

America & China: A Fight for Hegemony

Ka'Von Johnson

On July 7th, 2020 the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Christopher Wray, gave a speech *China's Attempt to Influence U.S. Institutions: A Conversation with FBI Director Christopher Wray*, at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C. According to Wray, "The greatest long-term threat to our nation's information and intellectual property, and to our economic vitality, is the counterintelligence and economic espionage threat from China. It's a threat to our economic security—and by extension, to our national security" (Wray, 2020). This is a common issue echoed by many politicians, security advisors, and intelligence agencies. The Chinese government has waged a clandestine war on America, every aspect of institutions and industry have been targeted and will continue to be targeted. Unlike North Korea, Iran, Russia, and other countries, the Chinese are patient and have been patient, continuing trade with America and conducting diplomacy, while under the table they're stealing intellectual property and hindering United States foreign policy. North Korea will always cry wolf, shooting Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles into its Eastern coast, but seemingly pose no immediate threat. Iran will continuously bother merchant ships in international waters, while running counter operations against the U.S. in the Middle East, but they pose no imminent threat. Russia has been a declining world power since the end of the Cold War, mix this with Putin's uncertain future with the war in Ukraine, Russia lacks the capability to cause any severe immediate damage to America. But China is a different story, the world's number one exporter of goods and services. A country with a massive population, despite its population decline over the years, China still remains one of the world's most populated countries. China is patient, and will always observe from afar and build up until it is ready. Everything the Chinese do involving foreign policy has a reason and they are incredibly methodical in their practices. They find success in their ability to take advantage of other countries, and are cut throats, especially in the international market. China knows that currently they cannot stand toe-to-toe with the U.S. military, but recently China surpassed America in one strategic military area and that's naval capabilities. According to *China's Global Navy*, by James E. Fanell (2020):

After twenty years of transformation, the PLAN (People's Liberation Army Navy) today operates around the world, from the Baltic (and soon even the Barents) to the South Pacific, and from the Arctic to the Antarctic. By 2015, it already was clear that China's naval shipbuilding would continue unabated through the third decade of the millennium, and that China's leaders would move rapidly to increase PLAN's order of battle to support an expanding set of missions, so as to fulfill their "China Dream" of national rejuvenation and restoration. (p. 18)

As of 2022, the Chinese Navy has surpassed the U.S. In the quantity of vessels, the quality of said vessels has been questioned by U.S. Navy Admirals.

China is using the rifts between the U.S. and its allies to subvert U.S foreign policy. In Africa, The Communist Chinese Party has been building relationships with countries and coercing African leaders into accepting diplomacy that is not favorable

to American interests. Not only is China turning Africa against America, the Chinese are brokering business deals with African countries to expand the Chinese footprint in the region. In 2020 China did exactly that; they outsmarted the U.S. and gained the rights to building a new Center for Disease Control headquarters in Africa with the guidance of the African Union. This deal meant deeper ties with China and less American cooperation in the region. The article, "How the U.S lost to China over Africa's new CDC: Beijing outwitted Washington to build disease centre in Addis Ababa and showcase it as a major symbol of China-Africa solidarity," Jevans Nybiage (2022) states, "As they sparred over who should build the Africa CDC headquarters, the US accused China of aiming to spy on Africa's genomic data" followed by, "In 2018, as US-China relations were deteriorating, the AU and China agreed that the Chinese would build the CDC headquarters." It's the small things that matter, China is using foreign projects as leverage against African countries and purposely exasperating U.S. officials. China has been relatively nice to Africa, but in the past, they've been known to ask African countries for favors. The Chinese government isn't trying to build a better Africa, they're attempting to spread resentment against America, while stealing intellectual property and finding ways to benefit themselves at the same time.

To make matters worse, the Chinese practice unfair trading with the U.S. In the most heinous of cases, the Chinese steal intellectual property and make their own version of anything they want. It's not a secret that governments steal intellectual property from other countries, but China has the most egregious theft of property. In the reading, "Steal the Firewood from Under the Pot The Role of Intellectual Property Theft in Chinese Global Strategy," Capt. Scott Tosi (2021) from the U.S. Army states:

In September 2015, the United States and China reached an agreement in principle that specified, among other stipulations, that neither the U.S. or the Chinese government will conduct or knowingly support cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property, However, less than two years later, China's use of cyber-enabled intellectual property theft was outlined bluntly in the 2017 National Security Strategy, which state that every year, competitors such as China steal U.S. intellectual property valued at hundreds of billions of dollars. (p. 1)

The most threatening part of this finding was that Chinese authorities are knowingly violating a treaty and can pose broad implications for the U.S Army and Department of Defense. The theft of intellectual property from the Army and DoD can have ripple effects on U.S. defense strategy. The theft included research and U.S. military technological development. Chinese President Xi Jinping, has said for years that he wants to build the Chinese military into a world class army with all military capabilities. The report goes beyond property theft, and also mentions how China has been studying America's interventions in the Middle East, looking for vulnerabilities in military strategy and finding ways to gain an advantage over America if the two countries were ever to go to war.

The U.S has made it easy for the Chinese to infiltrate American industry; America has globalized since its isolationist decades during the 1920s and 30s and businesses were booming. But America should reverse course a bit, because the

Dragon in the East is using America's free-market to essentially plagiarize industrial methods and military research. The U.S. should continue diplomacy and economic relations with China, but sustain security limitations in regards to sensitive information. The U.S. needs to continue investing in modernizing the military to counter China's rise. In the reading, "Countering China," Michael Sobolik (2021) writes:

Today, however, it is China that is baiting America, Washington's instinctual response to compete with the Belt and Road dollar-for-dollar is a losing proposition that plays into China's long game. But with an offensive framework, American policymakers could turn the tables and transform in an albatross for the Communist Party, for the massive project has multiple flanks that Washington has so far left untouched. (p. 68)

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is its golden child; it believes this super highway for trade in goods and services can stop its reliance on delivering trade goods through the Strait of Malacca. This strait has always been a vulnerability for China, for instance, it's patrolled by the U.S. so if war were to ever occur the U.S. and its allies could blockade the strait and prevent China from trading with the outside world. The reading demonstrates that the U.S. needs to make sure this BRI does not get completed. It appears on the surface; U.S. strategy does not encompass dismantling the BRI. As for the military, the number one reason the U.S. military has been successful is because of its technological military superiority. But China's Navy has outpaced the U.S. in Naval assets, but we can still ensure we have the quality advantage over China. One important thing to consider is that China copies and pastes diagrams for weapons, only making small adjustments but overall, the weapon is the same. Furthermore, there's a lot of uncertainty around the quality of the People's Liberation Army of China whether or not it's a paper tiger or the real deal. Nonetheless, America must be prepared to take on China in all areas of military and geopolitics.

References

- Fanell, J. E. (2020). CHINA'S GLOBAL NAVY: Today's Challenge for the United States and the U.S. Navy. *Naval War College Review*, 73(4), 12.
- Nyabiage, J. (2022, August 14). How the U.S. lost to China over Africa's new CDC; Beijing outwitted Washington to build disease control centre in Addis Ababa and showcase it as a major symbol of China-Africa solidarity. *South China Morning Post (Hong Kong)*.
- Tosi, S. (2021, September 1). Steal the Firewood from Under the Pot: The Role of Intellectual Property Theft in Chinese Global Strategy. *Military Review*, 101(SE), 31.
- Sobolik, M. (2021, May 1). Countering China. *The National Interest*, 173, 62.

Wray, Christopher. (2020, July 7). "China's Attempt to Influence U.S. Institutions: A Conversation with FBI Director Christopher Wray." *Hudson.Com*, www.hudson.org/events/1836-video-event-china-s-attempt-to-influence-u-s-institutions-a-conversation-with-fbi-director-christopher-wray72020. Accessed 29 Apr. 2023.