

Committee on Oversight and Accountability
Hearing Entitled: Defending America from the Chinese Communist Party’s Political Warfare, Part III
10:00 AM, Tuesday, September 24, 2024
Rayburn 2154
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)

Over the past four years, the message that the Biden Administration has delivered to the PRC and to our partners and allies in the Indo-Pacific is clear: the United States is back and will not waver as a Pacific power. In that time, the Biden-Harris Administration has renewed U.S. standing in the Indo-Pacific, working with partners and allies to provide a united front against authoritarianism and growing hostility from the PRC. These actions provide a stark contrast to the Trump Administration’s record towards authoritarianism and the PRC, which includes an American withdrawal from the Indo-Pacific, a trade war with China, and a marked alignment with authoritarian ideologies and leaders.

The Biden Administration has renewed U.S. leadership and alliances in the Indo-Pacific to create a significant response to the PRC’s malign economic, military, and diplomatic campaign:

- **Trilateral Cooperation:** After years of animosity amongst two close U.S. allies, the Biden Administration brought the Republic of Korea and Japan together to create a mechanism for trilateral cooperation. Two weeks ago, I was proud to lead a resolution that unanimously passed the House of Representatives.
- **AUKUS:** With Australia and the United Kingdom, the United States unveiled “AUKUS” to codevelop modern technology and increase the capacity of our partner Australia in the Indo-Pacific.
- **CHIPS and Science Act:** A Democratic Congress passed the largest single investment in domestic semiconductor manufacturing as a part of the CHIPS and Science Act.
- **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue:** President Biden and Vice President Harris have renewed the profile of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the Quad, to work with Japan, India, and Australia to promote a rules-based order, protecting freedom of navigation, and promoting democratic values in the region.
- **ASEAN Nations:** The Biden Administration has strengthened key partnerships in Vietnam and the Philippines.
 - **Vietnam Partnership:** The Administration has elevated the U.S.-Vietnam relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership.
 - **Philippines Base Agreement:** The Administration also secured an agreement for four new Enhanced Defense Cooperation Arrangement (EDCA) sites in the Philippines.

- **Reengagement with the Pacific Islands:** The Biden-Harris Administration held the first ever U.S.-Pacific Islands Country Summit and renewed the Compacts of Free Association that have been the cornerstone of the United States’ presence in the Pacific Islands.

These are just highlights, but they are impressive, given the Biden Administration tackled this important set of challenges while simultaneously cleaning up the mess left by the Trump Administration after four years of American withdrawal from the region.

In contrast to the Biden Administration’s record of standing up to the PRC and authoritarianism in a constructive manner, the Trump Administration was characterized by a former Commander in Chief who:

- Told the leader of the PRC that he should proceed in building concentration camps for Uyghurs in Xinjiang.
- Wrote love letters to North Korea’s dictator.
- Offered high praise for PRC President Xi Jinping at the Republican National Convention, “Think of President Xi. Central casting, brilliant guy. You know, when I say he’s brilliant, everyone says, ‘Oh that’s terrible.’ Well, he runs 1.4 billion people with an iron fist. Smart, brilliant, everything perfect.”
- Began a trade war with China, applying tariffs that now average 18 percent to hundreds of billions of dollars worth of Chinese goods.
- Withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), forfeiting an opportunity for the U.S. to set the rules for economic engagement in the Asia-Pacific and creating a vacuum that served as an unbelievable gift to the PRC. They continue to pop champagne in Beijing over this development.

In the Trump Administration, the story of U.S.-China relations was one of gobsmacking incoherence. President Trump complained about China’s unfair trade practices, yet it was he who abandoned the Trans-Pacific Partnership, allowing China to write the region’s trade rules.

President Biden has luckily charted a new path, increasing budget requests for aid to the Indo-Pacific and working with partners and allies in the region to develop the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. The Biden Administration’s reversal of our unilateral withdrawal from the Indo-Pacific will buttress U.S. economic engagement in the region and finally place the United States in a position to compete with China.

China’s nefarious tactics are one reason why I, as President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), urged NATO to put China on its agenda. In November 2020, I wrote a report for the NATO PA Political Committee entitled, “The Rise of China: Implications for Global and Euro-Atlantic Security” to encourage NATO to adapt to a new balance of power that

reflects China as a world power. In this report, I urged my colleagues to include reference to China's actions in NATO's strategic documents, including the Strategic Concept which was unveiled in April 2022 and highlighted the stated ambitions and coercive policies that challenge the Trans-Atlantic Alliance's interests, security, and values. I welcome the newly adopted NATO Strategic Concept which does just that.

China is playing the long game. For the United States to compete strategically, we need to make investments beyond the immediate horizon. That means investing in our diplomatic and foreign aid instruments. Continued partisan House State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bills that reduce overall funding by 12% and 20% below the Administration's request will only hamstring our ability to compete with the People's Republic of China. Under the 117th Congress controlled by Democrats, we have increased our competitive advantage with the CHIPS and Science Act and the development of an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. Now, we must follow up on that work and ensure the United States, as a Pacific power, sustains long-term engagement in the Indo-Pacific.