relations. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, relations improved somewhat. The United States welcomed China's commitment to cooperation against terrorism. Former President Jiang's immediate offer of condolence and assistance helped to smooth the waters between the two countries. Since then, the U.S.-China relationship has had its ups and downs, and many issues remain.

In this part of the reading, you will examine the issues that figure most prominently in U.S.-China relations.

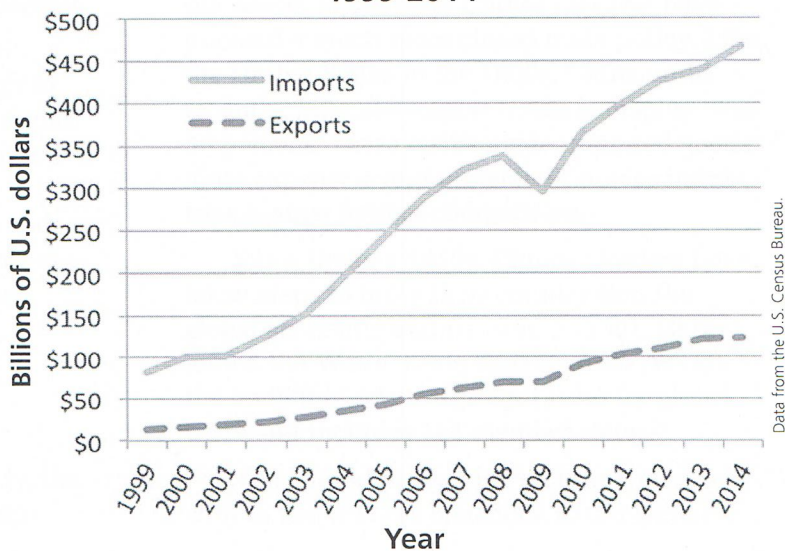
Trade Tensions and Human Rights

Economic issues currently dominate the U.S.-China agenda. Since the reforms of Deng Xiaoping, the economies of China and the United States have become more closely connected, primarily through trade. This increasingly close economic relationship has raised other questions for U.S. policy, such as whether the United States should use its trade policy to influence human rights in China.

What is China's economic relationship with the United States?

Today, the Chinese government is one of the two biggest foreign lenders to the U.S. government. (The other is Japan.) Because the U.S. government has a budget deficit—which means that it has been spending more than it earns—it must borrow money in order to fund its current level of spending. Experts estimate that China may be funding as much as 10 percent of the U.S. debt by buying U.S. treasury bills. Some worry that the United States depends too much on money from China. They argue that China could use its position to influence U.S. policy, for example by threatening to withdraw its funding if the United States

**U.S. Trade with China
1999-2014**



States, not only because it advances U.S. business interests, but also because it integrates China into the international system. For China, participation in the WTO helps to strengthen the internal economic reform process and China's position as an international economic competitor.

“[O]ur two nations are trying to do something that has never been done in history, which is to write a new answer to the question of what happens when an established power and a rising power meet.... the United States welcomes the rise of a strong, prosperous, and peaceful China....we are convinced that our two countries gain far more when we cooperate with one another than when we descend into an unhealthy competition. So we are committed to managing our differences effectively and expanding our cooperation wherever and whenever possible.”

—U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton
September 5, 2012

A recent trade agreement highlights the tension between economic cooperation and competition for the United States and China. The United States is negotiating a major trade agreement—the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)—with eleven Pacific Rim countries, including Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam. (Trade agreements are designed to increase trade between specific countries.) If passed, the TPP will be the largest regional trade agreement in history. China is not part of the TPP. President Obama has argued that the TPP will help the United States counter Chinese influence in the global economy.

“We have to make sure America writes the rules of the global economy. And we should do it today, while our economy is in the position of global strength. Because if we don't write the rules for trade around the

world—guess what—China will. And they'll write those rules in a way that gives Chinese workers and Chinese businesses the upper hand, and locks American-made goods out.... We're not going to be able to isolate ourselves from world markets. We got to be in there and compete.... When the rules are fair, we win every time. So this is why I'm such a strong supporter of new trade agreements.”

—President Barack Obama, May 8, 2015

What trade conflicts have strained U.S. relations with China?

The close trade relationship between the United States and China has had its fair share of problems. For instance, the United States has put pressure on China to curb the pirating, or illegal copying, of music, film, and software products created by U.S. businesses. The U.S. government argues that pirating violates intellectual property laws that protect the rights that these businesses have over their creations.

In addition, U.S. officials have complained that Chinese clothing manufacturers frequently sell their goods below cost on the international market. The purpose of this practice—known as dumping—is to drive their international competitors out of business. The United States also accuses China of providing subsidies to some Chinese manufacturers that violate WTO regulations. These subsidies artificially lower the prices of Chinese-made



Michael Mandberg (CC BY-SA 3.0).

goods, making them more attractive to buyers. (China has made similar complaints about U.S. government subsidies.)

Health and safety concerns have also strained relations. In 2007, a series of recalls of toys, pet food, and medicines manufactured in China frightened parents and pet owners in the United States. The recalls called into question both safety in Chinese manufacturing and oversight in the U.S. companies that contracted with the Chinese factories. The volume of exports from China is so high and the variety of products so great that the recalls did not have an effect on the value of Chinese exports, even in the toy and food categories. Clearly, despite safety concerns, people in the United States rely heavily on products made in China.

For its part, China has voiced frustration with some U.S. policies. Many in China and around the world have expressed concern about what they believe is the United States' inconsistent adherence to WTO regulations on tariffs and subsidies. In 2002, China and several other countries won a dispute in the WTO against the United States for its subsidies in steel production.

How have human rights affected U.S.-China trade relations?

China's human rights record has been a central feature of the U.S.-China trade picture since 1989. After the government crackdown against protesters in Tiananmen Square, U.S. President Bush (1989-1993) stopped sales of military equipment and nuclear technology to China, as well as foreign aid.

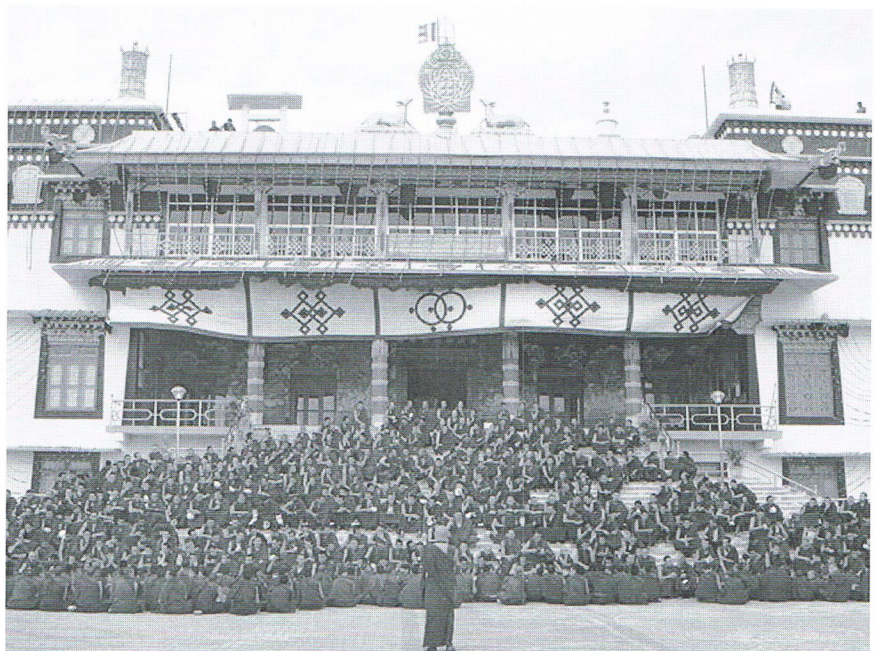
Anger in Congress toward the Chinese leadership was much stronger than the president's. Until 2000, Congress annually reviewed China's most-fa-

vored-nation status (which allows countries to export goods to the United States at the lowest tariff rates) as a means of pressuring China's leaders to change their policies at home.

In September 2000, the U.S. Congress approved permanent normal trading status for China, a policy that helped China join the WTO. Some human rights organizations, labor activists, and politicians made the case that by enabling China to join the WTO, the United States lost an opportunity to steer China toward greater openness and freedom. Others contend that WTO regulations and free-market forces will drive the country towards democracy.

How has the relationship between Tibet and China affected U.S.-Chinese relations?

Of particular concern to many in the United States is China's policy toward the region of Tibet. The Tibetans are a people best known for their devotion to Buddhism and to their land, which lies to the north of the Himalayan Mountains in what is today southwestern China. The Tibetans enjoyed autonomy for centuries, but in 1950 Chinese troops overran their homeland. Communist officials ruthlessly attempted to erase Tibet's distinctive



Buddhist monks at the Sera Monastery in Tibet, 2006. Tibetan monks have participated in many protests against the Chinese government.

culture during China's Cultural Revolution. After a rebellion in 1959, hundreds of thousands of Tibetans were killed or imprisoned. Thousands of monasteries, temples, and other Tibetan architecture were also destroyed. Since the 1980s, Beijing's policies have been aimed at promoting the migration of thousands of ethnic Chinese to Tibet. As a result, Tibetans are now a minority in the region.

Since 2001, the Chinese government has centered its policy in Tibet on rapid economic development and strict control of dissidents. The Chinese government has launched a number of "Strike Hard" campaigns that it claims are aimed at reducing crime in the region. Thousands of Tibetans have been arrested and hundreds have been killed for engaging in "separatist" activities. When the Dalai Lama, whom many Tibetans recognize as their leader, visited President Obama in the White House in 2010, the Chinese government condemned the meeting. It believes the Dalai Lama seeks independence for Tibet from China. The Dalai Lama claims to seek only more autonomy from the central government. Since 2009, at least 140 Tibetans have set themselves on fire in protest of China's religious, cultural, and political repression in Tibet.

What other issues top the human rights agenda?

In addition to the situation in Tibet, the United States opposes China's treatment of political prisoners and religious and ethnic minorities. The government's use of prison labor, harassment of journalists, censorship of internet sites and radio and television stations, and the emigration restrictions that prevent leading Chinese political dissidents from leaving the country also find spots on the U.S. list of concerns.

International human rights groups contend that some poorly-equipped psychiatric hospitals are used to confine and silence political and religious dissidents. For example, members of the Falun Gong spiritual movement, a banned religious organization, claim that thousands of their members have been committed to hospitals, where many have been subject to

torture or have been administered unnecessary medication.

China's use of the death penalty has also drawn international criticism. Although the Chinese government keeps data on death sentences and executions a secret, Amnesty International estimates that China executes thousands of people each year—more than the rest of the world combined.

Many human rights groups criticize China for limiting the number of children that its citizens may choose to have. From 1980 to 2015, China instituted a "one-child" policy that placed restrictions on many Chinese citizens in an effort to slow the country's population growth. For example, many couples living in cities were only permitted one child and risked facing expensive fines or being fired from their job for having additional children. In some cases, government officials have forced unmarried women, or women who are pregnant with their second child, to have an abortion or undergo sterilization—making it impossible for them to have more children. (These measures are officially illegal in China.) Second children have often faced significant discrimination and legal barriers throughout their lives. For example, it can be difficult for them to enroll in school, apply for jobs, or obtain a marriage certificate.

In October 2015, China announced that married couples will be allowed to have two children. Many believe that this change is due to concerns that China's workforce is aging and that there will not be enough young people to support the country's economy in the future. Critics of the policy maintain that any government interference in individuals' decisions about having children is a violation of their human rights, regardless of whether the limit is set at one or two children.

Many international human rights organizations report that the Chinese government's control over citizens' lives makes China one of the world's worst human rights offenders. The U.S. State Department's 2014 report on human rights characterized China's human rights record as extremely poor. The Chinese govern-

ment has responded to criticism by issuing its own critical reports on the human rights situation in the United States. Its 2014 report cites police violence, racial discrimination, and the use of torture by Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officials as examples of U.S. human rights abuses. The Chinese government has also pointed to some positive steps it has taken in the past. For example, in 2004, the Chinese government amended the Chinese constitution to include a provision on human rights.

It is clear that while human rights has become a central theme in political conversations in both countries, China and the United States emphasize different aspects of human rights. In China, physical health and material well-being are generally highlighted, while in the United States, political participation receives the most attention.

“Democracy and human rights are the common pursuit of mankind. At the same time, we must recognize that countries have different historical processes and realities, and we need to respect people of all countries in the right to choose their own development path independently.”

—President Xi, September 25, 2015

“[P]reventing journalists, lawyers, NGOs and civil society groups from operating freely, or closing churches or denying ethnic minorities equal treatment, are all problematic in our view, and actually prevent China and its people from realizing its full potential.”

—President Obama, September 25, 2015

Security Priorities

Although trade and human rights issues have dominated the headlines of U.S.-China relations, U.S. policy makers also worry about China's military. China's defense budget has increased steadily in recent years, growing at about the same rate as the overall economy. In

2014, China's military budget was estimated to be \$216 billion. (U.S. military spending in 2014 was about \$610 billion.)

Why is China a growing military concern for the United States?

Chinese military publications state that China believes the United States is its greatest security threat, partly because of U.S. military power and partly because of U.S. support for Taiwan.

“The United States is...an arrogant country with strong ambitions for hegemonism [dominance].”

—Major General Wang Baocun, People's Liberation Army, 2003

Chinese leaders are committed to a long-term program of military modernization. China is a major customer of high-tech Russian military equipment. Beijing has been especially eager to acquire Russian warplanes, submarines, and long-range missile technology. While U.S. capabilities—particularly in advanced nuclear weapons—remain far superior, China could soon challenge the balance of military power in East Asia.

Today, China has the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world. (China has approximately 250 nuclear weapons—compared to about 7,500 in Russia, 7,100 in the United States, and 300 in France.) China has been working to upgrade its arsenal in recent years. The Chinese government has stated that it has nuclear weapons solely for defensive purposes, in order to deter a possible nuclear attack, and has said it will never be the first to use these weapons in a conflict. Nevertheless, the fact that China is continuing to build new weapons is a point of concern for U.S. officials.

The United States is also concerned about China's role in the international arms market. Chinese weapons and military equipment exports are well-known worldwide. According to the CIA, China is a significant source for developing countries seeking to build up arsenals and add to their capabilities, for example with

trucks or communications equipment. CIA evidence also indicates that China has played a key role in helping Pakistan produce missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads that have a range of 185 miles.

What recent security tensions have arisen between China and the United States?

As the world has become more closely connected through advances in communication, the U.S. government has raised concerns about the increase in cyberattacks, many originating in China. Cyberattacks are attacks against computer systems or networks. In recent years, companies in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere have complained that computer hackers have broken through cybersecurity protections and stolen program codes and secret information. In 2010, Google announced that it had been the victim of such an attack. Hackers not only took program codes, but also broke into the email accounts of Chinese human rights activists. U.S. officials have claimed that the Chinese hackers involved in the Google attack were probably sponsored by the government. The Chinese government has denied any involvement.

In 2015, the United States discovered that the personal records of nearly twenty-two million people had been hacked at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Hackers stole the fingerprints of more than five million federal employees. U.S. investigators suspect that the Chinese government may have been behind the attack. China has since acknowledged that the security breach was carried out by Chinese hackers, but denies that the Chinese government supported the attack.

These cyberattacks raise new issues around future methods of warfare, as well as concerns about how to protect economic and business interests. In September 2015, President Obama and President Xi reached an agreement on cybersecurity. China and the United States pledged that they would not support or carry out cyberattacks on businesses in the other country. They also vowed to cooperate to investigate cyberattacks. This is

the first cybersecurity agreement between the two countries, and many U.S. companies and policy makers are skeptical that China will follow through on the deal.

Another challenge for the two countries has been coordinating diplomatic action against North Korea. In the fall of 2002, North Korea admitted that it had been continuing work on a nuclear weapons program for years, violating a 1994 agreement to not develop the weapons. Since 2003, six countries—the United States, Russia, China, South Korea, North Korea, and Japan—have held a series of meetings to negotiate an end to North Korea’s nuclear program. China has played a pivotal role in ushering North Korea to these “six-party talks” and acting as a mediator between North Korea and the United States. Many experts believe that China’s leverage over North Korea and its influence as a mediator has boosted China’s power and standing in the international community. Despite international pressure, North Korea has continued its nuclear weapons program and tested three nuclear devices.

China’s Role in its Region

Before the arrival of Western powers in China, the sphere of influence of the Chinese empire included Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), and Nepal. These states were considered “tributaries” of China, and honored the emperor by regularly sending officials bearing lavish gifts to the Chinese capital.

Under Mao Zedong, China presented itself as a model for poor, developing countries. Some preferred to think of China as a country with a tradition of past greatness that would eventually return to its former status. Chinese leaders in recent years have indeed begun to reassert their country’s voice in international relations, primarily in East Asia.

How is China extending its regional influence?

China today is seeking to extend its influence over many of the areas that historically have fallen under its control. China has been

especially assertive in staking its claims to two chains of tiny islands in the South China Sea. The islands, known as the Spratlys and the Paracels, reportedly lie atop rich oil deposits and are also valuable for commercial fishing. Five of China's neighbors—Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei—have made their own claims on the islands, but China has shown little willingness to negotiate a settlement. These countries have not yet resolved this dispute. In 2014, China drew international attention when it began building several artificial islands in disputed areas in the South China Sea. China has been building the islands by dumping sediment onto reefs and installing airstrips and other facilities on them. President Obama and other world leaders have called upon China to stop its construction, which it has not done.

In addition, Beijing is strengthening its navy and increasing its presence in the South China Sea. The growth of China's naval forces has some U.S. officials worried. Since World War II, the United States has been the leading naval power in East Asia. In 2012, U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced that, by 2020, about 60 percent of the U.S. naval fleet will be located in the Asia-Pacific region. (At the time of the announcement, the fleet was split evenly between the Atlantic and Pacific.)

How does Hong Kong figure on the U.S.-China agenda?

In 1997, Great Britain returned the island of Hong Kong to China after controlling the territory for 150 years. Reunification has been complicated. The former colony of more than seven million people is an international financial and manufacturing center. Before reunification, it was the largest single foreign investor in China and the gateway for much of

China's international trade. Politically, Hong Kong's residents have shown their determination to defend the democratic freedoms they won in the last years of British rule.

China's leaders are eager to take advantage of Hong Kong's economic power and yet are worried about the former colony. Beijing officials have promised to preserve Hong Kong's unique economic and political system through a constitutional policy of "one country, two systems." This allows Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy, with its own constitution and legal system that include protection of rights—such as the right to vote, freedom of assembly, and free speech. At the same time, they have crafted election laws to ensure that Hong Kong's legislature will support Beijing.

U.S. officials have voiced concern that China may sometimes suppress Hong Kong's open society. From Beijing's perspective, the fear seems to be that Hong Kong's vibrant brand of capitalism and democracy may fuel momentum for political change in China. Indeed, most of the Chinese troops stationed in the former colony have been positioned to block mainland Chinese from flooding into Hong Kong.



A perspective from Hong Kong on the threat of Chinese press censorship.

The Umbrella Movement

China promised that Hong Kong would have direct democratic elections for Hong Kong's leader by 2017, but in 2014 the Chinese government announced that a nominating committee would decide upon two or three candidates for citizens to vote on. Some people in Hong Kong argue that this allows the Chinese government—not citizens—the power to decide Hong Kong's political leadership.

Following the announcement, pro-democracy demonstrations swept Hong Kong. Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets, voicing their frustrations that the Chinese government was not fulfilling its promise of democratic change and more open elections. They also called for Hong Kong's leader, Leung Chun-ying, to step down.

Student groups played a key role in organizing the gatherings. Protesters camped in the streets for months, despite facing tear gas, pepper spray, and arrests by police. Protesters used umbrellas—not merely for protection from the rain, but for protection from tear gas—gaining recognition as the “Umbrella Movement.”

Although students and high-level officials met in attempts to reach an agreement, the protests were ultimately unsuccessful in their demands of the government. Most Chinese people did not support the idea of democratic reform, and some citizens of Hong Kong resisted groups calling for direct elections. Pro-Beijing groups and business leaders have criticized pro-democracy activists for civil disobedience and disruption, and are concerned about the country's economic stability.



Pasu Au Yeung. (CC BY-SA 2.0).

Umbrella Movement protesters in Hong Kong used technology and social media to coordinate, document, and gain international support for their cause. Above, protesters project messages of support from around the world.

Why is Taiwan a special issue?

The status of Taiwan represents a more long-term problem in East Asian affairs. Since losing its seat in the United Nations to China in 1971, Taiwan has existed in a state of international limbo of sorts. Economically, it is a powerhouse. Politically, Taiwan's status is complicated.

After 1971, Taiwan sought to strengthen its economic and cultural ties worldwide. Taiwan's economy has continued to boom, even though it has been forced out of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other international organizations. The country is one of the top exporters in the world, and its 23.4 million

people enjoy a per capita income more than three-and-a-half times higher than that of the citizens of China.

Questions about the political status and future of Taiwan complicate its relations with China. The two countries possess distinct governments, but are officially one state. This arrangement has been a source of tension and has raised questions about the political future of Taiwan. Will Taiwan someday be an independent state, or will China and Taiwan be reunified?

China firmly holds to its position that there is “one China” and sees reunification as the eventual goal. Taiwan’s position has evolved over the years. In the mid-1990s, then-President of Taiwan Lee Teng-hui argued that Taiwan and China were two separate states and that Taiwan should be recognized as an independent country “just like Britain or France.”

Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou (2008-2016) called for a “diplomatic truce” with China. He stated that there would be no efforts towards reunification nor towards independence, and that eventually it is the Taiwanese people who must decide what they want. The Taiwanese public appears ambivalent in its position towards China; many agree with the goal of independence, but some fear that an overly provocative stance may prompt a response from China that could threaten their way of life.

After President Ma Ying-jeou took office, tensions eased between Taiwan and China. The president increased interaction between Taiwan and China, for example by starting direct flights and signing new trade agreements. On November 7, 2015, Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou met with Chinese President Xi Jinping. It was the first meeting of its kind in sixty-six years.

On January 16, 2016, Tsai Ing-wen was elected president of Taiwan. She is a member of the Democratic Progressive Party, which has traditionally supported Taiwan’s independence.

Many in China see the possibility of Taiwanese independence as a challenge to China’s sovereignty and a threat to the state as a whole. These concerns are based on a fear of China weakening: independence efforts in Taiwan and Tibet call to mind the dangers of disintegration that China faced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Likewise, many in China are apprehensive of outside involvement in these domestic concerns, particularly by the United States.

How does the United States figure into the Taiwan issue?

Taiwan has long been a point of tension between China and the United States. After the Korean War, the United States was Taiwan’s key ally, providing billions of dollars in military aid to Chiang Kai-shek’s government in Taipei, Taiwan’s capital. President Nixon’s visit to China in 1972 changed U.S. policy toward Taiwan. In 1978, the United States broke relations with Taiwan and recognized China a few months later. Most other countries have adopted the same position. Nevertheless, concerns about the security of Taiwan led Congress in 1979 to pass the Taiwan Relations Act. The act guaranteed continued trade and cultural relations with the island and committed the United States to helping protect Taiwan’s security.

Taiwan’s security remains an important issue for the United States. In addition to the historical relationship between the two countries, the United States and Taiwan have strong trade ties. The United States is also concerned with maintaining peace and stability in Asia. Ultimately, the United States wants a peaceful resolution of tensions across the Taiwan Strait and is committed to the eventual reunification of China and Taiwan.

Chinese leaders have warned that they will use force to block any drive by Taiwan for full independence from the mainland. China’s naval expansion and military maneuvers near Taiwan are viewed as part of a larger strategy to intimidate the Taiwanese government. For its part, Taiwan has a strong defense force



Al Jazeera English.

A Taiwanese F-16 fighter jet takes off from its base in 2011. The United States builds and sells Taiwan these military jets. U.S. arms sales to Taiwan are a major source of tension with China.

equipped with sophisticated weapons, many of them from the United States. U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, which have totalled billions of dollars over the past decade, have been a constant irritant in U.S.-China relations. In recent years, the United States has increased its shipments of arms to Taiwan (and included offensive weapons as well). Nevertheless, while some consider the U.S. relationship with China and Taiwan to be one of the most serious security problem for the United States, most experts believe that this threat has become more manageable in recent years.

China's Role in the World

Since the 1980s, China has steadily increased its role in the world. China has not only bulked up its military but has also strengthened its economic ties around the world. Other countries increasingly see China as a counterweight to Western—especially U.S.—trade, aid, and influence. Two regions in which China has expanded its role are Latin America and Africa.

How has China increased its trade and foreign aid in Latin America and Africa?

Latin America—In recent years, China has increased trade with countries in Latin America, especially Brazil. For example, from 2000 to 2012, Chinese agricultural trade with Latin America grew from \$2 billion to more than \$26 billion and is projected to exceed \$40 billion by 2017.

In addition to trading more with the region, the Chinese government and Chinese companies have committed to investing in infrastructure projects. Some of these projects would facilitate trade by making it easier to transport goods throughout the region and on to China. Currently, Chinese companies move goods primarily through Central America's Panama Canal, which connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

A Chinese company plans to build a transcontinental railroad in South America that would connect the continent's Atlantic and Pacific coasts, starting and ending in port cities of Peru in the west and Brazil in the east. The Peruvian and Brazilian governments both

enthusiastically support the proposal. This would be the first railroad across South America, though it would hardly be the first time the Chinese played a crucial part in building a railroad of this magnitude. (As you read in Part I, the construction of the U.S. Transcontinental Railroad in the late 1800s depended largely on the work of Chinese laborers.)

In 2012, China offered to support the construction of another route to connect the Atlantic and Pacific—a canal through Nicaragua. The idea of such a canal has been considered since the 1500s, when the Spanish ruled the area as a colony. This waterway would compete with the Panama Canal, which was commissioned by the United States and also constructed in part by Chinese coolies and black laborers in the late 1800s.

These proposed projects are not without criticism. Many people have raised concerns about effects on the environment and local communities. For instance, the new railroad would pass through the Amazon rainforest, an incredibly diverse ecosystem that has already suffered from massive clearing of its forests. Some Chinese citizens have also spoken out about projects abroad, noting that the same companies planning to build in Latin America follow strict international environmental standards for foreign projects, while disregarding them for projects in China.

Africa—The Chinese government and Chinese businesses have invested billions of dollars in infrastructure projects in dozens of African countries as well, building highways and railway lines and expanding ports in order to increase access to the continent's natural resources. In 2012, China completed construction of a new headquarters for the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Flags reading, "Peace, Development, and Cooperation" decorate this \$200 million gift. China has developed strong trade ties with African countries, surpassing the United States to become Africa's largest trading partner.

A 2015 Pew Global Attitudes survey showed that of those who responded, Africans had a much more positive view of China (70 percent positive) than people in other regions

(57 percent in Latin America and in Asia, and 41 percent in Europe).

“Over the past decades, China-Africa cooperation has gone from strength to strength. The future prospects of our partnership are even brighter.”

—Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi, 2012

Some in Africa and abroad express concern that China is exploiting African resources and workers. For example, human rights organizations have criticized Chinese copper mining companies in Zambia for violating both national and international labor laws. Critics point to poor health and safety conditions. For example, workers are required to work shifts as long as eighteen hours and are exposed to dangerous chemicals without proper safety equipment.

Others see China's role in Africa as a threat to Western economic interests in the region. For some, including the United States, a competing Chinese influence has potential political consequences, not just economic. Western countries prefer to support projects in areas with or working towards democratic government. Chinese loans and trade agreements often stay out of local politics, focusing on making profits and providing for the growing Chinese population.

“[Africa needs] a model of sustainable partnership that adds value, rather than extracts it.... America will stand up for democracy and universal human rights even when it might be easier to look the other way and keep the resources flowing.”

—Secretary of State Hillary Clinton,
Dakar, Senegal, August 1, 2012

How has China sought to create new global financial organizations?

China prefers to fund these foreign investments directly and operate through its own banks. In 2013, China—along with Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa—proposed a new organization for this purpose: the New

Development Bank (NDB). Headquartered in Shanghai, the NDB differs from other global financial organizations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). (The World Bank and the IMF work to address issues of international economic development and global finance.) One major difference between the NDB and the other organizations is the voting power of participating countries. In the World Bank, countries that contribute more money gain more votes. In contrast, the NDB affords each country one vote, regardless of wealth, and gives no government the right to veto propositions. Many believe this makes the NDB a fairer organization, in which all countries have a more equal say.

China held a similar goal when proposing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2013. Many see the AIIB as an attempt to counterbalance U.S. influence over the World Bank and the IMF. Although the United States discouraged its allies from joining, fifty-seven countries—including major world powers such as Germany, France, and Great Britain—have become prospective members of the AIIB.

What role has China played in addressing international conflicts?

China's seat on the UN Security Council

gives Beijing veto power over critical decisions of the UN. The UN's expanded involvement in international peacekeeping since the 1990s makes China's position on the Security Council all the more important.

China is a steadfast supporter of the concept of sovereignty, which is the right of a country to govern its own affairs. It is particularly wary of interfering in what it views as internal affairs of other countries, partly because it does not want outsiders like the United States interfering in China's internal issues. China tends to oppose sanctions—which punish countries economically—while the United States and other Security Council members have supported them. Instead, China favors other diplomatic means of pressuring countries to change their policies, such as economic aid and development support.

In general, China has gone along with the other members of the UN Security Council. It has used its veto power significantly fewer times than any other permanent Security Council member. For example, China did not object when the United States formed an international coalition against Iraq's Saddam Hussein before the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the UN's most significant military operation since the Korean War. But China has not been afraid to oppose the United States. China did not



Matt Paish (CC BY 2.0).

The financial district of Shanghai.

authorize the use of force against Iraq in 2003. The Chinese government later described this U.S.-led invasion as a violation of international law.

China's position on the civil war in Syria demonstrates its unease with strict international measures. In 2011, opposition forces in Syria began fighting to end the dictatorship of President Bashar al-Assad. The conflict has claimed the lives of over 250,000 Syrians and caused more than half of all Syrians to flee their homes. China has historically had friendly relations with Syria—China is one of Syria's top trading partners. China, alongside Russia, has vetoed several UN resolutions that would have condemned Syria's government for its role in the conflict and imposed sanctions.

In recent years, China has begun to match its economic expansion with more active participation in the international community. For example, China did not contribute troops to any UN peacekeeping missions until 2004, but since then has been a major UN troop contributor. In 2009, China sent naval ships to join a multinational effort against piracy in the Gulf of Aden, near Somalia. The Gulf of Aden



This 2008 photograph shows the Chinese fishing vessel FV Tian Yu 8 after it had been taken over by pirates off the coast of Somalia.

DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jason R. Zalasky, U.S. Navy

is an important area for international shipping. China's participation in this campaign was significant because it was the first time in six hundred years that the Chinese navy had been deployed on a combat mission outside of China's territorial waters.

Chinese officials stressed that this did not signal a shift in its non-interventionist foreign policy. But as China's economic participation expands across the world, it seems to be more willing to cooperate in global security operations in order to protect its interests. In the coming years, U.S. policy makers will have to carefully consider how they will respond to the new role that China has taken in the world.

In the coming days, you will have an opportunity to consider four options for U.S. policy towards China. Each of the options in the next section is based on a distinct set of values and beliefs. Each takes a different perspective on the U.S. role in the world and its stake in China. You should think of the options as a way to help you better understand the contrasting strategies that people in the United States may use to craft future policy.

In the end, you will be asked to create an option that reflects your own beliefs and opinions about where U.S. policy should be heading. You may borrow heavily from one option, combine ideas from two or three options, or take a new approach altogether. You will need to weigh the risks and trade-offs of whatever you decide.