There is no question that tensions have heightened between the United States and China over the past few years. Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle agree that we must urgently discuss the United States’ strategy in East Asia in order to lower the risk of military confrontation. Throughout this briefing, our expert panel identified three key issues and areas of cooperation that Members should prioritize as China-focused legislation is considered:

**Diplomacy and peace should be the standard**

As the war in Ukraine continues, countries are looking to the United States for guidance and support on geopolitical issues from immigration to food security, which is why our response to China must be calculated and focused on areas of cooperation. Rep. Judy Chu highlighted the importance of collaboration on the climate crisis and other international issues, which will help build trust between our countries while working to address urgent global challenges. The panelists also emphasized that Congress must move beyond a defense framework when discussing U.S.-Asia policy. As global and regional powers, the U.S. and China should collaborate to address issues including economic development, technology, and combating violent nationalism internationally.

**Anti-Asian rhetoric is unacceptable**

The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism reports that anti-Asian hate crime increased by 339 percent last year compared to the year before, with hate crimes in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and other cities surpassing record numbers in 2020. Jessica Lee, Senior Research Fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, noted that using China as political scapegoat has real repercussions on both the long-term safety of Asian Americans and our countries’ overall relationship. Congressional Members and staffers should clearly distinguish between their critiques of the Chinese government and the people of China in order to protect citizens at home. Tobita Chow, Director of Justice is Global, emphasized that policymakers should avoid language that invokes fear or discrimination, such as “malign influence,” or accusing China of “cheating” the United States. Changing the way we talk about China, including in legislative language, would decrease anti-China hysteria and reduce anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S.

**Increased nuclear posturing toward China does not ensure security**

Eric Gomez, Director of Defense Policy for the Cato Institute, explained how “Great Power competition” and “Cold War” framing diminishes the nuance between the U.S.-China’s historic and current relationship, and causes us to forget how dynamic and intertwined our two countries are. According to Gomez, while China is increasing its nuclear weapons production, they also have a relatively lean arsenal and Chinese nuclear policy has historically focused entirely on retaliatory options, rather than first strike options. Avoiding threat inflation and amplifying legislative measures that place human rights and global issues at the forefront, such as protecting the Uyghur people and taking action on climate issues, are key to encouraging positive economic, social, and political engagement between our countries without promoting military conflict.
Conclusion

As the Hill considers China-focused competition legislation, it is imperative that policymakers understand the impacts of such legislation on the future of the U.S.-China relationship. It is no secret that the Chinese government lacks economic transparency and commits and enables egregious human rights abuses. However, severing the relationship and posturing toward war will only serve to further escalate already-high tensions, with a deleterious ripple effect beyond our two countries. We must work to rebuild a diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and China and avoid military confrontation. We can do that by decreasing anti-Asian sentiment in our foreign policy, finding points of cooperation like climate change, and engaging in policymaking that does not include weapons proliferation or war planning.

Speakers

**Tobita Chow**
Tobita Chow is the founding Director of Justice Is Global, a special project of People’s Action to build a just and sustainable global economy and defeat right-wing nationalism. He is a leading progressive strategist regarding the US-China relationship.

**Eric Gomez**
Eric Gomez is the director of defense policy studies at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on extended deterrence, nuclear stability, and arms control issues in East Asia. With Caroline Dorminey, he is the co-editor of the 2019 book America’s Nuclear Crossroads: A Forward-Looking Anthology. Eric received his bachelor's degree from the State University of New York College at Geneseo and a master's degree from the Bush School at Texas A&M University.

**Jessica J. Lee**
Jessica J. Lee is a Senior Research Fellow in the East Asia Program at the Quincy Institute. Her research interests include U.S. foreign policy toward the Indo-Pacific region, with an emphasis on the Korean Peninsula. She has testified before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and co-authored the 2021 Quincy Institute report, “Toward an Inclusive & Balanced Regional Order: A New U.S. Strategy in East Asia.”

**Maggi Chambers (moderator)**
Maggi Chambers is a recent graduate of Howard University and Scoville Fellow at Women’s Action for New Directions. She previously worked as a foreign relations and legislative affairs intern on Capitol Hill and served on the Middle East and North Africa team at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Women’s Action for New Directions Education Fund, a 501c3 organization founded in 1982, builds women’s political power to advocate for peace and security with justice. We believe that women are central to shifting the patriarchal culture that pervades our society and leads to endless war and violence.

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