

OPENING STATEMENT
DANIEL J. KRITENBRINK
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS
“THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION’S PRC STRATEGY”
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE STRATEGIC COMPETITION BETWEEN THE UNITED
STATES AND THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY
JULY 20, 2023

Chairman Gallagher, Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi, distinguished members of the Select Committee – thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I appreciate this Committee’s bipartisan approach to strategic competition with the People’s Republic of China.

The Biden-Harris Administration is clear-eyed about the challenges posed by the PRC, which has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad in challenging the interests and values of the United States and our allies and partners. China is the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order, and, increasingly the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do so.

Implementing the core pillars of our PRC strategy – “invest, align, compete” – is working, and is positioning the United States to out-compete China and maintain an enduring competitive edge. With your help, we are *investing* in the foundations of our strength at home – our competitiveness, our innovation, our democracy, with bipartisan bills like the CHIPS and Science Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

We are *aligning* our efforts with our unrivaled network of allies and partners, acting in common cause on our approach to build collective resilience, close off vulnerabilities and advance a shared affirmative vision, including for an Indo-Pacific region that is free and open, connected, secure, prosperous, and resilient. In the Indo-Pacific, we have done so by deepening our alliances with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines, and by strengthening the latticework of established regional organizations such as ASEAN, APEC, and the Pacific Island Forum, as well as newer, flexible arrangements such as the Quad, AUKUS and Partners in the Blue Pacific, while also driving shared prosperity

through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. Along with Assistant Secretary Ratner, I am particularly pleased that we have achieved so much with some of our closest allies when it comes to strengthening U.S. force posture in the Indo-Pacific. These efforts play an important role in reinforcing regional peace and stability through synchronized diplomacy backed by credible deterrence.

We have instructed our diplomats to engage on the PRC challenge not just in the Indo-Pacific, where competition is most pronounced, but also globally, as Beijing exerts economic, diplomatic, military, and technological pressure in unprecedented ways. Our objective is not to change the PRC but to shape the strategic environment in which it operates, building a balance of influence that is favorable to the United States, our allies and partners, and the interests and values we share.

By harnessing these key assets, we are *competing* with the PRC to defend our interests and build our vision for the future. The contest to write the rules of the road and shape the relationships that govern global affairs is playing out in every region and across economics, technology, diplomacy, development, security, and global governance. We will continue standing up to PRC threats and provocations, whether in the South and East China Seas or across the Taiwan Strait; to its economic coercion; to the PRC's attempts to exploit our cutting-edge technologies to advance the PLA's military modernization; and to the PRC's increasing acts of transnational repression around the world, including in the United States.

We will also continue to support people in Hong Kong as they confront the steady erosion of their rights and fundamental freedoms, and we will continue to call out egregious and unacceptable human rights abuses across China, including in Xinjiang and Tibet, and seek accountability for those involved in these practices.

As we compete, we are committed to managing this competition responsibly and to maintaining open lines of communication with the PRC. Intense competition requires intense diplomacy. Similarly, we will continue to express our belief in the importance of open lines of military-to-military communication between the United States and the PRC, and I must note that the PLA has unfortunately remained unwilling to engage in substantive dialogue through these channels. Open lines of communication are the only way to make clear our profound

concerns, to clear up misperceptions, to signal, and to explore areas where we might work together.

To that end, last month Secretary Blinken traveled to Beijing. His trip advanced our interests from a position of confidence. Secretary Blinken had candid, substantive, and constructive conversations. His overarching message was to emphasize the importance of maintaining open channels of communication across the full range of issues to reduce the risk of miscalculation. He made clear that while we will compete vigorously, the United States will responsibly manage that competition so that the relationship does not veer into conflict.

The Secretary stressed that the United States will continue to use diplomacy to raise directly areas of concern, and to explore areas of potential cooperation where our interests align. At the same time, the Secretary was candid that we will continue to defend our interests and values. We have taken and will continue to take actions against PRC entities involved in human rights abuses, forced labor, nonproliferation, and supporting Russia's war in Ukraine. We will continue to uphold freedom of navigation in the region by flying, sailing, and operating wherever international law allows and supporting our allies and partners in exercising their rights under the international law of the sea in the face of PRC threats or coercion. And we will continue to take additional steps in a range of other arenas to advance our interests.

In closing, let me reiterate our commitment to approaching our PRC strategy in a way that is inclusive and consistent with our values, with bipartisan efforts at home, and in lockstep with our allies and partners abroad. There are few issues where bipartisan action is more crucial. In coordination with Congress and this Committee, we are confident that we can prevail in our competition with the PRC.

Thank you.