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A VISION FOR 5G COMPETITION

David A. Gross, Megan L. Brown, and Tawanna D. Lee

PROTECTING THE U.S. SUPPLY CHAIN FROM CHINA

Alexander B. Gray

COUNTERING CHINA IN AFRICA

Jacob McCarty

THE CHALLENGE OF CHINA'S RIGHTS ABUSES

Olivia Enos

THE CHINESE THREAT TO PRIVACY

Klon Kitchen



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MAY 2021 | ISSUE 30

- 1. From the Editors** 2
Ilan Berman and Richard M. Harrison
- 2. A Vision for 5G Competition** 3
China has a plan for telecommunications dominance. We need one as well.
David A. Gross, Megan L. Brown, and Tawanna D. Lee
- 3. Protecting the U.S. Supply Chain from China** 6
The pandemic has proven our vulnerability. Here's how we can protect ourselves.
Alexander B. Gray
- 4. Countering China in Africa** 10
The continent's resource wealth makes it vital to U.S. national security.
Jacob McCarty
- 5. The Challenge of China's Rights Abuses** 14
If leveraged properly, China's domestic behavior can be a major point of pressure.
Olivia Enos
- 6. The Chinese Threat to Privacy** 20
Beijing seeks data dominance. Here's why.
Klon Kitchen



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the May 2021 edition of the American Foreign Policy Council's *Defense Dossier* e-journal.

In this issue of the *Dossier*, we turn our attention to the evolving great power competition between Washington and Beijing, and the future frontiers where it may play out. The articles in this collection cover a broad array of topics, including how to counter China's ambitions to be the lead supplier of 5G infrastructure globally, the danger of vulnerable U.S. supply chains, the importance of Africa's strategic minerals to the PRC, and China's domestic abuses and cyber-theft. All of them paint a picture of an ambitious Chinese plan for global dominance, and offer suggestions for how the U.S. can best compete with this Beijing on the various fronts of this new contest. We hope you find the ideas contained in these pages to be both thought-provoking and insightful. As always, thank you for your readership.

Sincerely,

Ilan Berman
Chief Editor

Richard M. Harrison
Managing Editor



A Vision for 5G Competition

David A. Gross, Megan L. Brown and Tawanna D. Lee

5G, the fifth generation of wireless technology and its related “technical” innovations, is no longer solely the domain of technologists and policy wonks. It has become a priority in boardrooms and legislatures around the world. Several dynamics have propelled technology policy to the fore: security concerns about hardware and software, demand for access to innovative services, and, increasingly, great power competition for dominance in the ecosystem that will undergird our digital future.

Heralded as a social and industrial disruptor on a par with the printing press, electricity, and the Internet of yesteryear, 5G is propelling growth globally. Not merely an evolution from 4G networks, 5G offers incredible speed, low latency, and massive capacity, enabling a growing Internet of Things (IoT), devices, and applications that rely on virtually real-time completion and nearly imperceptible lag times. This trifecta is expected to revolutionize the global economy, generating trillions of dollars of economic output and producing tens of millions of jobs as it reshapes whole industries—from automotive and transportation to manufacturing, agriculture, and healthcare.

Competition has ignited across the globe to harness the potential of 5G, with China a key supplier in the global supply chain. But a growing global consensus has also emerged regarding the potential security risks of using equipment from China’s telecommunications companies. In particular, there is concern that China requires its telecommunications firms to support its intelligence services — something which poses significant security risks, including that of data theft and disruption of essential services. In response, the United States and

other nations have taken steps to find alternative network equipment.

PUTTING 5G IN CONTEXT

5G may be the latest generation of wireless communication technology, but it will not be the last. Its technology has been in development for over a decade, and is poised to revolutionize economic and national security. U.S. policy, meanwhile, is at an inflection point on security, supply chain diversity, and competitiveness abroad.

Shifts of this magnitude require a whole-of-government response, with a thoughtful and inclusive strategy that preserves the best of American technology policy and promotes that vision to the rest of the world. Here, we offer three suggestions to help policymakers to champion innovation and reap the fruits of U.S. ingenuity in 5G competition.

First, the President must take the lead in setting out a vision, evangelizing the benefits of innovation, and corralling 5G work across departments and independent agencies. 5G and advanced technology involve virtually every area of the economy and are fundamental to national security. Federal research and development funding and incentives will never be able to match China’s massive spending. However, they should nonetheless reflect a coordinated effort to unleash the ingenuity of the industry experts who built the vibrant online and digital economy that has become the envy of the world. The White House and its senior officials are able to provide expertise, lead interagency coordination, direct federal funding, create incentives for private

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investment, and shape procurement policies to advance America's technological advantage.

United States "to secure radio frequency spectrum for United States businesses and national security needs,"

"encourage the development and adoption by foreign countries of internationally recognized standards, policies, and best practices," and "promote and protect the exercise of human rights, including freedom of speech and religion, through the Internet."²

Third, the federal government should renew its commitment to private-sector leadership and market forces to set the course of innovation. It should strengthen investments in research and development, with a renewed emphasis on foundational research; actively support education (especially STEM); reform immigration policies to allow the best and the brightest to work in the United States; and encourage commercial flexibility to determine which ideas and technologies work best free from government-mandated industrial policies.

Equally important, the entire U.S. government should reaffirm its commitment to bottom-up, private-sector standards, supported by government where relevant (such as at the International Telecommunication Union), coordinated with democratic allies, and based on expanded private participation. Such standards have historically promoted interoperability and economies of scale, including in global telecommunications. Industry-led standards have been foundational, and we must ensure that fundamental technological building blocks are not captured by governments—this applies to Chinese efforts to affect telecom standards as well as European efforts to move first on regulation of artificial intelligence and emerging tech. To guard against emboldening geopolitical rivals or politicizing the work, the United States should champion private sector leadership to create global, voluntary, transparent consensus standards.

Beyond international standards, the United States should pursue policies that encourage the deployment and use of 5G and other infrastructure. Networks are necessary to enable innovation in applications, devices, and services, so the United States should aggressively promote domestic and international rollout of 5G and advanced networks. This is vital because, as we learned

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Second, Congress needs to play a key role in keeping 5G and technology policy apolitical. It can do so by setting out a bipartisan vision for U.S. policy from which agencies can take direction, as it did in the 1990s when it mandated a light-touch approach to wireless and Internet services. That approach helped to create an unparalleled innovation economy, and it can pay similar dividends today.

For instance, Congress can help bring coherence to the multiple, competing strains of authority that currently deal with cyberspace and electronic communication through initiatives like the *Cyber Diplomacy Act of 2021* (introduced earlier this year). That legislation proposes the establishment of a Bureau of International Cyberspace Policy within the State Department to serve as a focal point for U.S. diplomatic efforts around cybersecurity and to "lead engagement, in coordination with Executive agencies, with foreign governments on [all] relevant international cyberspace and digital economy issues."¹

Congress can also mandate some degree of deconfliction on 5G, thereby allowing the United States to speak with one voice on relevant global tech policy. Indeed, the *Cyber Diplomacy Act of 2021* lays out the need for the



from 4G and prior wireless generations, the engine of U.S. growth has not been the domestic manufacture of infrastructure components. While re-shoring and near-shoring of component manufacturing may diffuse geopolitical risk, help limit supply chain shocks, and maintain visibility, even more value is captured by the economies that promote innovative services and applications that make use of infrastructure. Here, it will be the next generation of yet-unimagined services that will use 5G and other new technologies. That is why it is so important the United States continue the decades-long push to simplify and expedite the deployment of communications facilities, and encourage other nations to follow suit, so that it can create and lead the services that rely on those facilities.

UPHILL CLIMB

This whole-of-government approach will not take shape by accident or through luck. It must be a deliberate choice made by the President and Congress to promote American innovation. To maintain the dominance of the United States as a hub of tech innovation and a champion of digital liberty, we must preserve a welcoming and dynamic climate for investment and a regulatory environment that supports — rather than stifles — risk and creativity. If the United States does not meet the moment, it risks ceding not just market share but innovation leadership and, ultimately, control over the nation's digital destiny to geopolitical rivals.

Luckily, none of our suggestions require radical changes. But they do require prompt action and dogged follow-up to ensure that the United States maintains its economic and national security leadership. As always, time is of the essence. The Biden administration and Congress should act swiftly to assure innovators and investors that the United States remains open for business, that the government will encourage investment, and that it will dedicate American resources to smart research and regulation.

ENDNOTES

1 117th Congress, *Cyber Diplomacy Act of 2021*, H.R. 1251, §5 (2021), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1251>.

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Protecting the U.S. Supply Chain from China

Alexander B. Gray

President Biden's "Executive Order on America's Supply Chains," issued on February 24, 2021, has signaled the new administration's intent to maintain its predecessor's focus on expanding the resilience and security of U.S. supply chains. As the White House's *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* has noted, the Biden administration intends to "invest in critical stockpiles and ensure that supply chains for pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, and other critical materials" are secured from potential overseas disruption.¹

This approach seeks to build upon several important steps taken by the Trump administration. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed extensive vulnerabilities across the supply chains for personal protective equipment (PPE) and the active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) for many essential medicines. Dependence on China for many of these critical supplies, from masks to gloves to testing kits, has galvanized bipartisan interest in securing medical supply chains. With 72% of all API used in U.S. markets manufactured outside the country, and 13% of that production located in China, the focus could not be more timely.

Yet, despite President Biden's latest Executive Order, the U.S. government and its allies and partners have yet to fully grasp the magnitude of the problem – and the sweeping nature of the remedies required. China's assault on U.S. supply chains occurs across multiple vectors, from concerted economic aggression to highly-centralized industrial planning to direct economic espionage, impacts not only American economic competitiveness but also the ability of the U.S. to field modern, capable military forces.

MADE IN CHINA

China's industrial policy, as enshrined in its Made in China 2025 program and the country's Five-Year Plans, provides the proper framework for understanding the threat now facing American supply chains. Beijing's 14th Five-Year Plan, which covers the years 2021-2025, places great emphasis on "national economic security interests," explicitly calls for the use of the One Belt, One Road initiative to deepen Chinese control of global supply chains, and reemphasizes the importance of its dominance in advanced technologies.²

Made in China 2025 continues to serve as Beijing's ten-year blueprint for global manufacturing dominance. Announced in 2015, it focuses on turning China into a leading manufacturing power by the year 2049 by assuming the lead in industries as varied as information technology, robotics, aerospace equipment, high-speed rail, polymers, and electrical equipment. The strategy also encompasses Beijing's ambition for dominance in the quantum computing, artificial intelligence, and autonomous vehicle sectors.³

The combination of centrally-planned, comprehensive industrial policies and what the Trump administration termed "strategies of economic aggression" has allowed China to gain significant leverage over U.S. supply chains and the manufacturing and defense industrial base. Through a combination of nonreciprocal trade and investment policies, intellectual property theft, the "dumping" of products on the world market, and lax domestic environmental and safety standards, Beijing has come to dominate critical industries, including in areas once led by the U.S. and our partners.

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For example, China now produces over 70% of the world's solar cells, even as the Biden administration is expanding investment in green energy initiatives. According to the U.S. Defense Department, in 2015 24% of the world's power, 28% of the world's automobiles, 41% of the world's ships, 50% of the world's refrigerators, 60% of the world's color TVs, 80% of the world's computers, and 90% of the world's mobile phones, were manufactured in China. Those figures have only grown in the intervening years.⁴

As the Defense Department has noted, the greatest concern about China's economic coercion is the simultaneous pressure Beijing can exert on both the "upstream" and "downstream" elements of vital supply chains.⁵ China no longer simply controls the world's supply of some critical minerals; it also dominates the manufacturing and production processes for those minerals, and the manufacturing of many of the products for which those serve as essential components.

POSITION IN PERIL

This end-to-end dominance of key supply chains is an existential threat to the military preeminence the United States has taken for granted since the end of the Cold War. It extends far beyond the current interest in medical supply chains. The Trump administration's review of the manufacturing and defense industrial base, the first-ever such whole-of-government assessment, identified almost 300 specific areas of risk within the U.S. supply chain and industrial base.⁶ Ranging from sole and single domestic sources of critical components to foreign dependencies on essential products, often from China, these gaps and vulnerabilities pose an unacceptable risk to U.S. military readiness as well as to Washington's capacity to sustain conventional operations against a Great Power competitor.

The scale of the challenge posed by China's industrial and trade policies, and their direct impact on American national security, requires a holistic response by U.S. leaders. Securing U.S. supply chains and the industrial base they support can only happen if U.S. policymakers—both in the Administration and in Congress—expand

the traditional view of U.S. national security to truly encompass all elements of national power. As the Trump administration's 2017 *National Security Strategy* sought to propagate, economic security must be at the forefront of national security.⁷

While the consensus across the U.S. political spectrum has traditionally been to reject any semblance of industrial policy, even in the name of national security, China's unalloyed economic aggression offers a unique opportunity to shed outdated shibboleths. As the United States embarks upon long-term competition with China, it cannot hope to maintain its economic, diplomatic, cultural, and military advantages without taking aggressive action to ensure the health of its own industrial base and supply chains.

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The Administration should begin by identifying the industries essential to the vital economic and national security interests of the United States over the coming decade. It should then utilize all existing tools, and create new ones as needed, to ensure their security. While critics will complain that government lacks the expertise necessary to even identify critical industries, let alone emergent ones, recent history suggests otherwise.

For instance, the Trump administration conducted multiple assessments of key parts of the U.S. industrial base, gaining crucial insights into the supply chain in the process which will prove essential to the Biden White House in its efforts. Additionally, China's stat-



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ed industrial goals themselves are useful as a “pacing threat,” showcasing to American policymakers where they must focus their attention. Such understanding and prioritization, while painful and sometimes at odds with traditional American conceptions of government’s role, is necessary given the unprecedented nature of China’s economic aggression.

The U.S. government, meanwhile, has a variety of tools at its disposal to ensure that relevant industries are able to meet the economic and defense needs of the country. These include:

- Title III of the *Defense Production Act*, which allows the President to provide funding to critical industries and suppliers essential for defense purposes;
- Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment (IBAS), which seeks to identify defense-essential industries facing imminent threat;
- The Manufacturing Technology Program (ManTech), designed to further defense-applicable manufacturing capabilities. The National Defense Stockpile Program likewise ensures a ready supply of critical materials for defense and economic applications.
- Longstanding legislation, such as the *Merchant Marine Act of 1920* (the *Jones Act*) and the *Cargo Preference Act*, which ensures U.S. domestic maritime capacity in the face of China’s anticom-

petitive and aggressive industrial policies. Without such protections, as successive commanders of U.S. Transportation Command have noted, the U.S. would soon be without a domestic maritime industry for national security purposes, placing both military readiness and our shipping supply chains at unacceptable risk.

- Various “Buy American” provisions in the Federal Code, from the Berry Amendment (ensuring domestic-produced apparel for the U.S. military) to the Specialty Metals Clause of the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS), which provides for the melting of certain metals with defense applications in the U.S. These clauses help guarantee an industrial base and supply chain that is able to withstand China’s economic predation.

Taken together, these programs and protections are the foundation of a holistic American approach to economic and national security that can confront China’s pernicious behavior and revive the critical industries needed to win the future competition. While investments in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) are likewise important for future competitiveness, the U.S. cannot simply concede to Beijing dominance in more traditional industrial spheres. Emergent technologies like AI, quantum computing, autonomy, and 3D printing all require a resilient manufacturing base and associated supply chains. While many of the programs and protections outlined above have decades of history, they remain critical to the economic security of the United States.

But investments need to be made. As the Trump administration recommended back in 2018, the DPA Title III Program, which directly supports critical suppliers facing extinction, requires an infusion of several hundred million dollars to meet the challenge of a supply chain under direct assault from a Great Power competitor. The IBAS and ManTech program similarly require substantially increased investments. The National Defense Stockpile Program must become a priority initiative for the Defense Department, with the definition of critical materials expanded and radically enlarged to capture the range of dual-use supplies required to



sustain a civilian economy and military complex during a prolonged conventional conflict.

Key industries like maritime, rail transport, civil aviation, energy, bulk power, and more, which comprise most definitions of “national power,” will each face unique challenges associated with Beijing’s persistent economic aggression. As the Administration identifies the industries and sectors most crucial for successful, sustained competition, the tools available to meet the challenge posed by China will need to be expanded, refined, or created. The overarching requirement is an understanding of the enormity of the threat posed by Beijing’s ambitions, the stakes involved for the United States and our partners, and the necessity of acting with haste to ensure a stable, redundant, and resilient industrial base and supply chain for the years ahead.

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2 Karen M. Sutter and Michael D. Sutherland, “China’s 14th Five-Year Plan: A First Look,” Congressional Research Service *Report*, January 5, 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11684>.

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Countering China in Africa

Jacob McCarty

When it comes to U.S. national security, some resources are more important than others. In 2018, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) outlined a list of 35 “critical minerals” that are vital to, among other things, medical and atomic research, LCD screens, superalloys, high temperature ceramics, and fuel cells.¹ The significance of these elements (many of which are classified as “rare earth elements,” or REEs) is well-known to foreign policy and defense experts. As the Congressional Research Service laid out in a February 2021 report, some “are critical to U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) operations. These materials are frequently integrated into components (e.g., integrated circuits, electrical wiring, or optoelectronic devices) or structures (e.g., aircraft fuselages or ship hulls) of the military platforms and weapon systems that enable war-fighting capabilities.”²

Many of these strategic resources are abundant in Africa. For instance, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) currently produces 70% of the planet’s global supply of cobalt – an important element in the production of batteries, magnets, and turbines, among other products – and maintains 50% of the world’s available reserves of the mineral.³ South Africa, meanwhile, is the sixth highest producer of iron ore on the planet.⁴ And over the past two years, four African countries (Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, and South Africa) were responsible for roughly half of the globe’s supply of manganese, a critical element used in steel production.⁵

These attributes have helped to make Africa an area of intense and growing geopolitical focus – including on the part of China, which has concentrated intently on expanding its ties to the continent in recent years.⁶

CHINA’S GAMBLE

While China’s interest in Africa as a whole is not new,

Beijing’s focus on the continent as a source of strategic minerals is. Historically, the PRC has been a key exporter of these elements; between 2008 and 2018, according to the Center for Strategic & International Studies, China served as the source of 42.3% of all exported REEs.⁷ America, in turn, has served as one of Beijing’s biggest clients; some 80% of U.S. imports of REEs between 2016–2019 were sourced from China, according to the USGS.⁸ That fact has become a source of mounting concern among American policymakers and experts, especially as “great power competition” between the United States and China heats up.⁹

Yet China’s dominion over the world’s known REE reserves is decreasing. As the scholar Julie Klinger notes, “estimates of China’s reserves as a percentage of the global total have been decreasing annually, from 50 percent in 2009.” Today, the USGS estimates that China’s reserves make up roughly 36 percent of total global supply.¹⁰ However, as Klinger points out, “[t]his percentage does not account for the discovery of the largest known global deposit at the bottom of the South Pacific or the undetermined but reportedly massive finds in North Korea”¹¹—developments that could dilute China’s share of the global total still further.

Beijing has sought to mitigate this decline by becoming a net importer of unrefined oxides—something the country achieved in 2018 for the first time in 30 years.¹² Doing so has allowed China to dominate a certain aspect of the REE market; that is, the distribution of *refined* rare earths. According to a number of sources, China is currently responsible for roughly 80% of the refined rare earth elements that are distributed or used in various products around the world.¹³ This attempted monopoly of certain minerals has had the effect of centralizing supply chains, something that was recognized as a threat to national security by the Trump administration, and now by the Biden White House.¹⁴

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EYES ON AFRICA

If the United States is to untangle its strategic minerals supply from China, it is important to understand exactly *how* China approaches mineral resource acquisition. That conversation, by necessity, must include African countries, and examining how China has historically approached these nations can shed some light on Beijing's strategy for locking up key elements there.

For decades, China's approach toward African countries has revolved around political outreach, horse-trading in exchange for development assistance, and steep loans for infrastructure projects. Diplomatic relations between the CCP and some African governments are also steeped in decades of political history, as African liberation and anti-colonial movements fought for independence with at least some support from the Chinese government. These dynamics, in turn, have accelerated dramatically since the launch of China's global trade and infrastructure program, known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), early last decade. The resulting multilayered bilateral relationships between the PRC and African nations have proven difficult to contest by outside powers (such as the United States), and through them Chinese companies have managed to corner key local mineral extraction markets.

For instance, relations between China and the DRC have been consistently stable since the early 1970s, surviving multiple changes in government and political orientation. In 2006, the two nations issued a joint communique affirming a mutual effort to further "bilateral friendly relations and cooperation, as well as international and regional issues of common interest."¹⁵ The following year, the DRC and China inked a "minerals for infrastructure" deal via which, in exchange for access to local mining rights, "China's state-run Exim Bank and smaller Chinese banks [offered] up \$3 billion for infrastructure plus a further \$3 billion to develop Sicominex," a Chinese mining consortium operating in the DRC.¹⁶ The arrangement paved the way for close cooperation between the two countries in the field of strategic minerals, with significant effect; According to a 2019

working paper from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 8 of the 14 largest cobalt mines in the DRC are now owned by Chinese companies.¹⁷

China's relationship with Zambia has followed a similar trajectory. While ties between the two countries predate Zambia's independence in 1964, it kicked into high gear in the 1990s as a result of the Chinese government's "Going Out" policy. By 2007, 47% of China's pledged funding to Zambia was focused on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), "the majority of which is in mining, manufacturing, and telecommunications."¹⁸ Today, Zambia is one of the largest borrowers in the BRI¹⁹ while exporting roughly \$1.6 billion worth of unrefined copper—a crucial component to the production of electrical conductors and motors—to China.²⁰

Similarly, Zimbabwe's ties to China are rooted in the Southern African country's independence movement, the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU). During the tenure of former ZANU leader (and eventual autocrat) Robert Mugabe, Harare enjoyed a close relationship with Beijing and China was Zimbabwe's primary foreign financier for civic infrastructure development.²¹ Specifically, "[s]ince the early 2000s, China has invested enormously in diamonds in Zimbabwe. The major investment in this area comes through the

As strategic competition between the United States and China intensifies, growing attention has been paid to America's need to decouple itself from Chinese supply lines for, and Chinese control of, strategic resources. In this conversation, African countries, with their inherent resource wealth, may offer a viable option.



activities of the Chinese company Anjin, which invested \$400 million in a joint venture with the Zimbabwean government to mine diamonds in the Marange fields.”²² This special relationship appears to be continuing, post-Mugabe.²³

Instead, the U.S. government will need to demonstrate an approach to regional partners that emphasizes cooperation and mutual benefits. Confidence-building measures, such as commitments to fair international labor standards and mining methods that are mindful of environmental impact, would help Washington apart from Beijing as a benevolent, and viable, partner.

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All of the above, however, requires the United States to do something that successive administrations of both political parties in Washington have failed to do thus far, and treat political, social, and economic investment in the continent as worthwhile for its own sake (rather than as strictly an avenue for strategic competition with other global powers).²⁵ If it does, the United States is likely to find ample opportunities for engagement with African nations that improve its standing on the continent—including in areas such as access to strategic minerals.

ENDNOTES

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COOPERATION ON THE CONTINENT

As strategic competition between the United States and China intensifies, growing attention has been paid to America’s need to decouple itself from Chinese supply lines for, and Chinese control of, strategic resources. In this conversation, African countries, with their inherent resource wealth, may offer a viable option. Indeed, investment in Africa has already become a greater focus for countries, such as Australia, whose relationship with Beijing has soured significantly.²⁴ Yet it would be against American interests to cooperate with local governments and businesses solely with the intention of competing with China. To do so would not only be ineffective, due to China’s decades of comprehensive involvement on the continent, it also would perpetuate colonial and Cold War narratives that Africa and its countries exist only as a competition space or battlefield.



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The Challenge of China's Rights Abuses

Olivia Enos

Tursunay Ziawudun, a former detainee in Xinjiang's harrowing reeducation camps, recently described to the BBC the process of being selected for rape and sexual abuse in the camp where she was held.¹ She recounts "You can't tell anyone what happened, you can only lie down quietly... It is designed to destroy everyone's spirit."

Ziawudun is one of only a few former detainees from the camps who has been willing to speak to the media to date. Yet through corroborated accounts, a picture of conditions in the camps is emerging – one of systematic rape and sexual violence.

Today, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is carrying out what are perhaps the worst human rights violations of the 21stst century to date. The more than 260 known camps are estimated to hold between 1.8 million and 3 million detainees,² predominantly comprised of members of China's Uyghur Muslim minority. These detainees are subject to a range of abuses, including forced abortions and forced sterilizations, torture, rape, sexual violence and, in some instances, even death.

The U.S. government has already determined that genocide and crimes against humanity have taken place in Xinjiang.³ The determination, issued on the last day of the Trump administration, has since been reaffirmed by the Biden White House.⁴ Other countries, including Canada and the Netherlands, have echoed this determination, and still others now considering doing the same.⁵

The CCP has sought, in particular, to target Uyghur families. Adrian Zenz, a Senior Fellow for China Studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, found that the CCP has a stated goal of forcibly sterilizing between 80 to 90 percent of Uyghur women of

child-bearing age in certain provinces.⁶ In addition, *Radio Free Asia* has documented Uyghur women being subject to forced abortions.⁷ Both measures suggest that the CCP seeks to reduce, if not eliminate entirely, the next generation of Uyghurs.

The CCP has also taken steps to separate Uyghur children from their parents. Recent reporting from *Radio Free Asia* conservatively suggests that at least 500,000 Uyghur children have been separated from their families.⁸

Family separation is not just happening through political reeducation camps, however. It is also taking place through labor transfer schemes that seek to reduce the population density of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Zenz estimates that, in 2018 alone, 570,000 people were conscripted into forced labor.⁹ At least 1.6 million others are currently vulnerable to the same conditions.¹⁰ These circumstances paint a vivid picture of the genocide and crimes against humanity confronting the Uyghurs.

There can be no question of the gravity of the situation. But what leads the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to carry out human rights violations – not just against Uyghurs, but more generally? Chinese authorities, after all, have worked diligently to undermine Hong Kong's autonomy, collectivized Tibetans in broad sweeping forced labor transfer schemes, and repressed religious individuals of all faiths. Their decision to do so, note Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell in their seminal book *China's Search for Security*, relates to the CCP's two core foreign policy objectives: to maintain internal security and to safeguard its sovereignty.¹¹ To put a finer point on it, the CCP prizes stability and sovereignty because both solidify the preeminence of the Party and allow it to flex its muscles at home and abroad.



HONG KONG UNDER PRESSURE

In 2019, millions of Hong Kongers took to the streets to protest a Beijing-influenced extradition bill introduced in Hong Kong's Legislative Council that, if passed, would have erased rule of law in the city-state. The activists urged the withdrawal of the bill and called for universal suffrage, among other demands.

The widespread unrest in Hong Kong presented the specter of instability to authorities in Beijing, and prompted the CCP to act rapidly and resolutely – including by moving the People's Armed Forces to Shenzhen in Guangdong Province, the city in mainland China closest to Hong Kong.¹² When physical threats of violence didn't quell tensions, however, Beijing resorted to other tools in its proverbial toolbox. As the protests persisted, the PRC decided to neuter the Special Administrative Region's autonomy with the introduction of a new National Security Law which effectively ended the protection of civil and political liberties enshrined in the Basic Law—the legal framework that was supposed to govern Hong Kong until 2047.¹³ Today, while Hong Kong may continue to engage in global commerce and economic engagement, its citizens no longer enjoy the freedoms they once possessed.

Since the new law went into effect, countless pro-democracy advocates have been jailed or are facing charges, among them movement leaders Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow, and Ivan Lam.¹⁴ Even Hong Kong's "Father of Democracy," Martin Lee, has been convicted and sentenced to an 11-month term (though the sentence was subsequently suspended for 24 months).¹⁵ Prominent businessmen, like *Apple Daily* founder Jimmy Lai, have also been targeted, with Lai incurring a one-year prison sentence.¹⁶ Some people have even been detained at the airport as they were attempting to leave Hong Kong, even though there were no known warrants out for their arrests.¹⁷ The situation continues to worsen.

Those who argue that the promotion of values is merely a feel-good measure need look no further than what is taking place in Hong Kong to realize the real world impact of ceding the battle over values to au-

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thoritarian actors.¹⁸ The U.S. is now short another freedom-loving ally in Asia, while businesses increasingly operate at their own peril, never quite sure if and when they will be expelled or accused of colluding with pro-democracy elements. Meanwhile, the lives of 7.5 million Hong Kongers have been changed markedly, and for the worse.

TIBET UNDER THREAT

The CCP's extensive persecution of the Uyghurs is by now well-documented. China's campaign of repression, however, isn't limited to the country's Muslims. There are now growing concerns that human rights violations against Uyghurs are being replicated in other contexts—specifically, against Tibetan Buddhists.

Tibetans have long endured persecution at the hands of the CCP. For decades, their ability to freely practice their faith has been significantly restricted. The CCP has gone so far as to destroy important Buddhist landmarks like Larung Gar, the largest Buddhist institute in the world, which was once home to between 10,000 and 40,000 people.¹⁹ Many Tibetans, including Bud-



dhist monks, have been jailed and face persecution for practicing their faith. The CCP also refuses to allow the Dalai Lama to choose his successor; among those extrajudicially imprisoned is the Panchen Lama, the Dalai Lama's chosen successor, who was abducted at age 6 and forcibly disappeared by the CCP, along with his family. So severe is the repression that some desperate Tibetans have chosen to self-immolate in protest.²⁰ That, however, has had little effect, and the persecution continues.

Reports are now emerging that, much like the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, Tibetan Buddhists are also being collectivized and subjected to militarized vocational training, another possible ruse for forced labor.²¹ While Tibetans are not being sent to camps, they are being reeducated through other means, including through the historical denigration of their language (which is being replaced with Mandarin). Human Rights Watch has documented a shift to primarily educating Tibetan children at the pre-school and primary level through a bilingual curriculum that emphasizes Mandarin to the detriment of native language learning.²² Many Tibetans now worry that the next generation will be denied the ability to learn and speak in their mother tongue.

The vocational training and labor schemes identified and documented by Zenz “mandates that pastoralists and farmers are to be subjected to centralized “military-style” (军旅式, *junlüshi*) vocational training, which aims to reform “backward thinking” and includes training in “work discipline,” law, and the Chinese language.”²³ In

the first seven months of 2020, 543,000 Tibetan workers had been mobilized to work through this labor transfer scheme.²⁴ These schemes bear the hallmarks of labor transfer schemes now underway in Xinjiang, Zenz notes. Their purpose is essentially the same: to reform minorities so that they conform to the will of the Party.

The CCP's policies of forced labor and of reeducation are classic plays drawn from the Marxist-Leninist playbook. They seek to collectivize people, separating them from family, place, and culture, to reorient lives and livelihoods around the state, and more specifically, the Party. To do so furthers the CCP's goal of Sinicizing religious practice to conform with its dogma. It also reduces population density where high concentrations of one ethnic or religious group can normalize cultural and religious traditions at the expense of the state.

CHINA'S WAR ON RELIGION

Under Xi Jinping, persecution of religious persons has intensified. According to a 2017 report from Freedom House, religious persecution has increased steadily since 2012.²⁵ Its analysis notes that at least 100 million Chinese citizens belong to a religious group that is now experiencing “high” or “very high” rates of persecution.

Christians are prominent among them. In 2018, the CCP instituted new regulations on religious affairs that restrict activities like the participation of children in Christian Sunday school.²⁶ These new regulations

have impacted the operations of religious organizations and for Christians, in particular, resulted in the shuttering of churches, the removal of crosses from steeples, and the imprisonment of pastors and church members.

Wang Yi, the pastor of Early Rain Covenant Church, an especially active Chinese house church, was detained in December 2018 and subsequently sentenced to nine years in prison.²⁷ He not only pastored the church, but was actively involved in his local community, providing humanitarian aid and assistance in the wake of natural disasters like the country's 2008 earthquake.²⁸ Good Samaritans like Pastor Wang are viewed as threatening by the CCP because

“Those who argue that the promotion of values is merely a feel-good measure need look no further than what is taking place in Hong Kong to realize the real world impact of ceding the battle over values to authoritarian actors.”



they represent a source of help independent of, and therefore unregulated by, the state.

While the CCP does not seek worship of the state, it does require that religious practice conform to the will of the state, rather than to that of God. One clear example is the CCP's requirement that religious organizations register with the State Administration for Religious Affairs. Many house churches, or churches not affiliated with the state, refuse to do so 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.²⁹

Sinicization has moved beyond mere secularization of religion to characterizing various forms of religious practices as extremist, as the CCP has done to Uyghurs. This mischaracterization of religious practice has been used as a justification for crackdowns and various forms of reeducation that the CCP has enacted against religious minorities. The practice is deliberate; it reflects an attempt to represent persons of faith as an inherently destabilizing force, thereby justifying the Party's swift and often violent attempts to quash religious practice.

opened and continues to take place in Xinjiang. Members of both parties should seize upon that momentum to engineer a strategy toward China that addresses security and human rights concerns in tandem.

There are a number of ways available to policymakers to build on the determination, including by continuing to identify individuals and entities in China who should face sanctions on human rights grounds.³⁰ Steps taken in concert with partners and allies, like the jointly-administered March 23rd U.S. and EU sanctions over Xinjiang, are particularly powerful.³¹ Such measures demonstrate the resilience of shared values and the impact of joint action.

The CCP's policies of forced labor and of reeducation are classic plays drawn from the Marxist-Leninist playbook. They seek to collectivize people, separating them from family, place, and culture, to reorient lives and livelihoods around the state, and more specifically, the Party.

PRIORITIZING VALUES

Given that the CCP views human rights concerns as central, rather than peripheral, issues, U.S. policymakers would be wise to consider their place in our overarching strategy toward China. Rather than marginalizing human rights concerns—or delaying a focus on them until we've made progress on other security concerns—the U.S. should consider how safeguarding human rights in China advances U.S. interests.

Today, there is a uniquely bipartisan consensus on China, including regarding the need to hold the Chinese government accountable for perpetrating atrocities against the Uyghurs. The atrocity determination, in particular, handed the Biden administration and Congress a mandate to respond without having to debate what hap-

The U.S. should also seek to tackle forced labor from Xinjiang by instituting a region-wide Withhold Release Order to stop goods produced with forced labor from entering U.S. markets.³² Partners in Europe and Asia should be pressed to do the same.

The U.S. can also send a clear message that it is prepared to be a safe haven for persons in China fleeing persecution by extending Priority-2 refugee status to both Hong Kongers and Uyghurs.³³ There already appears to be some interest in Congress in doing so.

Finally, the U.S. in the past has served as a valuable convener by hosting at the State Department the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom.³⁴ Now, the Biden administration is considering hosting a Democ-



racy Summit as well. The U.S. should use both fora as opportunities to coordinate policy responses to China's human rights violations.

When the U.S. government defends human rights in China, however, it should link those actions to broader strategy in Asia—highlighting that promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific is not only in the interest of the U.S., but in the best interest of our partners, too. Safeguarding and preserving the rights of people in China has the potential to advance interests in powerful ways, while also safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of people whose government refuses to defend their rights itself.

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The Chinese Threat to Privacy

Klon Kitchen

These days, it is widely understood that, in the words of *The Economist*, “the world’s most valuable resource is no longer oil, but data.”¹ The massive scope of cyber-enabled data theft perpetrated by China over just the last decade supports this assessment. Already back in 2011, the Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive was assessing that “Chinese actors are the world’s most active and persistent perpetrators of economic espionage.”² Ten years later, it has been discovered that Chinese hackers have compromised more than 400,000 Microsoft Exchange servers in 115 nations, including more than 30,000 in the United States, giving Beijing full access to the victims’ emails and leaving them vulnerable to further exploitation.³

If the United States is going to prevent China from systematically syphoning “the world’s most valuable resource,” it must understand the strategic rationale of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for hoarding data, how that data is subsequently employed, how it is being collected, and what can be done to mitigate the threat.

CHINA’S TARGETING OF DATA IS RATIONAL

China is like every other nation in the history of the world in that it seeks to build and wield geopolitical influence to secure itself and its interests. The CCP has also determined that collecting and using this influence will, in part, depend on the nation’s leadership in emerging technologies that are shaping modern governance and economics. It has specifically identified the following industries as priorities: information technologies, robotics, “green” energy, aerospace, ocean engineering, power equipment, new materials, medicine, and agriculture.⁴

But Beijing likewise knows that American technological leadership will not be easily overtaken, and that China’s domestic technology industries are not robust or mature enough to win on their own. The CCP, therefore, is pursuing a strategy of “military-civil fusion,” where the Chinese government and the country’s industries partner on mutually-beneficial priorities and objectives—often leveraging state monetary and espionage capabilities in the process.

To put it simply, Beijing is attempting to prove a new concept of governance that links the wealth of its version of capitalism with the stability and security of technological totalitarianism. If successful, China will likely find a host of would-be authoritarians around the world eager to sign up for this new model, and it would be well-positioned to supply the capabilities and infrastructure needed for its implementation in those places. Indeed, techno-totalitarianism could become a key export along China’s Belt & Road.

At the root of this strategy is the acquisition and use of data, which the CCP uses to build wealth, to secure itself, and to shape the international environment.

THE THREE ROLES OF DATA

Data is not valuable in and of itself. Data must be examined, assessed, and leveraged toward some broader objective. But, when this is done effectively, data can provide a decisive advantage. To this end, the CCP’s data acquisition efforts can be understood as supporting three goals.

First, data is key for *economic energy*. Harvard professor and business strategist Michael Porter observes, “Innovation is the central issue in economic prosperity.”⁵



This is certainly true for the United States, where every consumer technology sector job supports almost three non-tech jobs in the American economy, and where the U.S. tech sector supplies \$1.3 trillion in annual wages, \$503 billion in tax revenue, and contributes nearly 12% of national GDP (~\$2.3 trillion).⁶

Similarly, in China, electronics and technology sales revenues topped \$630 billion in 2019, and nine of the world's 20 largest internet companies are Chinese.⁷ While economic numbers coming out of China are notoriously suspect, a Tufts University survey⁸ ranks the nation as the world's most rapidly evolving digital economy. There can be no doubt that the nation's financial future is inextricably linked to its technology industry.

Thus, the systematic and sustained gathering of intellectual property, proprietary secrets, trade secrets, and other data is critical for China's economic growth. One in five North American-based companies now say China has stolen their intellectual property.⁹ As of 2019, this was projected to have cost the U.S. economy more than \$600 billion.¹⁰ Beijing has clearly concluded that its prosperity is best achieved by leveraging that of others.

Second, data is seen as essential for *internal social strength*. It can be said that the CCP's primary concern is its own stability and security, and that data harvesting is a key means of achieving these ends. Specifically, data collection is used by the CCP to manipulate public attitudes and behavior, and to suppress anyone who is thought to challenge the government's authority.

Beijing's social credit score regime exemplifies the nation's cultural shaping operations. Here, the CCP leverages wide-scale surveillance and data collection to monitor citizen's economic, social, political, and online habits in an effort to incentivize "good" behavior and constrain "bad" behavior. If you advance the Party's priorities, your social score goes up—giving you greater freedom of movement and increased access to benefits like public services and travel. If you engage in unapproved behaviors, however, you may not be allowed to apply for certain jobs or to leave your home town.

The situation is even worse for religious and political minorities. The sheer scope of the CCP's ubiquitous

monitoring of Uyghur Muslims, primarily in China's Xinjiang Province, is staggering. It is also emblematic of the government's willingness to use data to monitor, harass, and target anyone deemed a threat to the state. In Xinjiang, Uyghurs are under nearly-total surveillance, regularly have their devices searched and copied, and are even required to download government surveillance software on their mobile phones. Their communications, images, medical data, economic spending, online viewing, and their family and social interactions are known by the government – often with the help of the country's leading tech companies, which collect, process, and analyze this data.

Beijing is attempting to prove a new concept of governance that links the wealth of its version of capitalism with the stability and security of technological totalitarianism.

Finally, the third goal of China's data collection is *external political power*. Aggressive data collection and exploitation not only facilitates economic growth and government stability, it also enables all of the other elements of national power. Traditional and corporate espionage are the backbone of China's military industrial base, its diplomatic strategies, its intelligence enterprise, and its international treaties and trade practices. Put another way, a robust pipeline of data feeds China's engagement with the world by informing and shaping its ends, ways, and means.

THREE WAYS IN WHICH DATA IS COLLECTED

The Chinese government draws data from three primary sources: open-source data stores, government espionage, and corporate espionage.



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First, in discussing open-source information, consider the following statistics from 2020:¹¹

- Nearly 90% of the world's data has been created in the last two years;
- Every minute of every day, 500 hours of new video are uploaded to YouTube, 147,000 photos are posted to Facebook, 41 million messages are shared on WhatsApp, and more than 212 million emails are sent;
- Humans produce 2.5 quintillion bytes of data every day (for perspective: 2.5 quintillion pennies, if laid flat, would cover the earth's surface five times); and,
- It is projected that people will produce 463 exabytes every day by 2025 (again, for reference, if a gigabyte is the size of the earth, an exabyte is the size of the sun).

The majority of the data discussed above is generated by, and exists within, unclassified networks that constitute the heart of the "knowledge economy." At the core of this economy are an array of "data brokers" who compile, analyze, and sell this data. Just one of these data brokers, estimates the Federal Trade Commission,

"has 300 data segments for nearly every U.S. consumer." Another "has information on 1.4 billion consumer transactions and over 700 billion aggregated data elements." And still another "adds three billion new records each month to its databases."¹²

That data can enable a near-total reconstruction of an individual's identity, location history, interpersonal relationships and networks, entertainment and purchasing preferences and habits, and even future economic, social, and political outcomes. And all of it is available for sale to anyone willing to cut a check.

Or to steal it. Data brokers are a key target for the CCP. In 2017, suspected Chinese hackers compromised the Equifax credit brokerage firm, exposing critical information for hundreds of millions of people. Two years prior, China broke into the Anthem Inc. insurance company and stole the names, birthdates, addresses, social security numbers, and employment data for more than 78 million customers. While Americans are increasingly concerned about how data collec-

tion affects their domestic freedoms and privacy, there is still too little understanding of the national security implications of these practices.

Traditional government espionage is another primary source of data for the CCP. In July 2020, FBI Director Christopher Wray noted publicly that:

If you are an American adult, it is more likely than not that China has stolen your personal data ... We've now reached the point where the FBI is opening a new China-related counterintelligence case about every 10 hours. Of the nearly 5,000 active FBI counterintelligence cases currently under way across the country, almost half are related to China.¹³

In terms of military and intelligence compromises alone, the CCP has stolen American plans for supersonic anti-aircraft missiles, stealth technology, and, of course, troves of personally identifiable information on Americans within the U.S. Intelligence Community when it hacked the Office of Personnel Management in



2015. Chinese hacking of defense contractors and others in the private sector is so pervasive that last year, the Department of Homeland Security issued a Data Security Business Advisory, with the following warning:

Businesses expose themselves and their customers to heightened risk when they share sensitive data with firms located in the PRC, or use equipment and software developed by firms with an ownership nexus in the PRC, as well as with firms that have PRC citizens in key leadership and security-focused roles (together, “PRC firms”). Due to PRC legal regimes and known PRC data collection practices, this is particularly true for data service providers and data infrastructure.¹⁴

The third source of data leveraged by China, corporate espionage, is perhaps the most poorly understood—and least well addressed—vector of Chinese data theft. It obviously includes traditional efforts by companies to steal intellectual property and other secrets. However, the CCP is going even further by enacting national security and cybersecurity laws that apply to every company inside China and to every Chinese company, wherever it operates.

In January 2020, for example, a new cybersecurity law required all companies operating in China—including foreign-owned companies—to arrange and manage their computer networks so that the Chinese government has access to every bit and byte of data that is stored on, transits over, or in any other way touches China’s information infrastructure. Laws like this one are at the root of American concerns about Chinese companies such as Huawei and TikTok operating in the United States. These companies do not need to have “backdoors” that Chinese hackers can access. Nor do they need to be malevolent in their intentions. They simply need to be compliant with Chinese law. And, in China, anyone who is not compliant is not in business for long.

Any one of these sources of data constitutes a critical capability for Beijing, and a critical vulnerability for the United States. Taken in total, they constitute an existen-

tial liability that must be addressed urgently and comprehensively.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

In its March 2021 *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, the Biden administration promised to “confront unfair and illegal trade practices, cyber theft, and coercive economic practices that hurt American workers, undercut our advanced and emerging technologies, and seek to erode our strategic advantage and national competitiveness.”¹⁵ Here are three broad steps that are needed in order to see this policy through.

Beijing’s social credit score regime exemplifies the nation’s cultural shaping operations. Here, the CCP leverages wide-scale surveillance and data collection to monitor citizen’s economic, social, political, and online habits in an effort to incentivize “good” behavior and constrain “bad” behavior.

First, stop the bleeding. The United States is hemorrhaging data to the Chinese. The nation cannot be secure as long as these losses continue at their current pace. In addition to ongoing efforts to increase scrutiny of Chinese investment and operations in the United States, the Biden administration should investigate the national security equities at stake in the data brokerage industry, and offer a path forward that can be fully implemented within 18 months. Washington should also develop a coherent framework for evaluating what technologies and platforms are truly strategically essential—and therefore in need of aggressive defense—and



those which are valuable, but where losses or dependency are not catastrophic to American strength. The methodology offered the China Strategy Group (CSG) of former Google CEO Eric Schmidt and Jigsaw CEO Jared Cohen is an excellent place to start.¹⁶ Finally, in the context of traditional government espionage, there is already a great deal of effort underway in the classified environment. Thus far, however, we do not appear to have changed Beijing's strategic calculus regarding increasingly aggressive cyber operations. This must change, and we must be prepared to use every element of national power to force this evolution on the CCP.

Washington should develop a coherent framework for evaluating what technologies and platforms are truly strategically essential – and therefore in need of aggressive defense – and those which are valuable, but where losses or dependency are not catastrophic to American strength.

Next, we have to build an alliance for the trust-development and deployment of emerging technologies. Even if the United States were able to unilaterally dominate emerging technologies for the next century, our national security and foreign influence would be critically weakened if our global partners and allies fail to keep pace—or even worse, if they are subsumed by Chinese technological expansion. Here again, the CSG offers a helpful suggestion by calling for a new multilateral forum to “bring together key countries to coordinate responses to technological competition.”¹⁷ This “T-12” should include the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain and Canada, the Netherlands, South Korea, Finland, Sweden, India, Israel, and Australia.

The specific forms this alliance could take may vary, but such a construct is essential and must be pursued as a core objective of American foreign policy.

Finally, the United States must prepare for a “splinternet.” As has been discussed above, Washington and Beijing have two increasingly different notions of modern governance, but both understand data and networks as being critical for securing and spreading those visions. In much the same way that the world was divided into competing spheres of influence between the West and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the world's networks may soon be divided between a Western and a Chinese internet – each with its own norms, rules, and infrastructure. To be sure, such a development would be incredibly disruptive to globalized economies and to the digital global commons more generally. Yet the techno-totalitarian model being pioneered by China requires at least some decoupling from the Western world. China, Russia, and other nations are already building regional internets in the name of cybersecurity, and there is little the United States can do to prevent these efforts from maturing. American bans on Chinese companies like ZTE and Huawei are being mirrored by Chinese bans on Western equipment. These are all telltale signs of the coming “splinternet.”

GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT DATA

The world is awash in data, and this deluge will only deepen in the foreseeable future. Nations that harness and secure this new strategic resource will be best positioned to thrive in the emerging geopolitical environment. Those that do not will face existential challenges. The Chinese government is heeding the ancient adage: “To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself.”¹⁸ The United States, however, has been too slow in securing itself, and because it has it risks ceding its security and interests to the nation's chief international rival. Even so, there is now growing consensus in the United States around this challenge, and there is good reason to expect a more se-



rious approach in the weeks and months ahead. In order for one to materialize, however, we must understand the strategic value of data, and protect it accordingly.

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