

Ideas Matter: The Fight Against the Ideology of the Chinese Regime

Dean Cheng and Olivia Enos

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The U.S. and China are engaged not only in a great-power struggle, but in an ideological competition centered on the relationship between the individual and state.

China's leadership employs a variety of tools, including investments and diplomatic pressure, to promote its national power and ideological interests.

To succeed in this competition with the Chinese Communist Party, the U.S. must compete on both fronts: national power and ideology.

The United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are currently engaged in a great-power struggle. That is, the two major powers, each with huge economies, substantial militaries, and extensive diplomatic influence, are engaging in a broad competition for global influence.

This is not the first time there has been a competition among great powers. The years leading up to World War I were a time of great rivalries among the various European powers including France, Great Britain, Russia, and Wilhelmine Germany. One of the hallmarks of the Cold War, however, was that there was more than great-power rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. The decades-long clash between the two major power blocs also included economic, diplomatic, and military elements.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/bg3596>

The Heritage Foundation | 214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE | Washington, DC 20002 | (202) 546-4400 | heritage.org

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

But there was also a fundamental *ideological* divide. Indeed, this divide was a distinguishing characteristic of the Cold War. Moscow and Washington each subscribed to an ideology, a system of thought and ideas, that was part of the struggle. The competition was not only about which side had more power, but which ideology would emerge victorious in a global race for influence.

Indeed, the 20th century was marked by ideological conflicts among fascism, communism, and democracy. All of these political ideologies, and their associated economic systems of capitalism and socialism, centered around the relationship between the individual and the state. Both fascism and communism were ultimately totalitarian systems, which sought to control every aspect of human activity, mobilizing the individual mainly as a cog for the state.

The end of the Cold War, and the earlier end of World War II, were both seen as ideological triumphs, as well as the end of a particular power struggle. The collapse of both fascism and communism was seen as indicative of the superiority of the liberal individualistic ideology of the West. The idea of “the end of history” was in part the belief that ideological rivals to Western democracy and capitalism would now fade away.

In this new era, China was seen as a potential great-power rival, but not necessarily an ideological one. Given the obvious success of the democratic and capitalist system, the so-called Washington Consensus, there would still be great-power rivalries, but they need not be ideological. Concepts such as “Cold Peace,” where the primary competitors with the United States would be Germany and Japan, both democratic capitalist states with unthreatening militaries, abounded in the 1990s.

Evolving China

The view that ideology now mattered less, if at all, in international relations was further supported by the political evolution in the People’s Republic of China. Under Mao Zedong’s leadership from 1949 to 1976, China was an ideologically committed nation. Mao, and many of his top advisors, such as Lin Biao, were committed communists, whose ideological zeal often eclipsed reality. Mao’s Great Leap Forward (1957–1960), a program of forced-draft national industrialization, envisioned China catching up with the U.K. in national economic output within 15 years. “Foundries” and “smelters” were set up in backyards, people were forced to donate even their cooking implements to make steel, and China endured one of the worst famines of the 20th century, all to support Mao’s belief that Chinese

communism was inherently superior and capable of pushing China forward in one great leap. Similarly, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was undertaken in part in order to sustain revolutionary fervor.

For Mao, whether a policy succeeded was often less important than whether it was consistent with ideological litmus tests. Indeed, some of his closest military associates, such as Peng Dehuai, fell because they believed that the military should build up specializations and expertise, rather than rely on ideological fervor. This “Red versus expert” debate arose in a variety of fields during Mao’s quarter century of rule, with Mao consistently backing “Red,” ideological, solutions over expert views.

By contrast, Deng Xiaoping, who succeeded Mao in 1978, was in many ways the soul of pragmatism. One of Deng’s better-known aphorisms was “Black cat, white cat, so long as it catches mice, it’s a good cat.” Deng bequeathed a China whose economy was in utter shambles, focused on policies that would actually help to revive economic activity (embracing cats that catch mice, whatever their political hue) rather than what was ideologically consistent.

Deng was able to anoint his two subsequent successors, so it should not be surprising that this pragmatic streak was present in both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. Deng, Jiang, and Hu were not politically liberal; they did not believe in democratic values (as reflected in the Tiananmen massacre of 1989 and subsequent crackdown). But they were more likely to assess policies based on their actual likely effectiveness, especially economically, rather than focusing on their ideological acceptability within a Marxist–Leninist–Maoist context.

Jiang Zemin, for example, welcomed businessmen and entrepreneurs into the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as part of his “Three Represents” program.¹ Relabeling them as “the new social strata,” they were seen as “advanced productive forces” whose incorporation into the CCP was necessary to promote “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and eventually achieve socialism. In short, ideological categories could be malleable and flexible enough to include even those who had long been considered “class enemies.”

Notably, this dilution of the ideological component was also reflected in Chinese foreign policy. Where Mao had supported various revolutionary movements in Asia and Africa as part of the anti-colonial movements of the 1960s, that support largely faded away with his successors. There is little evidence that Deng, Jiang, or Hu were pushing for the creation of mini-PRCs across the globe, unlike their Soviet counterparts.

The Rise of Xi Jinping

Xi Jinping succeeded Hu Jintao in 2012. Unlike Jiang and Hu, Xi appears to have risen through his own efforts, rather than having been anointed by Deng Xiaoping. That would mean that he had to establish personal credibility to support his claim to the top leadership position, in ways that his two predecessors did not.

Subsequently, Xi has pursued a very different path than either Jiang or Hu. Throughout his eight years (thus far) in power, he and his supporters have sustained an anti-corruption effort that has gained strength annually, rather than dissipating after two or three years. Literally thousands of officials at all levels, from townships to the national level, have been tried and sentenced on corruption charges. According to Chinese statements, in the most recent iteration of the anti-corruption effort, more than 50,000 CCP and government officials have been punished in the past three years. At least some of those investigated and charged are believed to have been rivals to Xi and his coterie.

At the same time, Xi has also placed renewed emphasis on ideology. Indeed, in 2017, the CCP promulgated “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” which was integrated into the CCP constitution. According to the CCP, changes in the “main contradiction” (*zhuyao maodun*; 主要矛盾) necessitate a recalibration of party doctrine and ideology.² Such a recalibration has occurred three times in the past (1956, 1969, and 1981). Another main contradiction had arisen by the time of the 19th Party Congress in 2019. As explained by the European Council on Foreign Relations:

According to the documents emerging from the 19th party congress, Xi had successfully identified the new principal contradiction that characterised [sic] the most recent period of development. With the CCP having largely solved the problem of “backward social production” that dominated the reform era, the new contradiction was to be found “between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life”—including, in Xi’s words, “demands for democracy, the rule of law, fairness and justice, security, and a better environment.”³

It is important to recognize that Xi’s concept of “democracy” and “rule of law” bear little resemblance to Western understandings of those terms. The CCP remains the only source of legitimate power within the PRC, and all concepts of democracy and rule of law need to be seen in this context.

Recognizing the new “main contradiction” is intended to allow the CCP to modify its approach, in order to further its efforts to advance socialism, both in China and worldwide. It does *not* presage political liberalization or the creation of an independent judiciary.

In short, Xi has essentially updated China’s ideology. Indeed, the use of the term “thought” (*sixiang*; 思想) also highlights that Xi’s “Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” is to be considered of equal importance to “Mao Zedong Thought” (*maozedong sixiang*; 毛泽东思想), and outranks even Deng Xiaoping theory. Xi has clearly revived the role of ideology within the PRC.

Ideology and Chinese Foreign Policy

What is less clear, however, is how this renewed emphasis on ideology by the CCP will affect China’s foreign and defense policy. Certainly, there is little evidence that the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is about to return to the Maoist idea of emphasizing “Red” over “expert.” One should not expect Chinese fighter pilots to claim to be guided to their targets by Xi Jinping Thought, as their fathers credited Mao’s “Little Red Book.” Indeed, China’s military modernization has clearly embraced the importance of technology, with Xi promoting fundamental and major military reforms. In the 14th Five Year Plan unveiled in 2020, the PLA is expected to achieve “full mechanization and informatization” by 2027 (the 100th anniversary of its founding).⁴ Xi’s ideological push clearly allows the incorporation of the most modern military technologies, as occurred with his Dengist predecessors.

Nor does it appear that the Chinese are likely to apply ideological litmus tests to their economic partners. China happily buys resources from democracies like Australia and dictatorships such as Venezuela, as well as from religiously oriented governments in both Saudi Arabia and Iran. Nor do its exports appear conditioned on political leanings or institutions.

Similarly, whatever its impact on facilitating authoritarianism abroad, Chinese exports of internal security and surveillance equipment and military arms show little evidence of being ideologically motivated. Chinese companies such as Hikvision supply surveillance systems to Zimbabwe, but also to over a hundred other countries, including democratic nations.⁵ Like Huawei, Hikvision’s equipment is inexpensive and reliable, and is therefore used by a variety of states. Chinese behavior in this regard is far more easily explained by economic and traditional power considerations than ideological ones. That is, China employs economic activities to build relations with other states, as part of its broader foreign policy, along the lines of

traditional great powers, rather than due to the ideological foundations of either the PRC or the partner state.

This does not mean that there are no concerns with these exports. China is using surveillance technology for its own intelligence-gathering purposes, as well as equipping governments across the world with the tools needed to spy on and regulate their own populations.⁶ This is especially true in Africa. According to one Council on Foreign Relations report, China exported its artificial intelligence (AI) technology to Angola, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe—where the governments are now using facial recognition software to spy on their populations, allegedly for law enforcement purposes.⁷

According to Freedom House, in addition to permitting the deployment of facial recognition AI surveillance technology, the government of Zimbabwe is permitting the exportation of data on millions of Zimbabweans to the Chinese company CloudWalk so that it can “recognize faces with darker skin tones.”⁸ As the report notes, this agreement was made without the consent of the citizens whose data is being collected and shared. All of these tools are being used to monitor people for political insubordination or any behavior the government deems suspicious. There can be no question that China’s exports of surveillance technology often lead other governments to undermine civil and political rights of their citizens in favor of controlling the collective, which ideologically resonates with a Marxist–Leninist framework.

Another area of concern are the objectives of certain forms of Chinese investment. Many around the world fear that China is trying to create “mini-me” states with its aid. William and Mary’s AidData documents do not find evidence for that, but do specify how the Chinese government has used investments abroad to influence voting at the United Nations. In one nuanced study, AidData claims,

In some respects, the facts don’t support the “rogue donor” rhetoric. According to an AidData working paper now published in ISQ, Chinese aid (ODA) appears to be more responsible than we typically give it credit for: it generally goes to poorer countries and is given without strings attached (i.e., granting access to natural resources or commercial ties). Nor does it appear to go disproportionately to authoritarian or corrupt regimes. However, there is an important exception where China’s aid giving appears to follow the prevailing narrative of quid pro quo—buying votes. If African countries voted with China in the UN General Assembly an extra 10% of the time, they would get an 86% bump in official development assistance on average.⁹

It is not clear, then, that Chinese foreign policy under Xi is necessarily driven by ideological, as opposed to great-power, concerns.

What is also not clear, however, is how the CCP itself may benefit from these foreign dealings. Through Chinese investments and diplomatic pressure, the CCP clearly seeks to promote its own interests in the process. The result is an undermining of global norms and institutions to the CCP's advantage. One need look no further than the CCP's handling of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its intentional obfuscation of facts in the early days of the pandemic.¹⁰ The CCP's interactions with the World Health Organization, and blatant lies about the infectiousness about the disease, made the world less prepared to respond. Taiwan's response to the pandemic stands in stark contrast to the PRC's. The Chinese response would clearly have been different if its government had acted transparently, recognizing a greater accountability to the international community.

Taiwan provides an alternative approach. Rather than attempting to cover up the infectiousness of the disease, Taiwan's government eschewed authoritarian methods and quickly ameliorated some of the worst consequences of the disease. The Taiwanese government's response is often hailed as one of the most effective around the globe and stands in sharp contrast to Beijing's.

China's domestic human rights violations are similarly linked to ideology. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the regime's violation of religious freedom. Where earlier Chinese governments (such as the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek) were at least somewhat open to the presence of foreign missionaries and churches, the CCP has long been extremely hostile to organized religion. Since Xi took office, persecution of persons of faith has intensified.¹¹ Xi reinvigorated efforts to Sinicize, or secularize, religion.

Sinicization seeks to ensure that all religion is practiced in a way that advances the CCP's objectives. In February 2018, the Chinese government instituted New Regulations on Religious Affairs that, among other things, forbade children from attending Sunday school or receiving other forms of religious education.¹² Xi also ramped up efforts to garner compliance from religious organizations by requiring them to register with the State Administration for Religious Affairs.¹³ Many so-called house churches, or churches not affiliated with the state, refused to register for fear that they would be coerced by the party to participate in Sinicizing their religion; this is the same reason they give for not joining the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, which is comprised of state-sanctioned religious bodies that do the CCP's bidding.¹⁴

Sinicization has moved beyond mere secularization of religion to characterizing various forms of religious practices as extremist. The most vivid example of this is the genocide and crimes against humanity the CCP is perpetrating against its Uyghur Muslim population. The CCP's persecution of Uyghurs in Xinjiang has gained a great deal of international attention. Between 1.8 million and 3 million Uyghurs are currently held in political re-education camps today, where they are subjected to torture, forced self-criticism, rape and other sexual violence, various forms of forced labor (both while and after their time in the camps), and even coercive forms of birth control including forced sterilizations and forced abortions.¹⁵

The CCP has a stated goal of forcibly sterilizing between 80 percent and 90 percent of Uyghur women of child-bearing age in certain provinces.¹⁶ The decision to target Uyghurs is motivated by China's core interests—maintaining internal stability and ensuring sovereignty—as well as by a tenet of Marxism that sees religion as threatening to the party's power and supremacy.

But Xi and the CCP have gone further. They have also imposed restrictions on all Muslims, not just Uyghurs, on such practices as fasting during Ramadan. The Hui, the third-largest minority in China, are also increasingly facing repression for practicing Islam.¹⁷ Mosques in Zhejiang and Gansu have reportedly been shuttered or forced to “renovate.”¹⁸

The CCP's ideology becomes an even more evident factor in its interactions with the United States. In particular, China's ideology, rooted in Marxism–Leninism, Maoism, Chinese history, and now Xi Jinping Thought, is fundamentally incompatible with the United States and *its* ideology of rule of law, democracy, free-market capitalism, and freedom of religion. In short, China's ideology leads to the conclusion that the United States poses a threat to the CCP, requiring a commensurate reaction.

China and the American Ideological Threat

The CCP remains officially committed to the eventual establishment of socialism as the dominant political system, first at home, and eventually globally. Therefore, in terms of its official ideology, the United States constitutes a fundamental obstacle to the achievement of this goal. Since Deng Xiaoping, this has arguably become more of a talking point than an actual policy objective, especially as the PRC itself has become much more capitalist, certainly than the Mao Zedong era. Strikingly, however, discussions about the need to advance the cause of socialism have been substantially revived under Xi Jinping.

But the CCP, as a Leninist party, is also committed to its role as a vanguard party, the sole source of political authority within the PRC. As a Leninist party, the CCP finds the concept of civil society, a sphere beyond its reach, to be fundamentally inimical to its goals and even its security. The CCP's core interests involve safeguarding Chinese sovereignty and preserving internal stability.¹⁹ One aspect of these goals is to further solidify the party's power.²⁰ While most would acknowledge that all governments consider retaining power to be their core domestic and foreign policy objective, there is some question whether the CCP's desire for stability and sovereignty is analogous to these Western-oriented commonsense ends. The CCP justifies its crackdown on civil society and specific groups through its ideology. Whether out of concern for stability or ideology, however, American support for religious freedom and minority rights, as well as broader human rights, all strike at the core of the CCP. In these issues, from the Chinese perspective, the United States therefore poses an existential ideological threat to the CCP.

Nor would the threat recede if the United States turned a blind eye to, for example, Chinese mistreatment of the Uyghurs. The American experience, and the model it presents, is fundamentally at odds with the pervasive societal reach of the CCP. The American, and the broader Western, model poses a challenge to the CCP by demonstrating the virtues of civil society, beyond the official governments' stances on specific issues of human rights. Consequently, addressing Chinese concerns would require more than the silence of democratic governments about CCP abuses, it would require the proactive muzzling of groups such as Falun Gong and Chinese dissidents in the West (or their remanding to Chinese custody) to allay these Chinese ideological concerns. Indeed, the Great Firewall of China demonstrates the extent to which the CCP is prepared to go to prevent foreign ideas generally from contaminating the broader Chinese population.

Moreover, as Xi Jinping Thought notes, there is a broader security element incorporated into the CCP's ideology. This is based on the Chinese experience of the 19th and 20th centuries, when China suffered the "Century of Humiliation." Due to a combination of internal and external factors, China, in its imperial and republican forms, suffered repeated outrages at the hands of foreign states, including the U.K. and Japan. The CCP's legitimacy is in part rooted in the mythology that it drove the foreign interlopers out of China, ending the "concession" system and unequal treaties while safeguarding Chinese territorial integrity and sovereignty. Indeed, preserving Chinese territorial integrity and sovereignty are "core interests" that are fundamental to the survival of the PRC—and the CCP.

In this context, America's support for Taiwan, its opposition to Beijing's expansive claims in the South China Sea, and its "Quad" relationship with Australia, India, and Japan all constitute threats to China's core interests, as expressed and propounded by the CCP. Denying China its right to reunify the nation, with force if necessary, is perceived by Beijing as a challenge not only to China's national interests, but also to the CCP's ideology. It also undermines Xi Jinping's legitimacy, especially since Xi Jinping Thought includes specific principles focused on national unity. With regards to Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, Xi Jinping Thought notes the importance of reunifying the motherland, opposing all separatist activities, and "jointly striv[ing] to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."²¹

All of these ideological factors are layered atop traditional great-power concerns, which make the China–U.S. relationship far more complex than a straight-forward great-power rivalry. While it is excessive to characterize that relationship as a "new Cold War," it is equally fallacious to ignore the ideological elements that drive Beijing to view the United States as a threat for reasons beyond great-power politics. Confidence-building measures, such as regular U.S.–China military exchanges and greater military transparency on both sides, can reduce some tensions rooted in great-power politics, but without a corresponding better understanding of the role of ideology, such moves will have only limited effect.

Recommendations for the U.S.

As the Biden Administration forms its policy on Asia, China will unquestionably be an area of focus. There is a great need for a nuanced understanding of the CCP's motives. It is evident that great-power competition is alive and well in the region, and that China operates from a desire to maintain power and stability within its borders and in the region writ large. It is also clear that there are some ways in which China's actions and activities in the region are ideologically motivated. Tackling these challenges requires a clear-eyed view by the U.S. government of the delicate balance between ideological and great-power competition in the region today.

The U.S. government should consider the following as it crafts strategy. The U.S. should:

- **Promote a free and open Indo–Pacific by prioritizing values in tandem with security.** Promoting a free and open Indo–Pacific is an inherently values-based strategy. It is not rooted in the promotion of U.S.-centric or Western stances, but in promoting universal values,

including the protection of universal human rights as defined in the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which China has endorsed (at times).²² This is a recognition of the universality of protecting fundamental freedoms and human rights, including civil and political rights, and that the Chinese government is not exempt from protecting those rights. These principles—protecting human rights, combating corruption, safeguarding sovereignty—can and should guide U.S. strategy. The promotion of universal values necessitates coordination and cooperation with allies and partnerships, such as the Quad. This type of values-based strategy should acknowledge that some aspects of strategy are intended to address the threats that China poses through great-power competition, while others address ideological threats. Some of the policies to address the latter may be the same whether or not the U.S. is addressing the former, while others may not.

- **Coordinate and host a Summit for Democracy.** Since the 2020 presidential campaign, Joe Biden has stated his intentions to host a Summit for Democracy that “will prioritize results by galvanizing significant new country commitments in three areas: fighting corruption, defending against authoritarianism, and advancing human rights in their own nations and abroad.”²³ The effort, as candidate Biden laid out in a *Foreign Affairs* article, is intended to happen in the first year and will engage both government and civil society actors. Such a summit could be modeled after the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, an event pioneered by former Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback. The Ministerial brought together people from all across the globe to share best practices on how to safeguard religious freedom and respond to threats to freedom of religion or belief. If done effectively, a summit for democracy will galvanize political will to respond to democratic backsliding in Asia and around the world. There is no shortage of threats emanating from Burma, Cambodia, China, North Korea, and many other countries in the region. A summit or ministerial is only effective if there is political will to act on recommendations, however, so a commitment to specific action is essential. Follow-on steps from a summit could include identifying individuals and entities ripe for Global Magnitsky sanctions; commitments to review assistance to countries failing to make improvements in protecting the rights of their citizens; discussions over access and reciprocity for civil society, humanitarian agencies,

and journalists; and coordinating plans with friends and allies to respond to particularly egregious threats, such as the genocide in China and the coup in Burma.

- **Advance religious freedom in China and around the globe.** A Summit for Democracy should not be in place of hosting the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom or replace broader efforts at protecting religious freedom and responding to threats to religious liberty. The promotion of religious freedom is an important part of U.S. foreign policy and is another lens through which to view and respond to government repression. China continues to wield persecution of religious minorities as a cudgel in the CCP's arsenal. The CCP's persecution of Uyghurs, Tibetan Buddhists, Christians, Falun Gong, and other persons of faith is consistent and a part of the CCP's ideology and policy. To strengthen these bipartisan efforts to combat threats to religious freedom, the Ministerial should be action-oriented in the following ways: Without deliverables, the Ministerial risks becoming another bureaucratic meeting that fails to move the ball forward in advancing a critical foreign policy issue. To make it more action-oriented, the U.S. should:²⁴
 - **Require** the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of the Treasury to issue a report listing individuals and entities recommended for sanctioning under the Global Magnitsky Act or other relevant authorities for religious freedom violations.
 - **Coordinate** the timing and release of the State Department's International Religious Freedom Report with the Ministerial.
 - **Establish** a theme each year and require countries that attend to make commitments to ensure that this aspect of religious freedom is advanced in policy. The first Ministerial under the Biden Administration could focus on threats to religious freedom in China, given that China will be a top foreign policy priority.
- **Prioritize responding to ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs.** There are many severe and ongoing human rights issues in China. None come close to the situation facing the Uyghurs. The U.S. government could prioritize combating forced labor emanating from Xinjiang, extend Priority-2 Refugee

status to Uyghurs, and request that the International Olympic Committee reconsider China's suitability to host the 2022 Olympics. The U.S. should also levy additional sanctions against individuals and entities in China who are responsible for carrying out these atrocities.

- **Forge a unified message.** The CCP's view of ideological challenge and threat is rooted in the view that concepts such as individual rights, civil society, and the rule of law are anathema to the CCP's rule. For the West, these are fundamental principles, and they must be championed. Conceding this realm to the Chinese is not a matter of increasing stability or avoiding conflict, but of denying the West's fundamental beliefs in order to appease Beijing. It is essential that the West as a community of nations and societies stand together in making clear to the CCP that, while the West is prepared to push for mutual stability as a matter of great-power competition, that stability cannot be obtained at the price of denying the West's basic principles and rights.
 - The U.S. should strengthen its strategic messaging, including the role of the U.S. Agency for Global Media. The United States needs to push its own strategic message, including a broad overall narrative, to counter Beijing's "public opinion warfare." This will require a whole-of-government approach, where trade actions by the U.S. Trade Representative and the Commerce Department; military actions by the Defense Department; and diplomatic efforts by the State Department, as well as actions by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, all are integrated into that broader message.
 - The U.S. should coordinate with other key partners to create a common Western strategic message. Whether it is a Summit of Democracy, coordinated actions by the Five Eyes alliance²⁵ and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or U.S.–Japan and U.S.–South Korea joint statements and exercises, Washington needs to reinvigorate its alliances and network of friends and partners to make clear that the rebuttal of Chinese ideology is not solely an American action, but a global effort, jointly undertaken with a variety of states.

Conclusion

The U.S. government must devise a strategy that recognizes that China acts based on a myriad of interests. Some actions are motivated—like those of any other state—by a desire to maintain power. Other decisions are based on the specific model and ideology that the CCP embraces. Understanding that these two forces are both at work prepares U.S. policymakers to respond to challenges as they arise. Eschewing one understanding in favor of the other hamstringing U.S. policy. In fact, policy efforts are better when they combine values components and security components. The U.S. will continue to act in its own interests in Asia, but it can only benefit the U.S. to understand Chinese motivations and to craft policies that address challenges inherent in the CCP's system.

Dean Cheng is Senior Research Fellow in the Asian Studies Center, of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, at The Heritage Foundation. **Olivia Enos** is Senior Policy Analyst in the Asian Studies Center.

Endnotes

1. Willy Lam, "The Rise of the 'Red Capitalists,'" *The New York Times*, October 26, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/26/opinion/26iht-edlam.18067870.html> (accessed March 9, 2021); Winberg Chai, "The Ideological Paradigm Shifts of China's World Views: From Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to the Pragmatism-Multilateralism of the Deng-Jiang-Hu Era," *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, March 24, 2010, p. 169, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00927670309601526> (accessed March 9, 2021); and Yasheng Huang, "Two Cheers for Jiang Zemin's Three Represents," Project Syndicate, November 14, 2002, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/two-cheers-for-jiang-zemin-s-three-represents> (accessed March 9, 2021).
2. "Main contradiction" refers to the central problem or issue that must be addressed by the CCP. Cao Ying and Han Jiahui, "'New Observations' on the 19th Party Congress: How to Solve the 'New Contradictions?'" (in Chinese), Xinhuanet, October 24, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-10/24/c_129725444.htm (accessed March 17, 2021).
3. Angela Stanzel et al., "China's 'New Era' with Xi Jinping Characteristics," European Council on Foreign Relations, December 15, 2017, https://ecfr.eu/publication/chinas_new_era_with_xi_jinping_characteristics7243/ (accessed March 9, 2021).
4. Fenella McGerty and Meia Nouwens, "China's New Five-Year Plan and 2021 Budget: What Do They Mean for Defence?" International Institute for Strategic Studies, March 8, 2021, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2021/03/chinas-new-five-year-plan-and-2021-budget> (accessed March 14, 2021).
5. Xiao Yu, "Is the World's Biggest Surveillance Camera Maker Sending Footage to China?" Voice of America, November 21, 2016, <https://www.voanews.com/usa/worlds-biggest-surveillance-camera-maker-sending-footage-china> (accessed March 9, 2021).
6. John Aglionby, Emily Feng, and Yuan Yang, "African Union Accuses China of Hacking Headquarters," *Financial Times*, January 29, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/c26a9214-04f2-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5> (accessed May 21, 2019); Viola Rothschild, "China's Heavy Hand in Africa," Council on Foreign Relations, February 15, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/chinas-heavy-hand-africa> (accessed May 21, 2019); and Mailyn Fidler, "African Union Bugged by China: Cyber Espionage as Evidence of Strategic Shifts," Council on Foreign Relations, March 7, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/african-union-bugged-china-cyber-espionage-evidence-strategic-shifts> (accessed May 21, 2019).
7. Arthur Gwagwa, "Exporting Repression? China's Artificial Intelligence Push into Africa," Council on Foreign Relations, December 17, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/exporting-repression-chinas-artificial-intelligence-push-africa> (accessed May 21, 2019).
8. Adrian Shahbaz, "Freedom on the Net 2018, The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism," Freedom House, October 31, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2018/rise-digital-authoritarianism> (accessed March 9, 2021).
9. Samantha Custer, "China's Financial Statecraft: Winning Africa One Yuan at a Time?" AidData, March 22, 2018, <https://www.aiddata.org/blog/chinas-financial-statecraft-winning-africa-one-yuan-at-a-time> (accessed March 9, 2021).
10. Olivia Enos, "Holding the Chinese Communist Party Accountable for Its Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* No. 5074, May 12, 2020, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/holding-the-chinese-communist-party-accountable-its-response-the-covid-19-outbreak>.
11. Sarah Cook, "Worsening Religious Persecution in China Requires Stronger U.S. Response," Freedom House, March 20, 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/article/worsening-religious-persecution-china-requires-stronger-us-response> (accessed March 9, 2021).
12. China Law Translate, "Religious Affairs Regulations 2017," September 7, 2017, <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/religious-affairs-regulations-2017/> (accessed March 9, 2021).
13. News release, "China Revises Regulation on Religious Affairs," State Council of the People's Republic of China, September 7, 2017, http://english.gov.cn/policies/latest_releases/2017/09/07/content_281475842719170.htm (accessed May 22, 2019).
14. "Why We Won't Join the Three-Self Patriotic Association," *ChinaAid*, June 6, 2011, <https://www.chinaaid.org/2011/06/why-we-wont-join-three-self-patriotic.html> (accessed March 24, 2020).
15. Olivia Enos, "Why the U.S. Should Issue an Atrocity Determination for Uighurs," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* No. 3529, September 17, 2020, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/why-the-us-should-issue-atrocity-determination-uighurs>, and Matthew Hill, David Campanale, and Joel Gunter, "'Their Goal Is to Destroy Everyone': Uighur Camp Detainees Allege Systematic Rape," BBC News, February 2, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55794071> (accessed March 9, 2021).
16. Adrian Zenz, "Sterilizations, IUDs, and Mandatory Birth Control: The CCP's Campaign to Suppress Uyghur Birthrates in Xinjiang," The Jamestown Foundation, June 2020, <https://jamestown.org/product/sterilizations-iuds-and-mandatory-birth-control-the-ccps-campaign-to-suppress-uyghur-birthrates-in-xinjiang/> (accessed March 9, 2021).
17. Emily Feng, "'Afraid We Will Become the Next Xinjiang': China's Hui Muslims Face Crackdown," National Public Radio, September 26, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/26/763356996/afraid-we-will-become-the-next-xinjiang-chinas-hui-muslims-face-crackdown> (accessed March 9, 2021).
18. Emily Feng, "China Targets Muslim Scholars and Writers with Increasingly Harsh Restrictions," National Public Radio, November 21, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/11/21/932169863/china-targets-muslim-scholars-and-writers-with-increasingly-harsh-restrictions> (accessed March 9, 2021).
19. Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search for Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

20. Richard McGregor, *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010).
21. "His Own Words: The 14 Principles of 'Xi Jinping Thought,'" BBC Monitoring, October 24, 2017, <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c1dmwn4r> (accessed March 9, 2021).
22. Giavanna O'Connell, "How China Is Violating Human Rights Treaties and Its Own Constitution in Xinjiang," Just Security, August 19, 2020, <https://www.justsecurity.org/72074/how-china-is-violating-human-rights-treaties-and-its-own-constitution-in-xinjiang/> (accessed March 9, 2021).
23. Joseph R. Biden, Jr., "Why America Must Lead Again," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2020), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again> (accessed March 9, 2021).
24. Olivia Enos, "Codifying Religious Freedom as a U.S. Foreign Policy Priority," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 3458, December 13, 2019, <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/codifying-religious-freedom-us-foreign-policy-priority>.
25. The Five Eyes intelligence alliance consists of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K., and the U.S.