

A U.S. Campaign to Exploit Beijing's Weaknesses

By Nick Harrington

MAY 2026

THE ISSUE

The United States must pursue an invigorated hybrid warfare campaign that capitalizes on the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) enduring vulnerabilities. The CCP prioritizes narratives over facts, is built on endemic corruption, suffers excessive strongman rule, is paranoid about U.S. intentions, and has few friends to help reduce its dependence on the United States and allies. A U.S. hybrid warfare campaign built on exploiting endemic CCP frailties will provide the United States more flexible policy options against China with the added benefit of anticipating predictable CCP responses. As the United States formulates this campaign against the CCP, it must avoid sunk cost fallacy, be risk tolerant, coordinate appropriately to achieve scale, and scope objectives to achieve clear, measurable outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The United States must wage a more offensive and entrepreneurial campaign to compete with China. Crucially, this campaign must exploit the increasingly detrimental means by which China's President Xi Jinping and the CCP control China.¹ This campaign can capitalize on CCP vulnerabilities, anticipate predictable reactions, and position the United States to successfully advance its national security priorities.

The CCP is vulnerable because it prioritizes narratives over facts, is built on endemic corruption, suffers excessive strongman rule, is paranoid about U.S. intentions, and has few friends to help reduce its dependence on the United States and allies. The United States should shape its political, economic, military, and intelligence operations to exploit these weaknesses in ways that embarrass the CCP and ensure China remains too weak, distracted, or insecure to dominate East Asia. U.S. operations should include exposing CCP hypocrisy, extracting and releasing factual

data, conducting sabotage operations to hinder China's illicit activities, and pursuing more aggressive intelligence operations in instances where CCP officials are particularly incentivized to hide bad news.²

This article explains the stakes underlying the U.S.-China contest and articulates a foundation for a U.S. campaign based on the CCP's core vulnerabilities. It determines that China's responses to U.S. hybrid warfare activities are fundamentally predictable and therefore exploitable.³ It concludes with key principles that U.S. policymakers should adhere to if they carry out this campaign. Other work on U.S.-China relations and gray zone activities largely focus on means by which the United States can defend against China's operations.⁴ China exploits tensions inherent to the open, democratic society of the United States; the United States' approach should likewise exploit China's Communist dictatorship. This piece offers ways to take the fight to the CCP.⁵

A U.S. HYBRID WARFARE CAMPAIGN CAN FILL THE SEAMS IN U.S.-CHINA COMPETITION

The United States is taking competition with China seriously. It has—in a largely bipartisan manner—bolstered its military presence and capabilities in East Asia, pursued an oscillating trade war, sanctioned Chinese technology companies, and increased its support to partners and allies in the region.⁶ China is not going down without a fight, either.⁷ Beijing has pursued an expansive export control scheme for rare earth elements, attempted to harden its economy to weather Washington’s sanctions, dug in on key trade imbalance issues, rapidly accelerated its military modernization, bolstered its relationship with Moscow, and provided military support to Tehran to bring about a U.S. military defeat.⁸ China has also aggressively ramped up its offensive irregular warfare activities against the United States, including disturbing intelligence and cyber operations, disinformation campaigns, economic coercion, and military cognitive domain operations.⁹ Some of these activities are likely wartime preparations, but often, they are about economic and industrial espionage intended to position China to leapfrog the United States.¹⁰

Though existing U.S. policies are meaningful steps toward achieving national security objectives, they are ultimately insufficient to ensure China remains too weak, distracted, or insecure to dominate East Asia. The United States should pursue a more deliberate, entrepreneurial, protracted strategy to compete with China.¹¹ Hybrid warfare campaigns—if done correctly—provide the United States the flexibility to conduct timely, appropriately scoped, and (if necessary) obfuscated operations to maintain technological advantage, degrade the CCP’s confidence in its military, and corrode global sentiment toward China. Critically, the United States must also pursue these activities without disqualifying opportunities for engagement and cooperation.¹²

Several converging geopolitical factors suggest that now is the right time for the United States to pursue an invigorated offensive campaign against China. First, the United States is stretched thin on conventional power projections resources.¹³ Hybrid warfare operations will bolster hard power deterrence, shape perceptions, and provide policymakers with more flexible courses of action below the threshold of outright conflict. Second, recent intelligence assessments have clarified China’s ambitious mid-century

goals.¹⁴ The United States requires an approach that looks past 2027 and beyond Taiwan as the epicenter of U.S.-China competition.¹⁵ Taiwan should remain an important component of a strategy but should not be the prism through which the United States measures its success. Third, U.S.-China technology, energy, and supply chain contests are gaining prominence and require a more thorough integration into U.S. gray zone activities.¹⁶ China appreciates the stakes of this technological competition and is relatively unrestrained in finding solutions, including through subversive tactics.¹⁷ Last, Xi Jinping increasingly perceives the United States is pursuing a coordinated campaign to contain, encircle, and suppress China’s “inevitable” rise, including undermining Beijing’s partners in Caracas and Tehran.¹⁸ His worldview suggests Beijing will carry out activities designed to harm U.S. interests and ensure China dictates the terms in East Asia.¹⁹ U.S. operations can reduce the CCP’s confidence that its own activities are effective.

CCP VULNERABILITIES PROVIDE THE BLUEPRINT FOR A U.S. CAMPAIGN

What should this campaign look like? To start, the United States’ strategy must begin with a clear-eyed view of China’s vulnerabilities. The CCP has several weaknesses that the United States can capitalize on.

- 1. The CCP prioritizes narratives over facts.** The CCP is obsessed with maintaining control, censoring unfriendly narratives, and projecting consistent progress toward party goals.²⁰ This consistently results in delayed, inappropriate, or harmful policy responses to crises. CCP officials likely hid information about Covid-19 during the early days of the epidemic, which led to lockdowns, economic upheaval, and millions of deaths.²¹ CCP officials, particularly at local levels, are incentivized to manipulate economic, financial, and social data to present a better image of performance, secure promotions, and meet unrealistic growth targets.²² China’s economic growth, while considerable, is also exaggerated, and official data is manipulated.²³
- 2. The CCP is built on endemic corruption.** The CCP is tainted by pervasive corruption because of poor transparency, a CCP-centric concept of rule of law, and a lack of independent checks

on public officials.²⁴ Xi, and previous CCP leaders, have consistently pursued anti-corruption efforts—Xi himself has likely investigated over 5 million government officials since 2012.²⁵ Xi’s motivations for addressing corruption are likely threefold: to root out corruption that undermines the regime’s legitimacy, to target his political rivals, and to eliminate growing power centers within the party.²⁶ CCP corruption also extends itself to China’s illegal operations, including intellectual property theft, technology smuggling, and harassing dissidents abroad.²⁷ Endemic corruption incentivizes CCP officials to hide unlawful activities and prevent information from moving up the chain of command.²⁸

China’s recent military anti-corruption campaign is especially illustrative. CSIS data indicates Xi has potentially purged at least 100 senior PLA officers since 2022.²⁹ Xi’s anti-corruption efforts may have reduced the likelihood that a rival faction can grow out of the military and may have also helped him whittle away any resistance PLA officials may have had for Xi’s military reform and modernization goals.³⁰ Xi now has the daunting task of rebuilding China’s military leadership.³¹ This presents a window for the United States to capitalize on historic levels of insecurity, paranoia, and empty leadership at the top of the PLA. Xi is clearly dissatisfied with his military; U.S. operations can exploit that.

- 3. Xi’s personalist rule creates more problems than it solves.** Xi Jinping’s unprecedented steps to consolidate his rule over the CCP comes at a cost to the country. Xi abolished term limits, has not identified a successor, stacked loyalists into top leadership positions, and took more direct oversight of the military and security forces.³² His rule erodes institutional checks to the CCP, discourages dissenting views, and likely foments a succession crisis upon Xi’s departure.

Xi’s success bending the CCP to his will has downstream effects that erode the party’s effectiveness and legitimacy. CCP officials are incentivized to obfuscate rather than admit mistakes, paralyzing bureaucrats and hindering grassroots reform efforts at lower levels of party governance.³³

Expert Jonathan Czin rightly notes Xi’s choices are probably calculated decisions aimed at routing out China’s most pressing vulnerabilities—internal corruption and dependence on the United States for economic growth—but that does not alleviate the inevitable downsides of excessive strongman rule.³⁴

- 4. The CCP is paranoid the United States and partners seek war.** CCP officials are deeply insecure about China’s military capabilities vis-à-vis the United States and are prone to view everything the United States does as a coordinated campaign to contain and dominate China militarily, economically, and politically.³⁵ In 2024, Xi Jinping went as far to say the United States was trying to “trick” China into invading Taiwan after then-President Biden declared several times the United States would defend the island.³⁶ Beijing is well aware of the potentially disastrous outcomes of a failed Taiwan assault and likely views a military invasion as an unattractive policy outcome.³⁷ Efforts by the second Trump administration to tamper tensions via softened rhetoric do not appear to have eased China’s concerns, as they have noted a divergence between executive rhetoric and entrenched bipartisan policy campaigns to contain China, as evidenced by almost every U.S. National Security Strategy this decade.³⁸

Similarly, U.S. military operations under the Trump administration in Venezuela and Iran probably play into Xi’s worst fears—overwhelming U.S. military force to conduct rapid, shocking exfiltration (in the Venezuela case) and counterforce strikes (in the Iran case) against an adversary’s leadership. These U.S. military operations, plus pressure operations against Panama and Cuba, likely underscore for Xi that even if he wanted the PLA to protect China’s interests in the Middle East or the Western Hemisphere, his forces are not up for the challenge.³⁹ Before conflict broke out in Iran in February 2026, China consistently rotated a PLA Navy Task Group to the Middle East, yet China’s blue-water navy is nowhere to be seen as China’s energy supply chain is threatened by the ongoing situation in the Strait of Hormuz.⁴⁰ Xi has seemingly decided to avoid direct intervention in the conflict; however, if he decided to task his military to secure China’s oil, it is not obvious the PLA could do so.⁴¹ These

situations reinforce for Xi that his military does not have the power projection capabilities to protect China's interests abroad, which is why China is so aggressively pursuing unrestricted hybrid warfare activities of its own to make up for the gap.⁴² China's paranoia regarding U.S. intentions and inability to sufficiently project conventional military power are exploitable vulnerabilities.

5. The CCP has few friends and depends on the United States and its allies. The CCP has made insufficient progress shoring up the partners and allies it needs to reduce its dependence on the United States as a key importer of Chinese goods and as a key goods and technologies provider.⁴³ China's only formal ally is North Korea, while it is strategically aligned with Russia (currently bogged down in Ukraine), Pakistan, and Iran (currently reeling from the ongoing conflict).⁴⁴ Economic diplomacy efforts to strengthen ties have also fallen by the wayside; many of China's Belt-and-Road agreements resulted in predatory lending practices and likely harmed China's reputation in those countries.⁴⁵ CCP officials must balance their disdain toward the United States with the inconvenient reality that China's economy will struggle to grow absent cooperative economic policies with the United States.⁴⁶

The CCP's bullying tactics in the region, including against Australia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan, have pushed most of China's strategically significant neighbors to look for closer ties to the United States.⁴⁷ The CCP relies on stale diplomatic narratives and is often too slow to adjust failing tactics. More than three years of wolf warrior diplomacy—in which China's diplomats paired confrontational and insulting language with an aggressive online presence to defend against foreign criticism—did lasting damage to China's international image and hardened the U.S. public's views toward China. This wayward diplomatic effort was, predictably, only reversed following a Xi-chaired Politburo gathering.⁴⁸ The CCP has not figured out how to balance its narratives to earn more partners because their hypocritical actions—unlike within China—are more easily exposed on the international stage.

U.S. OPERATIONS CAN EXPLOIT CCP VULNERABILITIES AND PREDICT RESPONSES

A U.S. hybrid warfare campaign built on exploiting endemic CCP frailties will provide the United States more flexible policy options against China with the added benefit of anticipating predictable CCP responses. China exploits tensions inherent to the open, democratic society in the United States; the United States' strategy should likewise exploit China's Communist dictatorship.⁴⁹ Table 1 provides a range of possible U.S. actions against China.

CCP responses to U.S. offensive operations will be predictable and exploitable. First, CCP responses are predictable because they are guided by a primary principle: Avoid embarrassing Xi Jinping and ensure the party can save face.⁵⁰ This tenet provides a general blueprint to determine the likelihood and severity of CCP response to a given U.S. activity. The CCP's centralized decisionmaking combined with risk-averse attitudes at lower levels of the party reduce the chances U.S. operations are even reported up the chain in the first place. In other words, subtle messages are unlikely to register.

These hypothetical CCP responses should only serve as notional guideposts to anticipate outcomes. The United States will need to assess all the possible opportunities, risks, and outcomes of a given potential operation.

Take, for example, a notional U.S. effort to seed defunct technology into the CCP's research and development for frontier AI capabilities, akin to U.S. operations during the Cold War.⁵¹ The United States' approach should exploit corrupt patronage networks between personnel running smuggling networks (to get advanced chips into China) and CCP officials.⁵² Though these efforts are likely CCP-directed, they probably involve under-the-table payouts that unduly benefit CCP members.⁵³ Directing U.S. sabotage campaigns through these channels will be more successful because—even if discovered—CCP officials will seek to avoid invasive anti-corruption committee investigations into their network and will perceive their activities pose low risk of public embarrassment for the party. If forced, they may skew the information reported up the chain, which provides the United States further opportunities to tailor its activity. Alternatively, CCP officials may do nothing at all, and U.S. operations will persist long enough to have the intended strategic effect.

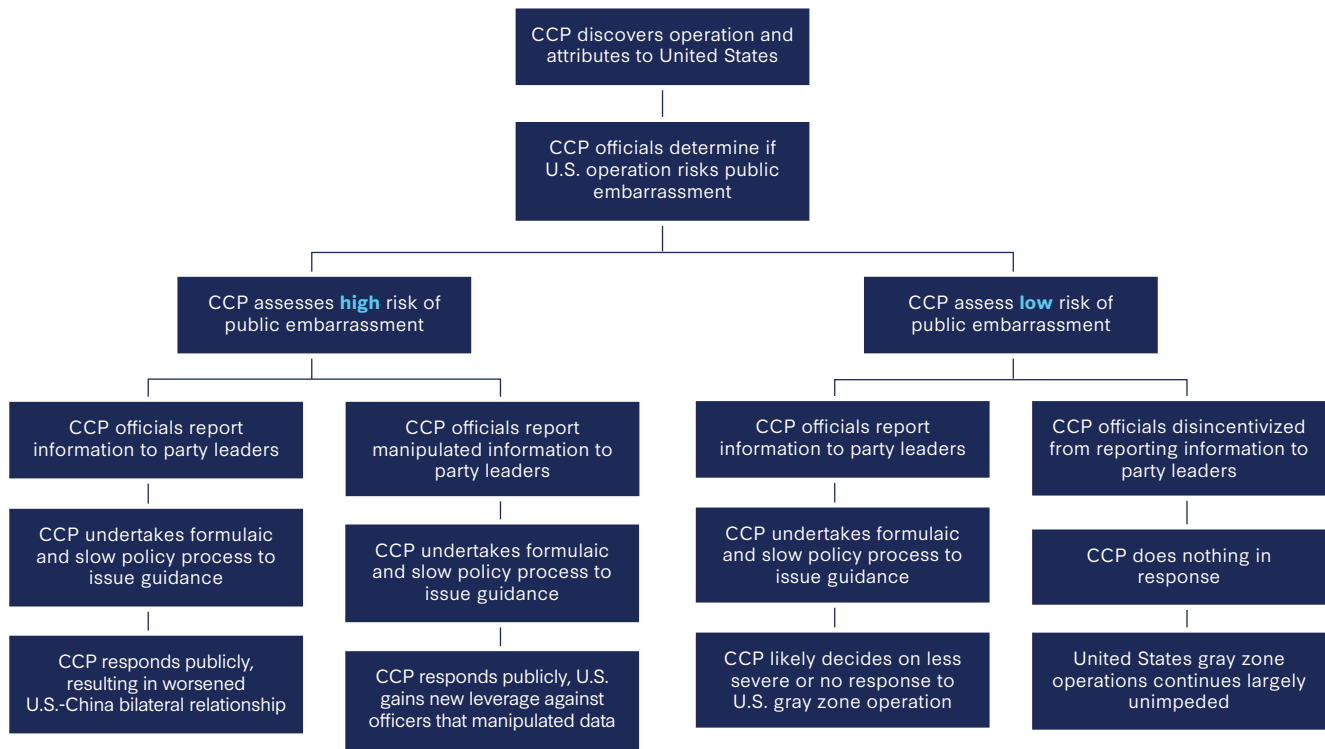
Figure 1 provides a blueprint of potential outcomes.

Table 1: U.S. Policy Opportunities to Capitalize on CCP Weaknesses

Toolkit to contest China	U.S. opportunity
Political operations	Incentivize partner countries to question CCP data and information when engaging with CCP officials.
	Publicize through third-party organizations discoveries of corruption or internal investigations to reinforce Xi’s view that the PLA is a corrupt institution, and play rival CCP factions off one another. ⁵⁴
	Expose CCP meddling in third-country elections, local governance, and industrial policy. ⁵⁵
	Expose risks for other countries procuring China’s digital infrastructure, including telecommunications hardware, cloud services, payment platforms, and surveillance tools. ⁵⁶
Information operations	Conduct tailored information operations to disrupt the flow of convenient CCP narratives up to leadership. ⁵⁷
	Counter CCP censorship through information operations that reveal CCP hypocrisy and evidence the CCP is prioritizing its image over the welfare of China’s citizens. ⁵⁸
Economic operations	Bolster credible organizations that publish real CCP economic data. ⁵⁹ Share that data with fence-sitting countries to highlight risk of increased investment with China. ⁶⁰
	Pair strategic trade controls with nonpublic sabotage campaigns to hinder China’s illegal technology and industrial policy efforts, including smuggling. ⁶¹
	Encourage capital flows out of China to the United States or other preferred destinations by highlighting CCP predatory lending practices. ⁶²
	Impose significant financial penalties on U.S. companies unwilling to shore up their cyber defenses against the CCP, or that overly cede their intellectual property or offshore manufacturing to the CCP.
Cyber operations	Use offensive cyber operations to extract and release data that exposes CCP hypocrisy and falsehoods. ⁶³
Military operations	Conduct operations that reinforce China’s view that the U.S. military is prepared for any contingency in East Asia without chest-thumping public displays of resolve.
	Integrate defense industrial bases across East Asia that block the viability of China’s export control regime. ⁶⁴
	Replicate the U.S. maritime support model in the South China Sea to other areas content with Chinese distant-water fishing fleets, including South America and Africa; encourage counteroperations against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. ⁶⁵
	Conduct unattributed sabotage or coercive operations against PLA units deployed abroad to reinforce Xi’s view his forces are incapable. ⁶⁶
Intelligence operations	Conduct intelligence operations that exploit specific instances of fear and lethargy among CCP officials.
	Share the stories of disillusioned or scared CCP officials for intelligence recruiting and operations; highlight the paranoia and fragility inherent to the CCP. ⁶⁷
	Pursue more aggressive collection efforts in locations or domains where CCP officials are incentivized to hide bad news.

Source: Author analysis.

Figure 1: Anticipating CCP Responses to U.S. Hybrid Warfare Activities



Source: Author analysis.

Ascribing this blueprint to a more aggressive notional U.S. effort to sabotage PLA units abroad—which may be harder to hide—proves illustrative. In March 2025, a PLA Navy Task Group circumvented Australia for this first time.⁶⁸ Imagine the United States conducted a sabotage operation against that Task Group. A successful U.S. operation would have been highly embarrassing for the PLA (e.g., one of its warships requiring assistance from Australia to stay afloat, or being towed by another Task Group vessel). The CCP would probably not hesitate to blame the United States (no matter how capably our operators conducted the operation), U.S.-China relations would sour, and Beijing would aim to respond accordingly.

A more productive sabotage operation would focus on PLA units trying to hide the extent of their activities abroad.⁶⁹ China has relatively little experience supporting expeditionary units; thus U.S. operations could capitalize on the CCP’s slow processes to support or replenish these PLA units asking for help.⁷⁰ In this case, U.S. operations could exercise more agility than formulaic CCP policy processes allow. China would likely view responding to these U.S. sabotage operations as unattractive because an exchange risks

revealing China’s activities to the host nation and embarrassing the CCP. In this instance, the CCP would probably settle on a diluted response to the United States’ operations.

U.S. operations will need to balance attributability and success if they are to achieve a level of scale required against the CCP. The CCP applies the thinnest layers of plausible deniability to their unlawful campaigns, including using maritime militia to harass fishermen and front companies to steal technology, and pushing out state propaganda through foreign media Beijing has acquired.⁷¹ The United States should mimic the CCP’s tenacity and not shy away from being seen as willing to get into the trenches with China. Nonattributable operations are important in a few discrete areas, such as actions within mainland China or targeting CCP officials individually, but embarrassing the CCP should be a feature—not a bug—of U.S. operations.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR AN ENDURING U.S. CAMPAIGN TO CONTEST CHINA

A U.S. campaign against China built on the CCP’s weaknesses will unlock new opportunities for policymakers to advance

U.S. national security interests. Critically, the campaign must align itself to the correct capabilities, appropriate authorities, robust staffing, and general agreement on how to assess risk in these spaces. U.S. efforts will likely fail if policymakers do not understand where current U.S. policy is lacking or if they are not provided a clear plan for how the government will execute these gray zone operations effectively.

As the United States formulates the specifics of its campaign to contest China, Washington should adhere to the following principles:

- 1. U.S. activities should be nimble and avoid sunk-cost fallacy.** U.S. operations will succeed in part because they will adapt faster than the CCP's policy processes allow China to respond. Some activities may require long-lead investments, but if those investments do not bear out, then the United States should abandon those efforts for more fruitful ventures. Protecting well-funded and entrenched bureaucratic programs risks the United States mirroring the very CCP weakness a campaign is trying to exploit.
- 2. U.S. policy toward China must be risk tolerant.** The stakes underlying the U.S-China competition are clear. A serious campaign must accept risks to achieve critical breakthroughs vital for U.S. national and economic security. This may include, for example, putting specialized mission units in harm's way or exposing them to capture by China to achieve specific objectives.⁷²
- 3. U.S. actions must be coordinated among the U.S. government, private sector, and, in some cases, state-level officials in the United States or foreign partners.**⁷³ Bifurcated or isolated efforts will

not achieve the scale, scope, or endurance required to fully realize the potential of a gray zone campaign.

- 4. U.S. activities should scope campaign objectives to long-term U.S. national security goals that reflect more than international relations pabulum.** They must focus on delivering clear, measurable outcomes and employ scalable operations. One-off events tied to military or diplomatic calendars will not get the job done.

U.S. hybrid warfare operations will help shape the landscape across which the United States and China will compete intensely for economic prosperity, technological dominance, military superiority, and ideological alignment. Right now, China is fighting the United States across all domains, while the United States is not doing enough. A hybrid warfare campaign, however, can put China on its back foot and help ensure China never sees the day it perceives it has surpassed the United States. ■

Nick Harrington is a senior associate (non-resident) for the Warfare, Irregular Threats, and Terrorism Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C.

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official positions or views of the US Government. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying US Government authentication of information or endorsement of the author's views.

This report is made possible by general support to CSIS. No direct sponsorship contributed to this report.

CSIS BRIEFS are produced by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a private, tax-exempt institution focusing on international public policy issues. Its research is nonpartisan and nonproprietary. CSIS does not take specific policy positions. Accordingly, all views, positions, and conclusions expressed in this publication should be understood to be solely those of the author(s). © 2026 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. All rights reserved.

Cover Photo: VCG/VCG via Getty Images

ENDNOTES

- 1 “CIA now says COVID most likely originated from a lab leak but has “low confidence” in its assessment,” CBS News, January 27, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cia-covid-likely-originated-lab-low-confidence-assessment/>.
- 2 Jonas Parello-Plesner, *The Chinese Communist Party’s Foreign Interference Operations: How the U.S. and Other Democracies Should Respond* (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, June 2018), <https://www.hudson.org/foreign-policy/the-chinese-communist-party-s-foreign-interference-operations-how-the-u-s-and-other-democracies-should-respond>; Peter Martin and Jennifer Jacobs, “US Intelligence Shows Flawed China Missiles Led Xi to Purge Army,” Bloomberg, January 6, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-01-06/us-intelligence-shows-flawed-china-missiles-led-xi-jinping-to-purge-military>; and Stephen M. Walt, “Hedging on Hegemony: The Realist Debate over How to Respond to China,” *International Security* 49, no. 4 (May 2025): 37-70, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00508.
- 3 Frank Hoffman, Colonel Matt Neumeyer, and Benjamin Jensen, “The Future of Hybrid Warfare,” CSIS, *Commentary*, July 8, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/future-hybrid-warfare>.
- 4 Todd C. Helmus et al., *Understanding and Countering China’s Maritime Gray Zone Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, November 2024), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2954-1.html; Dan Minnocci, “The US and China are in ‘gray zone’ competition. A counterinsurgency model can help explain what that means,” Atlantic Council, March 6, 2026, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/dispatches/the-us-and-china-are-in-gray-zone-competition-a-counterinsurgency-model-can-help-explain-what-that-means/>; Isaac B. Kardon, *Combating the Gray Zone: Examining Chinese Threats to the Maritime Domain*, Testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security, 118th Cong., 2nd sess. (June 4, 2024), <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/posts/2024/06/combating-the-gray-zone-examining-chinese-threats-to-the-maritime-domain>; and Dave Pitts and Chip Usher, “China’s Gray War on America,” *The Cipher Brief*, September 17, 2025, <https://www.thecipherbrief.com/china-gray-zone-war>.
- 5 Hoover Institution, “China’s Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance,” November 29, 2018, <https://www.hoover.org/publications/chinas-influence-american-interests-promoting-constructive-vigilance>.
- 6 Department of Defense, *2026 National Defense Strategy*, January 23, 2026, <https://media.defense.gov/2026/Jan/23/2003864773/-1/-1/0/2026-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY.PDF>; and Council on Foreign Relations, “U.S.-China Relations,” CFR, April 15, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/timelines/us-china-relations>.
- 7 Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, January 2018, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/May/18/2002302061/-1/-1/1/2018-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-SUMMARY.PDF>; and Mei Mei Chu, Laurie Chen, and Eduardo Baptista, “China ramps up ‘high stakes’ tech race with US as economic imbalances deepen,” Reuters, March 4, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-parliament-approve-growth-policy-plans-amid-growing-us-rivalry-2026-03-04/>.
- 8 Gracelin Baskaran, “China’s New Rare Earth and Magnet Restrictions Threaten US Defense Supply Chains,” CSIS, *Critical Questions*, October 9, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-new-rare-earth-and-magnet-restrictions-threaten-us-defense-supply-chains>; China Power Team, “How Deep Are China-Russia Military Ties?,” CSIS, China Power, August 4, 2022, updated October 28, 2025, <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-russia-military-cooperation-arms-sales-exercises/>; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community* (Washington, DC: ODNI, March 2026), <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2026-Unclassified-Report.pdf>; and Natasha Bertrand, Haley Britzky, and Zachary Cohen, “Exclusive: US intelligence indicates China is preparing weapons shipment to Iran amid fragile ceasefire, sources say,” CNN, April 11, 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/04/11/politics/us-intelligence-iran-china-weapons>.
- 9 Norah O’Donnell, “What China’s Spies Do in the US, What Happens When They’re Caught,” CBS News, August 31, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-chinas-spies-do-in-the-us-what-happens-when-theyre-caught-60-minutes-transcript-2025-08-31/>; Elsa Johnson, “I’m a Stanford student. A Chinese agent tried to recruit me as a spy,” *The Times*, August 28, 2025, <https://www.thetimes.com/us/news-today/article/spy-chinese-catfish-communist-party-stanford-rm5d5k6fw>; Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, “Countering Chinese State-Sponsored Actors Compromise of Networks Worldwide to Feed Global Espionage System,” CSIA, *Cybersecurity Advisory*, last updated September 3, 2025, <https://www.cisa.gov/news-events/cybersecurity-advisories/aa25-239a>; FBI, “China’s Hackers Have Entire Nation in Their Crosshairs, FBI Director Warns,” *News Blog*, January 31, 2024, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/china-s-hackers-have-entire-nation-in-their-crosshairs-fbi-director-warns>; “FBI Announces Joint Cybersecurity Advisory Related to Salt Typhoon,” YouTube video, posted by the FBI, August 27, 2025, <https://www.fbi.gov/video-repository/saltpyphoon082725.mp4/view>; Seth G. Jones et al., *Competing Without Fighting: China’s Strategy of Political Warfare* (Washington, DC: CSIS, August 2023), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-strategy-political-warfare>; and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, “Cognitive Domain Operations: The PLA’s New Holistic Concept for Influence Operations,” *China Brief* 19, no. 16 (September 2019), <https://jamestown.org/cognitive-domain-operations-the-plas-new-holistic-concept-for-influence-operations/>.
- 10 Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, December 2025), <https://media.defense.gov/2025/Dec/23/2003849070/-1/-1/1/ANNUAL-REPORT-TO-CONGRESS-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-2025.PDF>.
- 11 Kathleen H. Hicks et al., *By Other Means Part I: Campaigning in the*

- Gray Zone*, (Washington, DC: CSIS, July 2019), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/other-means-part-i-campaigning-gray-zone>.
- 12 Ryan Hass, Ryan McElveen, and Lily McElwee, “Advancing U.S.-China Coordination amid Strategic Competition: An Emerging Playbook,” CSIS, *CSIS Brief*, January 15, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/advancing-us-china-coordination-amid-strategic-competition-emerging-playbook>.
 - 13 Mark F. Cancian and Chris H. Park, “Ongoing Military Operations Around Venezuela Cost \$31 Million per Day—\$2.8 Million Is Unbudgeted,” CSIS, *CSIS Charts*, January 20, 2026, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/ongoing-military-operations-around-venezuela-cost-31-million-day-28-million-unbudgeted>; Department of Defense, *2026 National Defense Strategy*; and Dan Lamothe, Tara Copp, and Noah Robertson, “U.S. Uses Hundreds of Tomahawk Missiles on Iran, Alarming Some at Pentagon,” *Washington Post*, March 27, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/03/27/iran-war-tomahawk-missiles/>.
 - 14 Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Annual Threat Assessment; and Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, December 2025), <https://media.defense.gov/2025/Dec/23/2003849070/-1/-1/1/ANNUAL-REPORT-TO-CONGRESS-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-2025.PDF>.
 - 15 Philip S. Davidson, *Statement Of Admiral Philip S. Davidson, U.S. Navy Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Before The Senate Armed Services Committee On U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture*, Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 117th Cong., 1st sess. (March 9, 2021), https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/download/davidson_03-09-21; John Culver, “China, Taiwan, and the PLA’s 2027 Milestones,” Lowy Institute, *The Interpreter* (blog), February 12, 2025, <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/china-taiwan-pla-s-2027-milestones>; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Annual Threat Assessment*; and Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*.
 - 16 Christopher S. Chivvis and Senkai Hsia, *Implementing the Biden Administration’s China Strategy* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2026), <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2026/03/implementing-the-biden-administrations-china-strategy>; Special Competitive Studies Project, *Mid-Decade Challenges to National Competitiveness* (Washington, DC: Special Competitive Studies Project, 2022), <https://www.sscp.ai/reports/mid-decade-challenges-for-national-competitiveness/>; Gregory Allen, *Countering China’s Challenge to American AI Leadership*, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, & International Cybersecurity Policy, 119th Cong., 1st sess. (December 2, 2025), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/countering-chinas-challenge-american-ai-leadership>; “Insights on U.S.-China Technology Competition” (public event, CSIS, Washington, DC, March 27, 2026), <https://www.csis.org/events/insights-us-china-technology-competition>; Chu, Chen, and Baptista, “China ramps up ‘high stakes’ tech race”; and Erik Green and Olivia Parker, “China’s 15th Five-Year Plan,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, March 23, 2026, <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2026/03/chinas-15th-five-year-plan/>.
 - 17 Erich Grunewald and Tim Fist, “Countering AI Chip Smuggling Has Become a National Security Priority,” Center for a New American Security, June 11, 2025, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/countering-ai-chip-smuggling-has-become-a-national-security-priority>; “Survey of Chinese Espionage in the United States Since 2000,” CSIS, last updated February 2023, <https://www.csis.org/programs/strategic-technologies-program/survey-chinese-espionage-united-states-2000>; Chu, Chen, and Baptista, “China ramps up ‘high stakes’ tech race”; and Green and Parker, “China’s 15th Five-Year Plan.”
 - 18 Chun Han Wong, Keith Zhai, and James T. Areddy, “China’s Xi Jinping Takes Rare Direct Aim at U.S. in Speech,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-xi-jinping-takes-rare-direct-aim-at-u-s-in-speech-5d8fde1a>; Keith Bradsher, “China’s Leader, with Rare Bluntness, Blames U.S. Containment for Troubles,” *New York Times*, March 7, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/07/world/asia/china-us-xi-jinping.html>; and “Critical Issues Confronting China Series Featuring John K. Culver: How China’s Catastrophic Success, US Strategic Blunders Fueled Rivalry,” (public event, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, October 12, 2022), <https://fairbank.fas.harvard.edu/events/critical-issues-confronting-china-series-featuring-john-k-culver/>.
 - 19 “US Wants Stable Relations with China but Does Not Trust It, US Official Says,” Reuters, February 24, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/us-wants-stable-relations-with-china-does-not-trust-it-us-official-says-2026-02-24/>; Evelyn Cheng, “Retaliation or Escalation? Trust between the U.S. And China Is Fading Fast, Analysts Say,” CNBC, October 13, 2025, <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/10/13/retaliation-or-escalation-trust-between-us-and-china-is-fading-fast.html>; Davidson, *Statement Of Admiral Philip S. Davidson*; and Culver, “China, Taiwan, and the PLA.”
 - 20 Kieran Green et al., *Censorship Practices of the People’s Republic of China* (Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, February 20, 2024), <https://www.uscc.gov/research/censorship-practices-peoples-republic-china>.
 - 21 Edward Wong, Julian E. Barnes and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, “Local Officials in China Hid Coronavirus Dangers from Beijing, U.S. Agencies Find,” *New York Times*, August 19, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/19/world/asia/china-coronavirus-beijing-trump.html>; and “CIA Now Says COVID Most Likely Originated from a Lab Leak,” CBS News.
 - 22 Patrick Tyrrell and Anthony B. Kim, “The Problem of False Chinese Economic Data,” Heritage Foundation, November 8, 2020, <https://www.heritage.org/international-economies/commentary/the-problem-false-chinese-economic-data>; and Dominic Pino, “China’s Fake Economic Growth,” *National Review*, March 6, 2024, <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/chinas-fake-economic-growth/>.
 - 23 Daniel H. Rosen et al., “After the Fall: China’s Economy in 2025,” Rhodium Group, December 31, 2024, <https://rhg.com/research/after-the-fall-chinas-economy-in-2025/>; and Ambassador Xie Feng, “The 15th Five-Year Plan: China’s blueprint for a brighter future, and a list of opportunities for the world,” remarks at the China

- in Springtime: China's Development Opportunities for the World global dialogue U.S. session, March 13, 2026, https://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/dshd/202603/t20260314_11874964.htm.
- 24 Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Wealth and Corrupt Activities of the Leadership of the Chinese Communist Party* (Washington, DC: ODNI, March 2025), <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ODNI-Unclassified-CDA-CCP-Leadership-202503.pdf>.
 - 25 ODNI, *Wealth and Corrupt Activities*; and Susan Shirk, "China in Xi's "New Era": The Return to Personalistic Rule," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 2 (April 2018): 22-36, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/china-in-xis-new-era-the-return-to-personalistic-rule/>.
 - 26 ODNI, *Wealth and Corrupt Activities*; and Bonny Lin et al., *Assessing Xi's Unprecedented Purges of China's Military: Key Developments and Potential Implications* (Washington, DC: CSIS, February 2026), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/assessing-xis-unprecedented-purges-chinas-military-key-developments-and-potential>.
 - 27 Kali Hays, "White House memo claims mass AI theft by Chinese firms," BBC, April 23, 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cpqxgx9nrqo>; "China: The Risk to Corporate America," FBI, 2019, <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/counterintelligence/china-risk-to-corporate-america-2019.pdf/view>; and Office of Public Affairs, Department of Justice, "40 Officers of China's National Police Charged in Transnational Repression Schemes Targeting U.S. Residents," press release, April 17, 2023, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/40-officers-china-s-national-police-charged-transnational-repression-schemes-targeting-us>.
 - 28 "CPC calls for reinforced anti-corruption efforts during 15th Five-Year Plan period," National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, January 15, 2026, http://en.cpc-pcc.gov.cn/2026-01/15/c_1155094.htm.
 - 29 Bonny Lin et al., *The Purges Within China's Military Are Even Deeper Than You Think* (Washington, DC: CSIS, February 2026), <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-pla-military-purges/>.
 - 30 Lauren Estrada, "Analysis of China's 15th Five-Year Plan and Its Expected Impact on China's Military Modernization," *Defense and Security Monitor*, January 21 2026, <https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/2026/01/21/analysis-of-chinas-15th-five-year-plan-and-its-expected-impact-on-chinas-military-modernization/>; and Brian Hart, Bonnie Glaser, and Matthew P. Funaiolo, "China's 2027 Goal Marks the PLA's Centennial, Not an Expedited Military Modernization," *China Brief* 21, no. 6 (March 2021), <https://jamestown.org/chinas-2027-goal-marks-the-pla-centennial-not-an-expedited-military-modernization/>.
 - 31 Chun Han Wong, "Next Task for Xi Jinping: Rebuild the Military Command He Wiped Out," *Wall Street Journal*, March 7, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/world/china/china-xi-jinping-military-command-4b0c6338>.
 - 32 "China's Xi allowed to remain 'president for life' as term limits removed," BBC, March 11, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-43361276>; Yew Lun Tian and Tony Munroe, "China's Xi Clinches Third Term, Packs Leadership with Loyalists," Reuters, October 24, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-communist-party-politburo-standing-committee-unveiled-2022-10-23/>; Yew Lun Tian, "Analysis: How China's Xi Accumulated Power, and Why It Matters in a Third Term," Reuters, October 11, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/how-chinas-xi-accumulated-power-why-it-matters-third-term-2022-10-10/>; and Larry Wortzel, "Xi Jinping Consolidates Power in Beijing," American Foreign Policy Council, November 1, 2022, <https://www.afpc.org/publications/articles/xi-jinping-consolidates-power-in-beijing>.
 - 33 Jennifer Pan and Kaiping Chen "Concealing Corruption: How Chinese Officials Distort Upward Reporting of Online Grievances," *American Political Science Review* 112, no. 3, (June 2018): 602-620, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055418000205>.
 - 34 Jonathan A. Czin, "China Against China." *Foreign Affairs* 104, no. 6 (November/December 2025), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/against-china-xi-jinping-jonathan-czin>.
 - 35 ODNI, *Annual Threat Assessment*; Ryan Hass, "China's Response to American-led 'Containment and Suppression,'" *China Leadership Monitor* 77 (September 2023), <https://www.prcleader.org/post/china-s-response-to-american-led-containment-and-suppression>; and John Ruwitch, "China accuses U.S. of containment and warns of potential conflict," NPR, March 7, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/1161570798>.
 - 36 Demetri Sevastopulo and Joe Leahy, "Xi Jinping Claimed US Wants China to Attack Taiwan," *Financial Times*, June 15, 2024, <https://www.ft.com/content/7d6ca06c-d098-4a48-818e-112b97a9497a>; and Tom Porter, "The US is quietly arming Taiwan against a Chinese invasion – but it could backfire," *Business Insider*, November 7, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/us-arming-taiwan-against-china-invasion-but-it-could-backfire-2023-11>.
 - 37 Bonnie Glaser and Zach Cooper, "A Failed Chinese Invasion of Taiwan Would Be Disastrous for Xi Jinping," *Foreign Policy*, January 19, 2026, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2026/01/19/china-taiwan-invasion-failed-xi-disaster/>.
 - 38 Sun Chenghao, "How China reads the 2025 US National Security Strategy," Brookings Institution, January 12, 2026, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-china-reads-the-2025-u-s-national-security-strategy/>; and Kathrin Hille, "China warns of potential conflict with US over containment strategy," *Financial Times*, March 7, 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/dc3ee895-4ae9-4c1f-9dfd-49261220ef1f>.
 - 39 Erica Downs, "Implications of the Conflict in the Middle East for China's Energy Security," Center on Global Energy Policy, March 4, 2026, <https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/implications-of-the-conflict-in-the-middle-east-for-chinas-energy-security/>; Michal Meidan, *Disruption in the Strait of Hormuz: Implications for China's energy markets and policies* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, March 2026), <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Comment-Turmoil-in-the-Middle-East.pdf>; and NPR Staff, "Trump Threatens NATO Allies over Strait of Hormuz Help," NPR, March 16, 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/03/16/nx-s1-5749109/trump-threatens-nato-strait-hormuz-iran-war>.
 - 40 Blake Herzinger and Ben Lefkowitz, "China's Growing Naval

- Influence in the Middle East,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 17, 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/chinas-growing-naval-influence-middle-east>; and James Gregory, “US Blockade of Iran Ports ‘Irresponsible and Dangerous’, China Says,” BBC, April 14, 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c78l1eexj40>.
- 41 NPR Staff, “Trump Threatens NATO Allies.”
- 42 Department of Defense, “Senior Defense Official Briefs on 2024 China Military Power Report,” press briefing, December 16, 2024, <https://www.war.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/4009708/senior-defense-official-briefs-on-2024-china-military-power-report/>.
- 43 “United States/China,” Observatory of Economic Complexity, <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/usa/partner/chn>.
- 44 项昊宇 (Xiang Haoyu), “What ‘Partnerships’ Does China Have? [中国的‘伙伴’关系有哪些?],” CSIS, Interpret: China, original work published in Study Times [学习时报], October 20, 2023, <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/what-partnerships-does-china-have/>.
- 45 Brahma Chellaney, “China’s Trojan Gift: Creditor Imperialism,” Center for European Policy Analysis, December 24, 2021, <https://cepa.org/article/chinas-trojan-gift-creditor-imperialism/>.
- 46 Osmond Chia, “China’s Economic Growth Slows as Trade Tensions with US Flare Up,” BBC, October 19, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9v1medkk3vo>.
- 47 Micah McCartney, “China Issues Nuclear Warning to Japan,” *Newsweek*, December 22, 2025, <https://www.newsweek.com/china-nuclear-warning-japan-11252355>; Derek Grossman, “China’s bullying proves South Korea’s Yoon is on the right track,” *Nikkei Asia*, July 5, 2023, <https://asia.nikkei.com/opinion/china-s-bullying-proves-south-korea-s-yoon-is-on-the-right-track>; Forum Staff, “China’s bullying won’t deter Philippines’ South China Sea sovereignty, Coast Guard says,” Indo-Pacific Defense Forum, April 21, 2025, <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2025/04/chinas-bullying-wont-deter-philippines-south-china-sea-sovereignty-coast-guard-says/>; Bloomberg News, “China’s Defense Minister Warns on Taiwan, Condemns ‘Bullying,’” *Bloomberg*, September 17, 2025, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-09-18/china-s-defense-minister-warns-on-taiwan-condemns-bullying>; and Badiucao, “Unless Australia stands up to a bullying China, it will just push to get away with more,” *The Guardian*, June 16, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jun/17/unless-australia-stands-up-to-a-bullying-china-it-will-just-push-to-get-away-with-more>.
- 48 Tyler Jost, “Have China’s Wolf Warriors Gone Extinct?,” *Foreign Affairs*, June 27, 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/have-chinas-wolf-warriors-gone-extinct>.
- 49 Hoover Institution, “China’s Influence & American Interests.”
- 50 Max Jaeger, “The Chinese Are Already Worried about Xi’s Handshake with Trump,” *New York Post*, February 27, 2017, <https://nypost.com/2017/02/27/the-chinese-are-already-worried-about-xi-handshake-with-trump/>; and *South China Morning Post*, “Could fear of embarrassment and China’s domestic woes keep Xi Jinping away from Apec summit?” Yahoo! Finance, October 2, 2023, <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/could-fear-embarrassment-chinas-domestic-093000214.html>.
- 51 U.S. Congress Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, *Buy What It Can, Steal What It Must: China’s Campaign to Acquire Frontier AI Capabilities*, (Washington, DC: Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, April 2026), <https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/media/reports/buy-what-it-can-steal-what-it-must-china-s-campaign-to-acquire-frontier-ai-capabilities>; and Zach Dorfman, “Moscow’s Spies Were Stealing US Tech – Until the FBI Started a Sabotage Campaign,” *Politico*, August 4, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2024/08/04/us-spies-soviet-technology-00164126>.
- 52 Office of Public Affairs of U.S. Department of Justice, “Chinese National and Two U.S. Citizens Charged with Conspiring to Smuggle Artificial Intelligence Technology to China,” press release, March 25, 2026, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/chinese-national-and-two-us-citizens-charged-conspiring-smuggle-artificial-intelligence>.
- 53 Ann Cao, “Former China chip fund executive expelled from Communist Party for bribery, graft,” *South China Morning Post*, January 20, 2023, <https://www.scmp.com/tech/policy/article/3207561/former-china-chip-fund-executive-expelled-communist-party-bribery-graft>.
- 54 Martin and Jacobs, “US Intelligence Shows.”
- 55 Parello-Plesner, *The Chinese Communist Party’s Foreign Interference Operations*.
- 56 Jake Sullivan, “The Tech High Ground,” *Foreign Affairs* 105, no. 3 (May/June 2026), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/tech-high-ground-jake-sullivan>.
- 57 Catherine A. Theohary, *Information Warfare: Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. R24142, (Washington, DC: CRS, March 2018), <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45142>.
- 58 Kieran Green et al., *Censorship Practices*.
- 59 See, for example: <https://rhg.com/china/data-and-tools/>.
- 60 Stephen M. Walt, “Hedging on Hegemony: The Realist Debate over How to Respond to China,” *International Security* 49, no. 4 (May 2025): 37-70, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00508.
- 61 U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on China, “Select Committee Adopts Proposal to Reset Economic Relationship with The People’s Republic of China,” press release, December 12, 2023, <https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/media/press-releases/select-committee-adopts-proposal-to-reset-economic-relationship-with-the-people-s-republic-of-china>.
- 62 U.S. House Of Representatives Select Committee on China, *Predatory Pricing: How the Chinese Communist Party Manipulates Global Minerals Prices To Maintain Its Dominance* (Washington, DC: Select Committee on China, November 2025), <https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/media/reports/predatory-pricing-how-the-chinese-communist-party-manipulates-global-minerals-prices-to-maintain-its-dominance>.

- 63 Emily Harding, U.S. Cyber Capabilities: *Deter and Disrupt Malign Foreign Activity Targeting the Homeland*, Testimony before the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection, 119th Cong., 2nd sess. (January 13, 2026), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-cyber-capabilities-deter-and-disrupt-malign-foreign-activity-targeting-homeland>.
- 64 See, for example: <https://www.war.gov/Spotlights/AUKUS/>.
- 65 Harriet Barber, “‘Mad fishing’: the super-size fleet of squid catchers plundering the high seas,” *The Guardian*, January 6, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/jan/06/squid-argentina-coast-guard-overfishing-ecosystems-animal-cruelty-human-rights-china>; and Sweekriti Pathak, “Fishing and Force: China’s Dark Fleets and Maritime Militias,” Observer Research Foundation, Expert Speak, January 29, 2026, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/fishing-and-force-china-s-dark-fleets-and-maritime-militias>.
- 66 Dennis J. Blasko, *PLA Weaknesses and Xi’s Concerns about PLA Capabilities*, Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 116th Cong., 1st sess. (February 7, 2019), https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Blasko_USCC%20Testimony_FINAL.pdf.
- 67 Julian E. Barnes, “C.I.A. Video Appeals to Potential Spies in China’s Military,” *New York Times*, February 12, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/12/us/politics/cia-china-spies.html>.
- 68 Alex Luck, “Chinese Naval Task Force Circumnavigates Australia, Creates Local Stir,” *Naval News*, July 3, 2025, <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2025/03/chinese-task-force-circumnavigates-australia-causing-local-stir/>.
- 69 Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress; CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, “A Tale of Two Reams: Questions Remain at Cambodia’s Growing Naval Base,” CSIS, May 2025, <https://anti.csis.org/a-tale-of-two-reams-questions-remain-at-cambodias-growing-naval-base/>; and Ellen Nakashima and Cate Cadell, “China Secretly Building PLA Naval Facility in Cambodia, Western Officials Say,” *Washington Post*, June 6, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/06/06/cambodia-china-navy-base-ream/>.
- 70 Cristina L. Garafola et al., *The People’s Liberation Army’s Search for Overseas Basing and Access: A Framework to Assess Potential Host Nations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, December 2022), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1496-2.html.
- 71 Helen Davidson, “China’s maritime militia: the shadowy armada whose existence Beijing rarely acknowledges,” *The Guardian*, June 12, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/13/china-maritime-militia-explainer-south-china-sea-scarborough-shoal>; Nicholas Yong, “Industrial espionage: How China sneaks out America’s technology secrets,” BBC, January 16, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-64206950>; and Didi Tang and Eduardo Castillo, “China’s state media turns to social media and AI to tell its story – and often mock the US,” AP News, April 10, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/ai-iran-war-animation-video-china-8b74148007a3906cef85534eead1d7c8>.
- 72 Dave Philipps and Matthew Cole, “How a Top Secret SEAL Team 6 Mission into North Korea Fell Apart,” *New York Times*, September 5, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/05/us/navy-seal-north-korea-trump-2019.html>.
- 73 Seth Jones, “The Future of Warfare is Irregular,” *National Interest*, August 26, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/future-warfare-irregular-29672>.