

Talking Points Memo

Thesis:

The United States and China should implement a plan of cooperation and cohabitation to avoid an escalation of armed confrontation or war but maintain a managed strategic competitive nature in most aspects as to lessen economic tensions, reduce provocative Chinese military involvement in the South China Sea, and to pressure China into stopping their human rights violations of the Uighurs.

Talking Points:

1. Lessen Economic Tensions
 - a. U.S. needs to rejoin multilateral international organizations
 - b. China knows its dominance is possible after the Trump administration's foreign policy failures and removal from post WWII international institutions
 - c. U.S. needs to adapt a fully open economy
2. Reduce China's Military Dominance in the South China Sea
 - a. Chinese dominance in the South China Sea threatens the counties there
 - b. Threatens U.S. regional ability there
 - c. War in the South China Sea is not necessary
3. Pressure China into Stopping Human Rights Violations
 - a. Situation cannot be ignored any longer
 - b. U.S. cannot fail in a genocidal situation
 - c. U.S. needs to use its political and diplomatic strength to stop China's human rights violations against the Uighurs

How Should the United States Approach China?

The United States and China have an extensive history together beginning with tense relations after the People's Republic of China was established in 1949 and leading up to the recent trade war and questions on how the United States will proceed in the wake of a new administration coming into office during a pandemic that has origins in China (CFR, n.d.). The United States and China should implement a plan of cooperation and cohabitation to avoid an escalation of armed confrontation or war but maintain a managed strategic competitive nature in most aspects as to lessen economic tensions, reduce provocative Chinese military involvement in the South China Sea, and to pressure China into stopping their human rights violations of the Uighurs. Competition inherently exists between sovereign states and denying that would cause a lot more problems than recognizing it and going from there. U.S.-China relations should be about "rightsizing the competitive challenge China presents" and creating a "forward-looking policy as opposed to a reactionary one" (Wyne, 2020).

Managed strategic competition but with cooperation in some respects between the United States and China is particularly important in regard to the economic entanglement between the two countries. Tensions between the two countries could lead to a Cold War like conflict or worse and China is too systemically embedded in the global economic order to change that (Wyne, 2020). In China's plight to try and "peel countries away from the United States" the United States needs to maintain a fully open economy in order to not let China achieve its goal. The United States rejoining multilateral institutions can help to reassert diplomacy and legitimacy lost during the Trump administration while also preventing these international systems from becoming led or swayed by China (Rudd, 2021). Diplomacy is key here for balancing China as it is intertwined in the global economy. And as China will continue to seek

for global economic dominance it is important the United States regain its diplomatic relations in multilateral international institutions. China will remain competitive with the United States and the U.S. should still remain aware of that.

China is working to make its military stronger, more efficient, and more technologically advanced (Maizland, 2020). China's military is in direct competition with the United States and that isn't changing anytime soon. Although it is unclear if the Chinese government wants to project power globally like the United States, a rise in its military means it's prepared (Maizland, 2020). China's military rise is linked to asserting regional hegemony in the South China Sea. Not only would a China hegemonic dominance over the South China Sea delegitimize the sovereignty of the states there, but it would completely push the U.S. out of the region (CRS, 2021). China is responding to the size of the U.S.'s military which is inherently competitive in nature. Cooperation will not make China reduce its military or lower its budget, especially if the U.S. doesn't commit to doing the same. This is where strategic competition arises. The "unpredictable layer of military tensions" between China and Taiwan in the South China Sea dispute can lead to a conflict that the U.S. does not want. Political and diplomatic pressure stemming from strategic competition is the only way to prevent China's control over the South China Sea and from maintaining the legitimacy of, for example, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Malaysian sovereignty and needs in the region (Broder, 2020). If not, then the U.S. could potentially risk a dangerous military confrontation with China which could escalate into war and deterring that with strategic competition is a good way to ensure military involvement does not occur.

It is vital the United States rejoin multilateral international organizations and rebuild U.S. diplomacy because not only will it attain the ideas of strategic competition, but it is essential

when the United States “chooses to contest China ” (Wyne, 2020). A situation in which the United States may want to contest China politically and economically is when it comes to the Uighurs, a Muslim, Turkic-speaking ethnic minority group who live in the northwestern region of Xinjiang in China, who are currently being held in detention “reeducation” camps under intense surveillance, religious restrictions, and forced sterilizations (Maizland, 2021). The United States has called the abuses a genocide. The human rights atrocities happening cannot be ignored and as the United States is a leader not only in the UN but globally as well, other countries will be looking towards the United States to make another strategic move to deter the atrocities currently happening. China’s President Xi believes that they shouldn’t fear sanctions or other strategies used in response to human rights violations from the U.S. or other nations and a managed strategic competitive response to that could be key in hindering what the United States has called a genocide (Maizland, 2020). Political and diplomatic push is necessary to stop the atrocities from occurring in China and the United States has that capability.

Although strategic competition is needed for some situations, it isn’t for all. That’s where cooperation comes into play. The U.S. and China have many similar issues that it could decide to be cooperative on. When it comes to negotiations like those collaborating on climate change, a nuclear arms agreement, a North Korean nuclear disarmament and preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. China and the United States can also “work toward[s] an agreement on acceptable military applications of artificial intelligence” (Rudd, 2021). And although there is a common cause on both sides with things such as 5G infrastructure, intelligence sharing, and security cooperation, it will not always be like that on every issue (Wyne, 2020). But as mentioned “Washington cannot ensure its own vital national interests without maintaining a

baseline of cooperation with Beijing” (Wyne, 2020). Some issues the United States must remain cooperative on, it is key in de-escalation.

In a post pandemic world stage, both the United States and China have suffered politically and economically. Relations have been tense ever since the Trump administration imposed tariffs and incited a trade war (Usher, 2020). The United States is in the middle of rebuilding itself on a multilateral world stage. With a new administration in office, adapting to a plan of managed strategic competition with some cooperation and cohabitation to prevent an escalation is important to adopt. China in its emergence as another global power will inherently always be competitive as we know sovereign states are. The United States needs to respond in a delicate but strong manner to make sure the U.S. goals, economic and political, and safety are maintained whilst also pushing for regional peace in the South China Sea and in the plight against China's human rights violations. The idea that the United States can be the sole superpower of the globe is unrealistic. Obviously other countries want to compete with that especially China which has the population, economic, and military power to do so. It is in the United States favor to recognize this, maintain a managed strategic competitive nature with China whilst also cooperating on a plethora of issues to eventually strengthen relations and diplomatic ties. Coexistence is possible under strategic competition and as tensions hopefully relax, maybe that relationship can hopefully turn into one of just cooperation and cohabitation.

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