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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Hearing on Defending America from the Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare
Part III

Defending Democracy as a Pillar of U.S. Strategic Competition with the People's Republic of China

BY

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Testimony

Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Raskin, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this critical topic. I'll start by assessing the challenge and then offer some thoughts on how to respond.

The People's Republic of China (PRC), particularly under the rule of CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping, poses the most consequential challenge to American interests and values over the coming decades. How the United States wages strategic competition with China will determine the course of world affairs this century.

The challenge from Beijing is most acute in East Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region. But China's reach is increasingly global—to include the continental United States. Specifically, regarding China's political warfare, the CCP's foundational goal is to combat threats to its hold on power domestically in China and generally make the world safe for authoritarianism. As part of that campaign, Beijing seeks to paint democracies as corrupt, internally divided, tumultuous, and incapable of tackling big problems facing society.

So, what should we, the United States, do about it?

A comprehensive U.S. strategy to compete with China should have several pillars: First, the United States needs a credible military deterrent to guard against PRC aggression.

Second, we should forge an economic, financial, and trade strategy that ensures U.S. companies and workers compete in the global economy on a level playing field.

Third, we must continue to innovate cutting-edge civilian and military technologies like artificial intelligence and quantum computing, and actively work to increase their uptake across the private and public sectors.

Fourth, our diplomacy should sustain and expand coalitions of allies, partners, and like-minded countries to magnify our activities across the other pillars.

U.S.-China competition is too often portrayed as a contest between two *countries* when it is actually a contest of *coalitions*. Coalition building is painstaking and sometimes requires frustrating compromises. But it is worth the effort because it allows the United States to effectively counterbalance Beijing's actions that violate international rules and norms, and even engage China diplomatically—on a selective basis—from a position of strength.

As for responding to the PRC's political warfare specifically, the United States should assist vulnerable countries in exposing and punishing inappropriate PRC influence—whether in the form of political interference, transnational repression, or economic or security espionage.

Washington can do so by sharing intelligence on how China operates; supporting fact-based investigations by civil society and independent media outlets; and bolstering strong institutions and the rule of law around the world. The good news is that strengthening the foundations of democracies overseas—a worthy objective in its own right—helps counter PRC influence, too.

Meanwhile, we face similar challenges from the CCP here at home. The United States must also protect against efforts by the PRC party-state to interfere with and weaken our democracy and sow division and discord. Front and center in that fight are law enforcement and counter-intelligence activities that are both vigorous and vigilant. They should deny and impose costs on China for efforts to influence the sovereign affairs of the United States or to steal our

technology. Equally essential are transparent and accountable institutions and processes, which can help inoculate us against the tools of CCP influence.

The actions we take to defend ourselves, however, will be both ineffective and self-defeating unless they accord with American values. The United States is engaged in an intense strategic competition with China; that's a geopolitical reality. Additionally, PRC intelligence draws on a wide range of intelligence collectors.

Those facts could tempt the United States to go beyond targeted, common-sense controls in key sectors and instead cast all people of Chinese or even Asian descent as suspect. We could even be tempted to turn away from our country's historical role as a place where people seeking a better life yearn to live.

We must resist those temptations, because they would play right into the CCP's hands. America's ability to attract the best and brightest from around the world to come to our country and adopt our way of life—our political ideology—is an asymmetric geopolitical advantage that we squander at our peril. It is the reason why our economy is growing when China's is not and why our innovation ecosystem leads the world. In other words, we cannot effectively protect America by becoming more like China.

Finally, in addition to disrupting the *tools* the CCP uses to influence and interfere, we should refute Beijing's underlying *argument* by demonstrating that democracy can deliver freedom, prosperity, and security for its citizens in America and around the world. To put it in political warfare terms, delivering on the promise of democracy will act as a potent counteroffensive to China's efforts.

I will conclude my remarks there. Thank you again for the opportunity speak, and I look forward to your questions.

Appendix

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