

**Connecticut Debate Association**  
**State Finals**  
**Stamford High School**  
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**This House supports a policy of containment with respect to China.**

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**“containment: the policy, process or result of preventing the expansion of a hostile power or ideology”**

**Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition**

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**Containment Can Work Against China, Too**

The Wall Street Journal, By Hal Brands, Dec. 3, 2021

There are important differences between Xi Jinping’s China and the Soviet Union, but the Cold War still offers clear strategic guidance for the U.S.

In the defining geopolitical contest of this century, the U.S. is a superpower without a plan. The last two presidents have declared that our country is engaged in a historic competition with China—one that will shape the world order and the fate of human freedom. But neither Donald Trump nor Joe Biden has publicly explained what a more “competitive” policy aims to achieve, nor has either offered more than the barest outlines of a strategy for success. We appear to be embarking on a long, dangerous journey without knowing where we are trying to go or how we will get there.

The challenge is, admittedly, complex because China is so deeply integrated into the very system that its hegemonic ambitions threaten. But Washington has a precedent to draw on, if only it could set aside the endless—and superficial—debate over whether the U.S.-China relationship is a “new Cold War” and instead engage more deeply with the strategic insights developed in the original Cold War.

In the decades after World War II, the U.S. waged and won a multigenerational struggle against an authoritarian rival. It devised, at the outset, an elegant strategy—containment—that guided the actions of successive presidents of both parties. Today’s rivalry with Beijing isn’t an exact replica of the Cold War, of course. China is far more economically dynamic and technologically sophisticated than the Soviet Union was. Xi Jinping isn’t Stalin or Mao, although he admires the former and increasingly emulates the latter. But the best strategies have qualities that transcend particular eras and places. To succeed against a rising China, the U.S. must relearn the lessons of containment.

Containment emerged as a response to a dilemma that today’s policy makers would recognize: A powerful tyranny that the U.S. had tried to mold into a “responsible stakeholder” threatened to destroy the system instead. During World War II, Franklin Roosevelt allied with Stalin’s Soviet Union and sought to make it a partner in building a stable peace. By 1946-47, however, fears of a third global war were widespread, as U.S.-Soviet tensions spiked and Moscow’s power loomed menacingly over a shattered world.

The basic problem, as State Department official George Kennan explained in a pseudonymous 1947 essay in Foreign Affairs, was that a witch’s brew of traditional Russian insecurity, communist ideology and Stalinist paranoia made the Kremlin relentlessly hostile to the capitalist world. But if the Soviets weren’t reconcilable, Kennan argued, they were deterrable. Stalin understood that the U.S.S.R. was still weaker than the U.S., and his confidence in the eventual victory of communism meant that he would back down rather than fight prematurely.

America’s best strategy, then, was one of “firm containment”: checking Soviet power through “the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points.” If Washington denied Moscow the benefits of expansion, Kennan argued, the inner weaknesses of the communist system—the irrational command economy, the vicious absurdities of its totalitarian politics—would eventually take their toll. The result would be the “breakup or gradual mellowing of Soviet power.” A patient strategy, he insisted, would produce transformative results.

Kennan initially offered few details about how, where and with what tools Soviet power should be contained. In the late 1940s, the Truman administration would begin devising specific policies—aid to Greece and Turkey, the Marshall Plan, the creation of NATO—that made containment a reality. Later presidents, from Eisenhower to Reagan, put their own twists on the idea, taking widely varying approaches to issues such as negotiations, nuclear strategy and countermeasures against communist inroads in the developing world. Throughout the Cold War, the overarching goal of American strategy remained fixed, but the methods were subject to endless revision and debate.

In fact, containment was a more controversial—and taxing—doctrine than we often remember. The strategy led Washington to fight ghastly “limited” conflicts in Korea and Vietnam. The U.S. had to prepare continually for an apocalyptic global nuclear war just to preserve an unsatisfying peace. Containment entailed profound moral compromises, such as supporting brutal Third World dictators; it involved open-ended commitments and expenses beyond anything America had borne before.

The era’s doves deplored the perpetual peril that containment promised, while hawks abhorred the semi-permanent stalemate that it implied. At certain points, such as during the 1960s, a world-wide quest to curb communist gains led the U.S. into

disastrous overreach. At others, namely the late 1970s, the combination of surging Soviet power and crippling Western self-doubt seemed to jeopardize the entire project.

Yet in the end, containment paid almost exactly the returns that George Kennan had promised. Imperfect as it was, the West's long effort to resist Soviet aggrandizement eventually forced a new generation of Kremlin leaders to radically reduce their ambitions. Accumulating internal problems triggered desperate reforms that unintentionally brought the system crashing down. Denied easy expansion, Soviet power mellowed and crumbled, leading to the emergence of a world more secure, prosperous and democratic than ever before.

Containment yielded an epochal strategic victory, without the catastrophic war that such triumphs had typically required. It managed this feat because it was well-suited to long-term rivalry—the very quality that makes it relevant to today's U.S.-China contest.

Containment endured, through four decades and nine presidencies, because it blended brutal clarity with great flexibility. Kennan pulled no punches regarding the severity of the Soviet threat and the persistence needed to defeat it. He specified a bold, if distant, objective—the breakup or mellowing of Soviet power—and a straightforward approach to achieving it. Yet because containment, as Kennan expressed it, was an indication of direction rather than a detailed road map, it left room for maneuver along the way.

American presidents periodically expanded or contracted the country's defense perimeter; they dialed up or down the intensity of the contest. During the 1970s, for instance, a superpower exhausted from Vietnam sought a breather through diplomatic detente. A decade later, a re-energized Reagan administration sought victory by pressuring the Kremlin on all fronts.

Kennan later regretted the capaciousness of containment and felt that the doctrine had evolved in ways that he hadn't intended. But containment's conceptual simplicity ensured its endurance through a long conflict, even while its malleability kept it responsive to the Cold War's twists and turns.

Today, the U.S. needs the clarity that makes such flexibility possible. "Competition" is a geopolitical reality, not a strategic objective. The objective should be stopping China from overturning the balance of power and building a future in which authoritarianism is dominant. Put another way, the U.S. must contain China's ability to reshape the international order produced by the U.S. victory in the Cold War. The fact that this rival, like the Soviet Union before it, is driven by a potent combination of grievance and ambition—angry nationalism, intense autocratic insecurity, the grandiose designs of an emperor-for-life—suggests that its challenge to the U.S. will persist until Chinese power fades or the nature of the regime changes. Such an objective leaves scope for choice on how best to defend the Western Pacific, to vie for influence in developing countries and to blend competition and diplomacy with Beijing. It doesn't preclude the U.S. from running hard at certain stages of the rivalry and slowing down at others. As the history of containment shows, strategic clarity should function not as a straitjacket but as a compass.

Containment also succeeded because it deployed U.S. strengths to reveal the enemy's weaknesses and to discredit the enemy's strategy. Kennan understood that Stalin needed external victories to mask internal failures. Soviet officials believed that they could attain those victories because the capitalist world, having twice torn itself apart, couldn't hold together for long.

By denying Moscow the geopolitical triumphs it needed, containment brought the infirmities of the Soviet system into the open. At the same time, the U.S. continually cultivated the health and solidarity of non-communist countries, to show that history wasn't on the Kremlin's side, after all.

Today's China isn't the Soviet Union, but the country's formidable strengths conceal grave weaknesses. Slowing growth, political sclerosis and looming demographic catastrophe threaten the regime. Through his belligerence, Mr. Xi has made rivals of countries near and far. His strategy, such as it is, appears to involve seeking near-term wins—subduing Taiwan and weakening U.S. alliances in the Pacific, establishing a technological sphere of influence encompassing countries around the world—to offset, and perhaps even reverse, the accumulating effects of longer-term problems.

If Washington can block those advances, then Mr. Xi's narrative of inevitable Chinese ascent will start to look hollow. And his successors will someday have to turn inward and address, through domestic reform and diplomatic moderation, the country's growing isolation and the clutch of economic, political and social tensions that Mr. Xi's policies are accentuating.

Answering China will simultaneously require American leaders to emulate another virtue of containment—pursuing unilateral advantage through multilateral means. Communism, Kennan wrote, was a parasite "which feeds only on diseased tissue." In the late 1940s, the Soviet threat was so severe because famine, radicalism and instability were rampant. In response, the U.S. engaged in one of history's most audacious undertakings: Working with dozens of countries to create a vibrant free world.

Washington rebuilt shattered societies and anchored a flourishing Western economy. It promoted, if not always consistently, democracy as a source of political stability and common moral purpose. The U.S. forged alliances that protected the non-communist world from its enemies and from its own historic divisions. It outplayed the Soviet Union by remaking the globe around it—by creating a Western community whose cohesion Moscow couldn't break and whose power it couldn't equal.

The best check on autocratic aggression remains the strength and unity of the democracies. Knowing this, Mr. Xi longs to separate Washington from its friends. Any narrowly nationalistic American approach to competition will thus fail. The U.S. will need instead deeper cooperation with like-minded countries—on trade, technological innovation and defense—to build collective resilience against Chinese aggression and to generate the collective pressure that can throw Beijing on its heels for a change.

Indeed, containment reflected another fundamental truth of long-term rivalry: It is hard to win while remaining wholly on the

defensive. The strategy was primarily defensive, and this contrast with the Kremlin's more expansive aims is one of the reasons that so many countries accommodated Washington's power and resisted Moscow's. But containment bolstered a strong defense with a selective offense, meant to keep a dangerous adversary off-balance and under strain. To this end, U.S. information warfare highlighted the crimes and failures of East-bloc regimes. Diplomatic wedge strategies helped to split Moscow from Yugoslavia's Tito and China's Mao. The Reagan administration used anticommunist insurgents to roll back an overextended Soviet empire.

The U.S. never seriously sought to overthrow the Soviet regime. That is a line it shouldn't cross with China, either. But Washington does need ways of taking the fight to an enemy that is certainly taking the fight to it.

The U.S. can work with allies to slow Chinese innovation through technological denial policies that limit its access to cutting-edge semiconductors, vast troves of American data and other crucial goods. It can complicate China's overseas expansion by highlighting the corruption, authoritarianism and local resentment that its Belt and Road Initiative often fosters in developing countries.

Not least, by quietly manipulating the technical vulnerabilities of China's Orwellian, AI-enabled domestic security systems, and by publicly sanctioning Communist Party officials engaged in heinous abuses, America can make repression pricier for Mr. Xi's government. If Beijing responds with self-defeating "wolf warrior" outbursts—as it did in early 2021, reacting so furiously to multilateral sanctions imposed due to its persecution of the Uyghurs that it derailed an EU-China investment deal—so much the better.

The most effective long-term strategies aren't simply passive: They bait an enemy into blunders and drive up the costs that it must pay to compete.

A strategy of this nature will make for a tense, sometimes frightening struggle. But containment emerged in the first place and ultimately prevailed not because it was ideal but because it was the best of bad alternatives. Few observers in the late 1940s or after welcomed a long slog against Moscow. There was little joy in a fraught contest conducted in the shadow of Armageddon. Only when containment was compared to other possibilities—a replay of the appeasement that had preceded World War II, or a military showdown that would cause World War III—did its merits become clear. Containment offered a way of navigating unacceptable extremes, showing that sharp but patient competition could allow the free world to avoid disastrous confrontations as well as disastrous defeats.

Containing Chinese influence implies a return, for the foreseeable future, to Cold War-style tensions and crises. It requires, once again, discarding the dream of "one world"—a single, seamlessly integrated global order—and accepting the grim realities of competition in a divided one.

Beijing is trying to become the globe's dominant power and usher in an autocratic century. If it succeeds, the world that America built through its Cold War victory will be consigned to history. Undertaking another urgent, enduring effort to contain an advancing rival won't be easy, but it is the best way of averting a still darker future.

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## **Who Benefits From Confrontation With China?**

The New York Times, by The Editorial Board, March 11, 2023

America's increasingly confrontational posture toward China is a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy that warrants greater scrutiny and debate.

For most of the past half-century, the United States sought to reshape China through economic and diplomatic engagement—or, in the case of the Trump administration, through economic and diplomatic disengagement. The Biden administration, by contrast, has shelved the idea that China can be changed in favor of the hope that it can be checked.

The White House has moved to limit economic ties with China, to limit China's access to technology with military applications, to pull back from international institutions where the United States has long sought to engage China and to strengthen ties with China's neighbors. In recent months, the United States has restricted semiconductor exports to China, and this week it moved ahead with plans to help Australia obtain nuclear submarines. The administration also is seeking to impose new restrictions on American investments in certain Chinese companies. In treating China as a growing threat to American interests, it is acting with broad support, including from leading Republicans, much of the military and foreign policy establishments, and a growing portion of the business community.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken provided the clearest articulation of the administration's China policy in a speech last May at George Washington University. Dismissing engagement as a policy failure, Mr. Blinken said the United States had tried with little success to persuade or compel China to abide by American rules or the rules of international institutions. He described China as increasingly determined to impose its priorities on other nations. "China is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to do it," he said. "Beijing's vision would move us away from the universal values that have sustained so much of the world's progress over the past 75 years."

It is true that engagement with China has yielded less than its proponents hoped and prophesied. China's embrace of capitalism

has not proved to be a first step toward the liberalization of its society or political system. Indeed, China's brand of state-sponsored capitalism has damaged the health of liberal democracy elsewhere. The United States rightly continues to press China's leadership on issues where serious differences remain, including its repression of Uyghur Muslims and its disregard for intellectual property rights.

China also is demonstrating a greater willingness to engage in worrying provocations, mounting military displays in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait, and sailing a balloon over the United States. U.S. officials say China is considering military aid for Russia, a move that would deliberately escalate tensions with the United States in an arena where China has little to gain. Yet the relationship between the United States and China, for all its problems, continues to deliver substantial economic benefits to the residents of both countries and to the rest of the world. Moreover, because the two nations are tied together by millions of normal and peaceful interactions every day, there is a substantial incentive to maintain those ties and a basis for working together on shared problems like climate change.

Americans' interests are best served by emphasizing competition with China while minimizing confrontation. Glib invocations of the Cold War are misguided. It doesn't take more than a glance to appreciate that this relationship is very different. Rather than try to trip the competition, America should focus on figuring out how to run faster, for example through increased investments in education and basic scientific research.

Chinese actions and rhetoric also need to be kept in perspective. By the standards of superpowers, China remains a homebody. Its foreign engagements, especially outside its immediate surroundings, remain primarily economic. China has been playing a much more active role in international affairs in recent years — a new agreement facilitated by China to re-establish relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the latest example — but China continues to show strikingly little interest in persuading other nations to adopt its social and political values.

There are also signs that China's leaders are not united in supporting a more confrontational posture. It behooves the United States to reassure those who may be open to reassurance. America and China are struggling with many of the same challenges: how to ensure what President Xi Jinping has termed "common prosperity" in an age of income inequality; how to rein in the worst excesses of capitalism without losing its vital creative forces; how to care for an aging population and young people who want more out of life than work; how to slow the pace of climate change and to manage its disruptive impacts, including mass migration.

The core of America's China strategy, building stronger relationships with our allies, is sound policy. Over time, the United States ought to seek a greater alignment between its economic interests and other national goals. The president's budget proposal, released on Thursday, repeats some of the language from Mr. Blinken's speech last year and proposes several billion dollars of foreign aid and investments to buttress U.S. allies in the Indo-Pacific region. "We're trying to make sure that we can outcompete them when it comes to hearts and minds around the globe," said Shalanda Young, the director of the Office of Management and Budget.

But the United States should not pull back from forums where it has long engaged China.

For example, the World Trade Organization operates a court of appeals that was created to adjudicate trade disputes. The court, however, has not operated in over two years, since the most recently appointed judges completed their terms. New judges cannot be installed without the support of the United States, and the Biden administration has declined to provide that support. The United States has also pulled back from committees at the W.T.O. that write the rules of trade, according to Henry Gao, a professor at Singapore Management University and an expert on the organization. When Mr. Xi proposed in November 2021 to use the W.T.O. as a forum for establishing rules about state-owned enterprises, a key American goal, the United States didn't show much interest, Mr. Gao said in an interview.

That is a mistake. The construction of a rules-based international order, in which America played the leading role, was one of the most important achievements of the 20th century. It cannot be preserved if the United States does not continue to participate in those institutions.

The Biden administration's continuation of Trump-era restrictions on trade with China, and its imposition of a host of new restrictions, is also a dubious strategy. Limiting competition is likely to yield some short-term benefits, but American economic growth in recent decades has been driven primarily by increased productivity in sectors that are exposed to global trade. Competition has been both painful and beneficial. The value of the major investments the federal government is making in infrastructure, research and technical education is significantly reduced by measures that limit the size of the market for American goods or that shelter American businesses from healthy foreign competition.

The confrontational turn also makes it harder for the United States and China to cooperate on addressing climate change and on other issues where national interests could plausibly align.

Much of the shift in China policy has been justified as necessary for national defense. National security considerations can provide a legitimate rationale for limiting some types of trade with China. But it can also provide a legitimizing vocabulary for protectionist measures that are not in the interest of Americans. In the long term, the best guarantee of American security has always been American prosperity and engagement with the rest of the world.

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## **Xi Jinping's China and the rise of the 'global west'**

Financial Times, Gideon Rachman, OCTOBER 24 2022

The world's advanced democracies are pulling together in an effort to counter China's international influence

It is an image that may define a generation. The sight of Hu Jintao, the former president of China, being ushered forcibly from the front row of the Communist party congress in Beijing was a piece of political theatre — sending a message of utter ruthlessness and total control by Xi Jinping. Xi loyalists now dominate all the top positions in the party. Who can doubt that the Chinese leader intends to rule for life and that he will bulldoze whoever stands in his way — whether at home or abroad? Such scenes from Beijing will reinforce the idea stated in the Biden administration’s new National Security Strategy that: “The PRC [People’s Republic of China] presents America’s most consequential geopolitical challenge.”

At a time when Russia is waging war in Europe, it is striking that the US nonetheless identifies China as the bigger threat. The Americans view China as a rival superpower with global ambitions — while Russia is seen as a declining, but dangerous, power increasingly dependent on Beijing.

In its efforts to win what President Joe Biden calls a “contest for the future of our world” with China, the US is increasingly looking to an international network of allies, which can loosely be called the “global west”.

Like the global south, the global west is defined more by ideas than actual geography. The members are rich liberal democracies with strong security ties to the US. Alongside the traditional western allies in Europe and North America sit Indo-Pacific nations such as Japan and Australia. It is the countries of the global west that are participating fully in sanctions on Russia. They are also the nations that Washington hopes will align with the US in an emerging cold war with China.

The sharpest edge of the Beijing-Moscow challenge is military and territorial — with Ukraine and Taiwan on the front lines. But the global west is also increasingly alive to the risk of economic coercion — whether it is Russia cutting off energy supplies to Europe; or China’s trade sanctions against countries that anger it, such as South Korea or Lithuania.

The global west is also increasingly concerned about the risk that China will control the technologies of the future — building what one senior US official calls “a terrifying surveillance autocracy” with a worldwide reach.

Signs that the global west is coming together are proliferating. At the most recent Nato summit, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea were invited to participate for the first time. The statement issued after the June meeting was the first Nato strategic document to cite China as a threat. European navies are increasingly showing up in the Indo-Pacific. The signature of Aukus — a security pact between Australia, the UK and the US — was another signal.

When it comes to economic statecraft, the key organising unit is now the G7 group of leading industrial nations. After the global financial crisis, many suggested that the G7 would become defunct — displaced by the G20, which includes China, Russia and several countries from the global south. But now geopolitical rivalries are heightening again, the G7 is back. Jake Sullivan, Biden’s national security adviser, recently referred to the group as “the steering committee of the free world.”

The original G7, formed in the 1970s, included just one Asian nation — Japan. Formally or informally, the Indo-Pacific members of the global west will also be key partners in a revamped G7.

Within the global west there is increasing talk of the need to reduce vulnerability to economic coercion by China, by building supply chains and trading relationships primarily with friendly, democratic nations. Janet Yellen, the US Treasury secretary, calls this “friendshoring” — a term that was endorsed by Chrystia Freeland, Canada’s deputy prime minister, in a recent speech.

There is also an attempt to push back against China’s expanding global presence in the fields of infrastructure and technology. At its summit in June, the G7 launched a \$600bn fund to mobilise investment in global infrastructure. But it risks being a decade late and billions of dollars short. China’s Belt and Road Initiative was launched in 2013 and may already have lavished \$4tn on global infrastructure projects.

There are also presentational problems. The countries of the global west argue that they are banding together to defend universal values, underpinning a liberal world order. But China and Russia instead present the global west as an attempt to rebuild a hierarchy with its roots in imperialism and white supremacy. Opinion polls in the global south suggest that these Russo-Chinese arguments often find a receptive audience.

Even within the global west, there is a danger that unilateral American actions are alienating some partners. The recent ferocious US restrictions on technology exports to China will hugely complicate business for some of the biggest tech firms in South Korea, Japan and Europe. Olaf Scholz, Germany’s chancellor, has just firmly restated his belief in globalisation — in what felt like a rebuke to the US.

If it is to keep this new alliance together, the US will have to persuade its partners that the darkest fears about Russia and China are justified. This weekend’s scenes from Beijing certainly help to make that case.

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## **Stopping China’s growth cannot be a goal for the west**

Financial Times, Gideon Rachman JANUARY 2 2023

Deterrence and trade will have to go hand in hand

Do we want China to fail? That question came up at a recent seminar I attended for western policymakers and commentators. The group was leafing through a report on the year ahead, when one of our number asked why one of the dangers listed for 2023 was a sharp slowdown in Chinese growth. “Isn’t that what we want to happen?” he asked.

It is a fair question. After all, the US president has repeatedly said he is willing to go to war with China to defend Taiwan. The EU describes the country as a “systemic rival”. Britain is debating formally labelling China a “threat”. Surely, if you regard a country as a threat and a rival, you do not want to see its economy growing rapidly?

Or maybe you do. Those who believe that continued Chinese economic success remains in the interests of the west have

plausible arguments to make. First, China is a huge part of the world economy. If you will China to go into recession, you are quite close to wanting the world to also slide into recession. And if China were to crash — for example if its property sector melts down — the consequences would ricochet through the global financial system. Then there is the moral question. Are you comfortable with wanting more than 1.4bn Chinese — many of them still poor — to get poorer? Demand and investment from China are critical to countries in Africa and the Americas. Do you want them to get poorer as well?

The fact that such a debate is taking place at all says something about the current confusion in western capitals. Broadly speaking, two models of world order are doing battle in the minds of western policymakers: an old model based around globalisation; and a new one based around great power competition.

The old model stresses economics and what the Chinese call “win-win co-operation”. Its argument is that economic stability and growth are good for everyone — and that it also encourages useful habits of international co-operation on critical issues such as climate change.

The new model argues that a richer China has, unfortunately, turned out to be a more threatening China. Beijing has poured money into a military build-up and has territorial ambitions that threaten Taiwan, India, Japan, the Philippines and others. This view argues that, unless China’s ambitions change or are checked, then global peace and prosperity will be threatened. Russia’s attack on Ukraine, and the close alignment between Xi Jinping’s China and Vladimir Putin’s Russia, have strengthened the view that the best lens through which to view the world is now one that focuses on great power competition.

Unfortunately, this is not an argument that can be resolved because both world views contain elements of truth. A China that fails could be a threat to world stability. And so could a China that succeeds — as long as it is run by Xi, or another nationalist authoritarian.

The way for western policymakers to resolve the debate is to ask a different sort of question. Not: do we want China to succeed or fail? But: how do we manage the continuing rise of China?

Posing the question that way avoids basing policy on something that is beyond the control of western officials. It would not be wise for Americans or Europeans to assume that China is heading for failure, any more than it would be realistic for China to base its policies on America on the idea that the US might collapse. It is clear that both China and America do face substantial internal challenges that could — in the worst case — overwhelm them. But it would be foolish for either side to assume that outcome.

Rather than trying to make China poorer or to thwart the country’s development, western policy should concentrate on the international environment, into which a richer and more powerful China is emerging. The goal should be to mould a world order that makes it less attractive for China to pursue aggressive policies.

That approach has military, technological, economic and diplomatic elements. The US has been most effective in strengthening its web of security ties with countries such as Japan, India and Australia — which should help deter Chinese militarism.

Washington’s efforts to prevent China becoming the world’s technological standard-setter are gaining momentum — but will be much harder to co-ordinate with allies, who fear for their own economic interests.

Economics and trade are where the US is weakest. China is already the largest trading partner for most countries in the Indo-Pacific. America’s increasingly protectionist mood, and inability to sign significant new trade deals in Asia, make Washington’s counter-offer look ever less compelling.

The battle of ideas is also important. As the Ukraine war has illustrated, large parts of the world remain deeply sceptical about western motives — even in opposing an obvious war of aggression waged by Russia.

That is why it is crucial for the US and the EU to be clear — to themselves and others — that their goal is not to prevent China from becoming richer. It is to prevent China’s growing wealth from being used to threaten its neighbours or intimidate its trading partners. That policy has the merit of being both defensible and feasible.

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## **China is right about US containment**

Financial Times, Edward Luce, MARCH 8 2023

But encircling Beijing is not a viable long-term strategy

Here is a thought experiment. If Taiwan did not exist, would the US and China still be at loggerheads? My hunch is yes.

Antagonism between top dogs and rising powers is part of the human story.

The follow-up is whether such tensions would persist if China were a democracy rather than a one-party state. That is harder to say but it is not obvious that an elected Chinese government would feel any less resentful of the US-led global order. It is also hard to imagine the circumstances in which America would willingly share the limelight.

All of which suggests that loose talk of a US-China conflict is no longer far-fetched. Countries do not easily change their spots: China is the middle kingdom wanting redress for the age of western humiliation; America is the dangerous nation seeking monsters to destroy. Both are playing to type.

The question is whether global stability can survive either of them insisting that they must succeed. The likeliest alternative to today’s US-China stand-off is not a kumbaya meeting-of-minds, but war.

This week, Xi Jinping went further than before in naming America as the force behind the “containment”, “encirclement” and “suppression” of China. Though his rhetoric was provocative, it was not technically wrong. President Joe Biden is still officially committed to trying to co-operate with China. But Biden was as easily blown off course last month as a weather

balloon. Washington's panic over what is after all 19th-century technology prompted Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, to cancel a Beijing trip that was to pave the way for a Biden-Xi summit.

Washington groupthink drove Biden's overreaction. The consensus is now so hawkish that it is liable to see any outreach to China as weakness. As the historian Max Boot points out, bipartisanship is not always a good thing.

Some of America's worst blunders — the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution that led to the Vietnam war, or the 2002 Iraq war resolution — were bipartisan. So is the new House committee on China, which its chair, Mike Gallagher, says will “contrast the Chinese Communist party's techno-totalitarian state with the Free World”. It is probably safe to say he will not be on the hunt for contradictory evidence.

A big difference between today's cold war and the original one is that China is not exporting revolution. From Cuba to Angola and Korea to Ethiopia, the Soviet Union underwrote leftwing insurgencies worldwide.

The original idea of containment, laid out in George Kennan's 1947 Foreign Affairs essay, *The Sources of Soviet Conduct*, was more modest than the undeclared containment that is now US policy. Kennan's advice was twofold: to stop the expansion of the Soviet empire; and to shore up western democracy. He counselled against the use of force. With patience and skill the USSR would fold, which is what eventually happened.

Today's approach is containment-plus. When Xi talks of “suppression”, he means America's ban on advanced semiconductor exports to China. Since high-end chips are used for both civil and military purposes, the US has grounds for denying China the means to upgrade its military. But the collateral effect is to limit China's economic development.

There is no easy way round this. One possible side-effect will be to accelerate Xi's drive for “made in China” technology. The Chinese president has also explicitly declared Beijing's goal of dominating artificial intelligence by 2030, which is another way of saying that China wants to set the rules.

The one positive feature of today's cold war compared with the last one — China and America's economic interdependence — is thus something Biden wants to undo. Decoupling is taking on an air of inevitability.

When Xi refers to “encirclement”, he is thinking about America's deepening ties to China's neighbours. Again, Xi mostly has himself to blame.

Japan's shift to a more normal military stance, which includes a doubling of its defence spending, probably worries China the most. But America's growing closeness to the Philippines and India, and the Aukus nuclear submarine deal with Australia and the UK, are also part of the picture. Add in increased US arms transfers to Taiwan and the ingredients for Chinese paranoia are ripe. How does this end?

This is where a study of Kennan would pay dividends. There is no endgame to today's cold war. Unlike the USSR, which was an empire in disguise, China inhabits historic boundaries and is never likely to dissolve. The US needs a strategy to cope with a China that will always be there.

If you took a snap poll in Washington and asked: one, are the US and China in a cold war; and two, how does the US win it, the answer to the first would be an easy “yes”; the second would elicit a long pause. Betting on China's submission is not a strategy.

Here is another way to look at it. The US still holds more of the cards. It has plenty of allies, a global system that it designed, better technology and younger demographics. China's growth is slowing and its society is ageing faster. The case for US resolve and patience is stronger today than it was when Kennan was around. Self-confident powers should not be afraid to talk.

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## **U.S. Spy Agencies Warn of China's Efforts to Expand Its Power**

The New York Times, By Julian E. Barnes and Edward Wong, March 8, 2023

China sees a partnership with Russia as a way to challenge, and potentially weaken, the United States, a new threat assessment said.

WASHINGTON — China's government is increasingly convinced it can only make itself the pre-eminent power in Asia, and a major power globally, by diminishing American influence, the top U.S. intelligence official said Wednesday.

The goal of weakening U.S. power and influence is one reason China has continued to pursue a deepening partnership with Russia, according to an annual intelligence threat assessment that was also released Wednesday.

Avril D. Haines, the director of national intelligence who appeared before a Senate committee to present the threat assessment, said China believes it can achieve its goals of dominating its region and expanding its global reach “only at the expense of U.S. power and influence.”

“The People's Republic of China, which is increasingly challenging the United States economically, technologically, politically and militarily around the world, remains our unparalleled priority,” Ms. Haines said.

The threat report is a major yearly public release of the intelligence agencies' assessment of a variety of national security challenges. While some aspects of the report barely change year to year, the section on China expanded significantly, reflecting the intelligence agencies' greater focus on the nation during the Biden administration.

Prodded by both parties in Congress, the intelligence agencies have invested more resources on China, created a new C.I.A. mission center focused on Beijing and taken other measures aimed at improving intelligence collection and analysis.

The annual assessment said that despite the international condemnation of Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine, China will maintain its cooperation with Russia to try to challenge the United States.

U.S. officials have warned that China is considering providing lethal aid, such as ammunition, to Russia for the war in Ukraine.

U.S. officials have determined that China had aimed to provide artillery shells to Russia but hoped to do so without being detected, so Beijing could credibly maintain a public position of criticizing the United States for providing arms to Ukraine. Officials in the Biden administration made public intelligence that China was considering a secret provision of lethal aid along with both public and private messages to Beijing that such support would cross a line. Officials have warned that Washington would impose economic sanctions on Beijing if that support were to go ahead.

At the Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on Wednesday, Senator Angus King, independent of Maine, asked Ms. Haines if the relationship between China and Russia was a temporary marriage of convenience or a long-term love affair.

Ms. Haines said it was not simply a temporary partnership but added that it had “some limitations.”

“We don’t see them becoming allies, the way we are with allies in NATO,” Ms. Haines said.

China will continue to treat Russia as an important strategic power, despite the criticism that the United States and others have leveled at Beijing for maintaining that relationship, the report said.

In her testimony on Wednesday, Ms. Haines reinforced the message that President Biden and his top foreign policy aides have been sending on China. Since his election campaign in 2020, Mr. Biden has said that while Russia is a medium-term challenge, China is the greatest long-term rival of the United States and is the only nation with the power and resources to reshape the American-led international order.

Ms. Haines also underscored the espionage challenge posed by China, saying its ambitions and abilities make it “our most serious and consequential intelligence rival.”

Earlier this week, China’s president, Xi Jinping, issued his own critique of the United States in comments that state media reported on Monday.

“Western countries led by the United States have implemented all-around containment, encirclement and suppression of China, which has brought unprecedented severe challenges to our country’s development,” Mr. Xi said in a speech, according to China’s official news agency.

The threat report also reiterates a list of the Biden administration’s views on the strategic challenges posed by China, many of which build on analyses made during the Trump administration.

The report said that as China’s leader, Xi Jinping, begins his third term, the Chinese Communist Party will work “to press Taiwan on unification, undercut U.S. influence, drive wedges between Washington and its partners and foster some norms that favor its authoritarian system.”

At the same time, it said, Chinese leaders “probably will seek opportunities to reduce tensions with Washington when they believe it suits their interests.”

The strengthening of China’s military and its expanded operations, especially across the Asia-Pacific region, are a focal point of the report.

“Beijing is increasingly combining growing military power with its economic, technological, and diplomatic influence,” the report said, to reinforce party rule, secure territory and “pursue global influence.”

The report also outlined how Chinese leaders will likely be constrained in some policies and actions because of internal factors — including an aging population and economic issues.

The report’s authors say the Chinese military is trying to meet a goal of Mr. Xi’s — to be powerful enough by 2027 to stave off any U.S.-led intervention in an armed conflict over Taiwan.

Mr. Xi has used that language to spur modernization of the People’s Liberation Army, the Chinese military. But he and other Chinese officials have not said they will invade Taiwan anytime soon, and in fact, there is vigorous debate within U.S. agencies over Beijing’s exact intentions on Taiwan. Some U.S. military officials have spoken of Beijing likely acting in the next few years to force Taiwan to come under Communist Party rule, but those are individual views within the U.S. government.

The report also offers new insights on Beijing’s assessment of nuclear threats and the prospect of a nuclear conflict.

Beijing has determined that rising tensions and growing U.S. nuclear capabilities “have increased the likelihood of a U.S. first strike,” the report said.

Beijing has concluded its nuclear capabilities are insufficient, aims to expand its nuclear arsenal and is building hundreds of new silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles, the report said. Growing confidence in its arsenal over time, according to the report, will “bolster its resolve and intensify conventional conflicts.”

The report also warns that China will avoid signing nuclear arms agreements with the United States or Russia, at least until it modernizes and builds its arsenal.

“Beijing is not interested in agreements that restrict its plans and will not agree to negotiations that lock in U.S. or Russian advantages,” the report said.

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Edward Wong is a diplomatic correspondent who has reported for The Times for more than 22 years, based in New York, Baghdad, Beijing and Washington. He received a Livingston Award and was on a team of Pulitzer Prize finalists for Iraq War coverage. He has been a Nieman Fellow at Harvard and a visiting professor of journalism at Princeton and U.C. Berkeley.



## **Some Recent Headlines:**

### **China's Economy Won't Overtake the U.S., Some Now Predict**

The Wall Street Journal, By Stella Yifan Xie, Sept. 2, 2022

Slowing growth has dampened expectations that the Chinese economy will be the world's largest by the end of the decade  
HONG KONG—The sharp slowdown in China's growth in the past year is prompting many experts to reconsider when China will surpass the U.S. as the world's largest economy—or even if it ever will.  
Until recently, many economists assumed China's gross domestic product measured in U.S. dollars would surpass that of the U.S. by the end of the decade, capping what many consider to be the most extraordinary economic ascent ever.  
But the outlook for China's economy has darkened this year, as Beijing-led policies—including its zero tolerance for Covid-19 and efforts to rein in real-estate speculation—have sapped growth. As economists pare back their forecasts for 2022, they have become more worried about China's longer term prospects, with unfavorable demographics and high debt levels potentially weighing on any rebound.

### **China's Population Falls, Heralding a Demographic Crisis**

The New York Times, By Alexandra Stevenson and Zixu Wang, Jan. 16, 2023

HONG KONG — The world's most populous country has reached a pivotal moment: China's population has begun to shrink, after a steady, yearslong decline in its birthrate that experts say is irreversible.  
The government said on Tuesday that 9.56 million people were born in China last year, while 10.41 million people died. It was the first time deaths had outnumbered births in China since the Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong's failed economic experiment that led to widespread famine and death in the 1960s.

### **China Has More ICBM Launchers Than U.S., American Military Reports**

The Wall Street Journal, By Michael R. Gordon, Feb. 7, 2023

While the U.S. leads in intercontinental missiles and warheads, China's gains are fueling debate in Congress  
The U.S. military has notified Congress that China now has more land-based intercontinental-range missile launchers than the U.S., fueling the debate about how Washington should respond to Beijing's nuclear buildup.

### **China Is Running Covert Operations That Could Seriously Overwhelm Us**

The New York Times, By Nigel Inkster, Sept. 14, 2022

Mr. Inkster is a former director of operations and intelligence at Britain's Secret Intelligence Service.  
In my three-decade career with Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, China was never seen as a major threat.  
If we lost sleep at night, it was over more immediate challenges such as Soviet expansionism and transnational terrorism.  
China's halting emergence from the chaotic Mao Zedong era and its international isolation after Chinese soldiers crushed pro-democracy demonstrations at Tiananmen Square in 1989 made it seem like an insular backwater.  
It's a different picture today. China has acquired global economic and diplomatic influence, enabling covert operations that extend well beyond traditional intelligence gathering, are growing in scale and threaten to overwhelm Western security agencies.  
The U.S. and British domestic intelligence chiefs — the F.B.I. director, Christopher Wray, and the MI5 director general, Ken McCallum — signaled rising concern over this with an unprecedented joint news conference in July to warn of, as Mr. Wray put it, a “breathhtaking” Chinese effort to steal technology and economic intelligence and to influence foreign politics in Beijing's favor. The pace was quickening, they said, with the number of MI5 investigations into suspected Chinese activity having increased sevenfold since 2018.

### **China leading US in technology race in all but a few fields, thinktank finds**

The Guardian, Daniel Hurst, 2 Mar 2023

Year-long study finds China leads in 37 of 44 areas it tracked, with potential for a monopoly in areas such as nanoscale materials and synthetic biology

### **New China Rule Threatens to Disrupt U.S. Solar Ambitions**

The Wall Street Journal, By Sha Hua and Phred Dvorak, Jan. 31, 2023

SINGAPORE—A plan by China to restrict exports of key solar manufacturing technology could delay attempts to build up a domestic solar supply chain in the U.S., industry experts say.  
China's Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Science and Technology are considering adding advanced technology used in the production of ingots and wafers, some of the building blocks of solar panels, to a list of technologies that are subject to

export controls.

## **Why China Will Never Lead on Tech**

The Wall Street Journal, By Simone Gao, Jan. 30, 2023

Communism is incapable of nurturing the curiosity that leads to innovation.

China recently pulled up short in its race with the U.S. for dominance in chip manufacturing. While the U.S. has strengthened its commitment to rebuilding its domestic production through the passage of the Chips Act this past summer, spurring nearly \$200 billion in private investment in manufacturing projects, China has abruptly paused its investment of 1 trillion yuan (about \$148 billion) in the industry.

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But there is a bigger reason that China's ambitious technology endeavors are failing: Its communist system stifles innovation. In China, all major funding is controlled and distributed by the Communist Party. Top scientists must be in the party system to advance their careers and get funding. The higher they rank within the party, the more funding they can receive. They can also make fortunes steering projects and government funds to companies owned by their associates and earning huge kickbacks.

## **U.S.-China Tensions Fuel Outflow of Chinese Scientists From U.S. Universities**

The Wall Street Journal, By Sha Hua and Karen Hao, Sept. 22, 2022

Harvard, MIT lose experienced scholars as fear of government surveillance prompts 4 in 10 to consider leaving

HONG KONG—An increasing number of scientists and engineers of Chinese descent are giving up tenured positions at top-tier American universities to leave for China or elsewhere, in a sign of the U.S.'s fading appeal for a group that has been a driver of innovation.

The trend, driven in part by what many of the scholars describe as an increasingly hostile political and racial environment, has caused the Biden administration to work with scholars of Chinese descent to address concerns.

## **China's Myth of Communist Competence**

The Wall Street Journal, By Thomas J. Duesterberg, Jan. 5, 2023

Xi Jinping was preparing to dominate the globe. Instead he faces one crisis after another at home.

Xi Jinping doubtless expected to celebrate the New Year by touting the superiority of his authoritarian economic and governance model. Instead, he is trying to manage a healthcare crisis, a weakening economy, and political protests. These vulnerabilities—each attributable to the Chinese Communist Party under Mr. Xi's leadership—allow the U.S. to combat the party's mercantilist policies and debunk its narrative that China's rise to global dominance is inevitable.

## **Democracies Shouldn't Gloat About China's Stumbles**

Bloomberg, By Pankaj Mishra, January 22, 2023 at 4:00 PM EST

As China's death toll mounts and its economy slows, the country seems to be reaping the bitter fruits of Xi Jinping's zero-Covid policy. Ill-informed and arbitrary decision-making looks to be, in the eyes of many in the West, the fatal weakness of China's autocratic political system.

But a self-righteous contrast between democracy and autocracy cannot explain away the challenges of governance that confront many nations today. After all, terrible political decisions have brought the United Kingdom, the world's oldest democracy, to the point where its hollowed-out state is struggling to offer even basic services to citizens.

## **Can the US Take on China, Iran and Russia All at Once?**

Bloomberg, By Hal Brands, October 16, 2022

Imagine a scenario in which, a year or two or three from now, the world is convulsed by war from Europe to the Pacific. The idea isn't as absurd as you may think. Not in decades has the US faced such prospects of near-term military confrontation in several separate theaters.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine has ignited Europe's largest conflict in generations and provoked a great-power proxy fight. In East Asia, the chances of war are growing, as the tensions precipitated by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan in August demonstrated. In the Middle East, the US may have to choose between fighting Iran and accepting it as a nuclear threshold state.