

THE TELEGRAM



A China Agenda for President Biden

Sarwar A. Kashmeri

Including the author's conversations with:

CANADA
Lynette Ong

CHINA
Yan Xuotong
Zha Daojiong

DENMARK
Xing Li

HONG KONG
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UNITED KINGDOM
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UNITED STATES
Marc Chandler
Pamela Kyle Crossley
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A FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION REPORT

The Foreign Policy Association, founded in 1918, is the first independent national organization established to provide global affairs learning opportunities in all regions of the United States. Working to develop awareness, understanding, and informed public opinion on key current international challenges, the Foreign Policy Association is widely recognized as a leader in stimulating broader and more effective participation in world affairs. As FPA advances international affairs education, the organization enriches national debates about America's role in the world and strengthens U.S. democracy.

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In today's world, as globalization accelerates and its complexities and consequences expand, the experience and expertise of the Foreign Policy Association are needed more than ever.

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Sarwar A. Kashmeri

A FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION REPORT

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank the experts on the U.S.–China relationship from Asia, the Middle East, the European Union, and the United States who contributed to this report. They are listed on the cover and on the following Policy Experts list. All of them were kind enough to appear as my guests on *Polaris-Live*, live half-hour weekly video-conversations that I host. For the last four months, *Polaris-Live* has focused on discussing the U.S.–China relationship in free flowing, commercial-free conversations focused on the relationship between the two superpowers. In the conversations, the last question that I asked the guests was what suggestions they would make to U.S. President Biden to improve the two countries' relationship if they found themselves alone with him. Their suggestions are recorded in the last section of this report. For those who want to drill deeper, each interlocutor's suggestions are followed by a link to the entire conversation that is permanently recorded on the *Polaris-Live* channel on YouTube.

What better way to test my own thoughts, I reckoned, than to filter them through the eyes of experts from other countries, which is the process I have followed in compiling this report for the Foreign Policy Association. There is no question that my interlocutors were enormously helpful. They brought fresh insights and different perspectives to the largely one-dimensional and abrasive view of the U.S.–China relationship that exists in Washington, D.C., today. While the *Polaris-Live* conclusions forced me to think outside the box, the conclusions I present in *The Telegram* are my own, and it would be a mistake to link any conclusion to a particular interlocutor unless specifically quoted.

Students of history and geopolitics will recognize that the title of this report, *The Telegram*, is adapted from the now famous 1946 report *The Long Telegram*, authored by George Kennan, the Department of State's envoy in Moscow. Kennan's brilliant analysis of the Soviet economy and his recommendations to the U.S. Department of State resulted in the U.S. policy of containment, which ultimately (it took three decades) resulted in the implosion of the Soviet empire without a single shot being fired. It was a remarkable feat of bipartisan U.S. leadership over thirty years.

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The tussle between the Soviet Union and the United States was existential—while, thankfully, the competition with China is not. Ensuring that the China–U.S. competition does not become existential will require a fresh, realistic U.S. strategy for China. That is the reason I accepted the Foreign Policy Association’s invitation to write this report, which ultimately became *The Telegram*. I must confess the title made me a bit nervous because telegrams have long ceased to exist! But the historical context was hard to pass up. And I hope that somewhere there is a wryly smiling George Kennan looking down favorably at this far shorter namesake of his *Long Telegram*.

I also want to thank my friend and book editor Anna Typrowicz, who edited the essay in this report, and Emilie Trautmann and Tonya Leigh, both from the Foreign Policy Association, who completed the editing, designed the cover, and moved the report through production.

Dr. Pamela Crossley of Dartmouth College is one of America’s leading China historians. I leaned on her for advice often during the creation of this report and owe her a special debt of gratitude.

A special note of thanks is due to my spring 2021 Dartmouth/Osher class. These students were unusually well informed in geopolitics and brought with them a diverse set of experiences in government, media, national security, energy, and a host of other disciplines. I was lucky to be able to discuss and fine-tune some of my thoughts on the U.S.–China relationship with them as this report was being written.

Last, but not least, let me acknowledge my gratitude to Noel V. Lateef, president and chief executive officer of the Foreign Policy Association, a legend in the think-tank world. Noel has been a friend and adviser for many years; he was kind enough to serve as a sounding board for many of the ideas that found their way into this report and to write the report’s *Foreword*.

The FPA has been my intellectual home for almost three decades. Uniquely in a world of agenda-driven think tanks, the mission of the FPA today, as it has been for its more than 100-year history, is to serve as a catalyst for developing awareness, understanding, and informed opinion on U.S. foreign policy and global issues.

The U.S.–China relationship is perhaps the most consequential foreign policy issue of our time. That relationship appears fraught as I conclude these *Acknowledgements*. The current situation must change, for the United States and China will be the world’s two superpowers for many decades to come. The future of the world depends on their working together. It is my hope that this report and its recommendations from Asian, European, Middle Eastern, and American experts will help lower the present daggers-drawn temperature of the relationship and build understanding between two great countries.

Sarwar A. Kashmeri
Hanover, New Hampshire, USA
May 16, 2021

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Foreword

Noel V. Lateef

At my first meeting as Foreign Policy Association president, I welcomed to the FPA forum China's Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. He observed that when one party treats another party with respect, there is real dialogue. While his observation did not make the news, when the Chinese vice premier contradicted then U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher on nuclear policy, the hundred or so members of the media present had their story.

It is said that history teaches but has few pupils. Chinese leaders are very much an exception. They remember well their "century of humiliation" at the hands of colonial powers, and China is increasing its military expenditures significantly. In his Elizabeth French Hitchcock Lecture, an annual joint meeting of FPA and the Off-the-Record Lecture Series, former Australian Prime Minister and current President of the Asia Society Kevin Rudd observed that China has studied extensively the Monroe Doctrine. "History," he stated, "informs Chinese public sentiment of predatory powers seeking to gang up on China."

In the wake of the covid-19 pandemic, a geopolitical realignment is emerging to counterbalance China's burgeoning role in the region. The Quad (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) is a partnership of like-minded democracies that, in the words of President Joe Biden in his first address to Congress, positions the United States "in a strong relationship in the Indo-Pacific, not to start a conflict, but to prevent one." Yet consensus building in the face of significant economic and political consequences is challenging. Kevin Rudd flagged two competing dynamics in the region, with China at the heart of economic interests and the United States anchoring security interests. He concluded, "Countries in the region should not be

Noel V. Lateef *is president and chief executive officer of the Foreign Policy Association. His recent books include* In Pursuit of Peace: Conflict Prevention and World Order *and* The Future of Higher Education in the Age of Globalization.

forced to choose between China and the U.S. We can choose to walk and chew gum at the same time.”

China, accounting for 19 percent of the global economy, has overtaken the United States on a purchasing power parity basis. In 2017, China manufactured \$3.5 trillion of goods, or 60 percent more than the United States. The U.S. share of global manufacturing output declined from almost 30 percent in 2002 to 17 percent in 2018, while China’s share rose from less than 10 percent to 28 percent. During this time period, over 60,000 factories (out of 350,000) closed in the United States, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Statistics of U.S. Businesses.

In March 2021, China issued its fourteenth Five-Year Plan. The plan reaffirmed China’s strategy of increasing spending on research and development and on digitizing its economy. In 2020, China’s digitized economy grew to 40 percent of its gross domestic product. China’s live streaming market was already \$5.7 trillion in 2019—more than ten times its size in 2017.

The covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of global supply chains. With vital medical supplies dependent on foreign, especially Chinese, manufacturers, the public and policymakers in the United States are viewing our country’s deindustrialization in a new light. In response to global supply chain vulnerability, there is growing U.S. public support for rebuilding American industrial capacity and for taking actions to maintain U.S. technology leadership. In his essay “Global Supply Chains and U.S. National Security,” which appeared in the 2021 edition of *Great Decisions*, Jonathan Chanis writes:

Industrial Policy (IP) currently is enjoying a revival both on the left and right, and a large number of politicians such as Senators Marco Rubio, Sherrod Brown, and Sheldon Whitehouse and former Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley are supportive of a greater government role in the economy. A national-security-oriented IP would use a coherent and narrow set of government measures to reduce specific national security vulnerabilities, as in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductors, and 5G. One of the most high-profile current IP efforts is found in legislation to increase the domestic U.S. manufacturing of semiconductors and block as much indigenous Chinese chip development as possible. A broader IP would attempt to reinvigorate an entire industry, such as the automotive sector, by renewing or creating the full supply chain in the U.S. and friendly countries.

In a rare display of bipartisan agreement, the Senate approved in early June a major bill to support the U.S. finance, technology, and manufacturing sectors.

Before assuming his current position as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Ambassador William Burns described managing competition with China

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as the greatest geopolitical challenge facing the United States. In the *Great Decisions* special edition *America in the World 2020*, Burns states:

In recent decades, undisciplined thinking led us to assume too much about the benefits of engaging with China. Today, undisciplined thinking of a different sort is causing us to assume too much about the feasibility of decoupling and containment—and about the inevitability of confrontation.... Preventing China's rise is beyond America's capacity, and our economies are too entangled to decouple.

In testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Armed Services, General H.R. McMaster observed that competition with China does not foreclose on cooperation. In a recent op ed, Paul Sheard, a research fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School, argues that the United States "needs to change the way it views an increasingly pivotal China." Professor David Denoon at New York University concurs in *America in the World 2020*, writing that "the basic assumptions of the U.S.–China relationship need to be rethought and reconfigured."

Now comes FPA Fellow Sarwar Kashmeri, author of *China's Grand Strategy: Weaving a New Silk Road to Global Primacy* (an FPA Centennial book) and host of the widely followed podcast *Polaris-Live*, with a compelling brief for recalibrating U.S.–China relations. His recommendations are rooted in former U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz's advice to avoid another Cold War. Indeed, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has warned that already we could be "in the foothills of a Cold War." Sarwar Kashmeri's narrative draws upon expert views from across the political spectrum and from around the world. It could not be more timely.

“It behooves us to continue
in these paths, doing what lies
in our power to foster feelings of
goodwill, and leaving no effort untried
to work out the great policy of full and fair
intercourse between China and the nations,
on a footing of equal rights and advantages to all.”

*President Theodore Roosevelt
State of the Union Address
Washington, D.C., December 3, 1901*

China and the United States Today

Ask Dartmouth College Professor Pamela Crossley, one of America’s most respected China historians, to explain when in its long history China was as rich and powerful as it is now, and she will stop for a moment and smile before answering. Then she will tell you that except for a short period—a little longer than a century, beginning around 1850—China has been rich and powerful for *all* its past 3,000 years! In that one short period, China’s share of the world’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) dropped to around 5 percent from its normal share of 20 – 25 percent of global GDP. But with an estimated 21 percent share of the world’s GDP in 2021, China has now returned to its historical standing and is one of the world’s two superpowers, second only to the United States. And unless something goes terribly wrong, by 2025 China will have overtaken the United States to regain its status as the world’s largest economy.

To be sure, even as the world’s largest economy China will still not be as *wealthy* as America in terms of GDP per capita, which, according to 2019 World Bank data, was \$10,216 for China and \$65,297 for the United States. GDP per capita affects how people live, as Professor Crossley says. But a mere four decades ago, the per capita GDP of China, according to the World Bank, was \$195, and more than 90 percent of China’s citizens lived below the World Bank’s international poverty line. Remarkably, during these four decades, China raised some 900 million of its citizens out of poverty—an accomplishment never seen in recorded history.

These were the most successful four decades in China's 3,000-year history, especially for the lowest 50 percent of the Chinese population. By comparison, in the same four decades, the income of Americans in the lowest 50 percent bracket went down. The United States is the only developed country in which this has happened. In those decades, as the lot of the average Chinese citizen zoomed, the lot of the average American tragically barely crawled.

That brief period when China was not one of the world's top-ranked countries is permanently stamped in Chinese minds as the *century of humiliation*. During that time, China was colonized, brutalized, looted, humiliated, flooded with opium, and forced by the West—led by the power of the British Royal Navy's guns—to cede territory. It is a time that is etched laser-like in the Chinese psyche.

The barbarity with which the West, under Britain's leadership, executed its China policy reached its apogee in 1860 when a British and French force burned down the Old Summer Palace on the outskirts of Beijing. As *History is Now Magazine* describes it, "The palace that once boasted of possessing the most extensive and invaluable art collection of China became a site of ruins within three days in the face of some 3,500 screaming soldiers and burning torches.... British and French officers and men helped themselves to all the porcelain, the silk, and the ancient books—there were an estimated 1.5 million ancient Chinese relics taken away." This is but one example that illuminates why China has never forgotten this period and why this history is required reading in Chinese schools.

In my conversation with Singaporean diplomat and academic Kishore Mahbubani, I asked him whether China should constantly bring up the century of humiliation so long after that time has passed. "If you don't understand the century of humiliation that China suffered from 1842 to 1945, then you don't understand China's present-day strategy, because the main goal of this strategy is to avoid another century of humiliation," he told me.

No wonder that China has used its defense budget—which is roughly a third of America's—to develop and deploy a modern, technocentric military, with a phalanx of ground, air, sea, and space weapons. In a conflict with the United States, China's military would destroy American bases in the region within minutes and sink U.S. Navy nuclear-powered aircraft carrier attack groups if they ventured within a thousand kilometers (just over 621 miles) of China's shoreline.

As Christian Brose, former staff director of the U.S. Senate Armed Service Committee and senior policy advisor to Senator John McCain of Arizona puts it in his widely read book *The Kill Chain*, published in 2020, "Were a war to break out in the Indo-Pacific between the U.S. and China, U.S. aircraft carriers in the region would immediately turn east and sail away from China, intent on getting more than a thousand miles from the opponent's long-range anti-ship missiles, but from that far away, none of the aircraft on the flight deck would be capable of reaching their

targets.” He adds, “America’s forward bases in places like Japan and Guam would be inundated with waves of precise ballistic and cruise missiles.”

But isn’t it true, as geopolitical experts are quick to point out, that absent all-out war, America has an asset that China can only dream about: its global constellation of strong alliances, especially with European states, while China has virtually none? While this may have been true in the past, it is no longer necessarily the case today.

As Professor Xing Li of Aalborg University in Denmark explained, “It is a big mistake for the United States to think in that way. Let me explain to you the Chinese term *guanxi*,...[which] means relationship. China does not like the term alliance, but China likes making friends. That’s different. Making close friends is not equivalent to making an alliance, because the danger of making an alliance is that you force the country to act collectively towards the same line.”

Recent events have underscored Professor Li’s point that when push came to shove, some of the United States’ oldest and strongest allies have refused to support this country militarily and commercially. For instance, when America invaded Iraq in 2003, two of its steadfast allies, France and Germany, wanted nothing to do with a war they considered illegal because the United Nations had not authorized it. Then in 2017 the United States specifically asked its allies not to support the launch of China’s Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The United States viewed the AIIB as a direct competitor to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, key institutions of the American-led liberal world order. And yet virtually every U.S. ally, beginning with America’s supposedly closest, Britain, deserted the United States and lined up to support China.

Today the proposition that China has few allies is no longer true. After all, as Parag Khanna, the futurist and global thinker points out, China is the top trading partner of twice as many countries as the United States is, as well as being the largest exporter in the world. And China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—a massive infrastructure project under which China is constructing roads, tunnels, bridges, ports, and fiber optic connections in 130 countries of Asia, Europe, and Africa—has already provided China with dozens more alliances.

“Above all,” as the February 6, 2020, edition of *The Economist* put it, “the Chinese Communist Party is using the BRI to reshape a world order more to its liking. The focus is economic engagement and clever diplomacy.” The United States has nothing like the BRI, a global influence-building tour de force that is propagat

ing the China brand and its capabilities around the world and is creating alliances in an area that covers two thirds of the world's population and over a third of the world's GDP.

The BRI was best summarized by President Xi Jinping in 2017: "China will actively promote international cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative. In doing so, we hope to achieve policy, infrastructure, trade, financial, and people-to-people connectivity and thus build a new platform for international cooperation to create new drivers of shared development."

Most important, these Chinese alliances are commercial partnerships. They do not follow the American model of global alliances based on defense treaties, most of which come packaged with expensive commitments to protect countries with which the United States also does business.

Another way to measure the difference between how the United States and China structure their alliances is the number of military bases they have around the world. The United States has some 600 of them, while China, except for a tiny outpost in Djibouti, which is adjacent to American, French, and Japanese outposts, has none. Besides questions of cost, these U.S. bases give rise to a comparison—however unfair this may be—to the British Empire, on which it was said that the sun never sets, with all the discriminatory colonial appendages associated with Britain's then colonial power.

And last but not least is "Made in China 2025": China's determined, organized, and well-funded strategy under which, as the Mercator Institute of Chinese Studies details, "Beijing has devised an industrial masterplan...and is investing billions to turn China into one of the leading industrial countries by 2025." And to bypass America in research and development investment and in technological self-sufficiency, China is rapidly developing itself as the world's manufacturing powerhouse, especially in high-technology products and services such as 5G, artificial intelligence, quantum computers, and the dense chips that will drive these technologies in the 21st century.

These facts about today's China are little known to many Americans who mistakenly believe that in the competition between them, in the end China will have to listen to American reason because of America's overwhelming superiority as the world's richest and most powerful country. Many Americans simply do not understand or choose to believe that today's China is rich, powerful, and confident, with a well-thought-out three-part strategy—to become rich, to militarily dominate its borders, and to become the most connected and influential country in the world—that I describe in my book *China's Grand Strategy: Weaving a New Silk Road to Global Primacy*. This strategy is directed and executed by the Chinese Communist Party through a highly efficient authoritarian state/industry engine that is focused on making this century China's century.

But, and this is an important but, it would be wrong to conclude from China's rapid rise to the head table that America will soon be forced to exit the world's superpower leagues or that with China's rapid rise, America's day is done, and it is time for the United States to gracefully ride off into the sunset. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

If we can draw one lesson from America's more than 200-year history, it is that after a fall in fortune, the United States has a demonstrated ability to self-correct and get itself back on its feet. The country did this after a vicious civil war in the 19th century that tore the country apart and saw over 620,000 of its citizens killed. And the country transformed itself after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 from a virtually defenseless country to the most powerful nation on earth, as it converted its vast industrial resources from manufacturing peacetime goods to manufacturing the arsenal of democracy.

In our own day, witness the change in America's handling of the covid-19 epidemic. Within one year, from 2020 to 2021, the United States became the world's leader in battling the pandemic. The United States is already in the process of rebuilding its pandemic-devastated economy and appears poised to recover its economic momentum and lead the world out of last year's pandemic-induced depression.

As *The New York Times* pointed out on April 2, 2021: "Global forecasters are predicting that the United States and its record-setting stimulus spending could help haul a weakened Europe and struggling developing countries out of their own economic morass.... As Americans buy more, they should spur trade and investment and invigorate demand for German cars, Australian wine, Mexican auto parts and French fashions."

The United States still has the world's most developed banking and financial systems, and the U.S. dollar is, by far, the world's most desirable and important currency. The dollar is the currency of over 60 percent of the world's central banks' foreign exchange reserves and is used in over 88 percent of global trade transactions. In comparison, the Chinese yuan is a distant fourth, after the Japanese yen and the European Union's euro. And this preeminence of the U.S. dollar is not going anywhere soon. It is important to understand why this is so. After all, it is China that will soon have the world's largest GDP.

Determining a currency's status is not just a question of an economy's size. "Size is not the key thing that determines a currency's value," according to Bannockburn Global Forex Managing Director Marc Chandler, who has worked on Wall Street currency trading desks for four decades. "It is not about size of the gross domestic product, or how many tons of steel is produced, or autos made. What stands behind the U.S. dollar is the biggest, most liquid bond market in the world in a convertible currency. China owes a lot of debt, but the debt is not in the Chinese

government's hands as it is in America through the massive, liquid Treasury market. It is this liquidity that makes the U.S. dollar the world's currency." To which George Magnus, a research associate at the China Centre at Oxford University and at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, adds, "If size of GDP were a key measure of a currency's strength, the Swiss franc would count for little in the world's financial markets. But that is not the case, and on the contrary, the Swiss currency is more desirable globally than the Chinese yuan."

Perhaps America's most important asset is the goodwill and admiration generated by decades of American soft power: culture, music, clothing, openness, media, brash and highly visible capitalism, freedoms, and a sense of adventure that set America apart from any other country in the world. Though tarnished by America's stagnating percentage of middle class citizens, seemingly intractable racial divisions, increasing reliance on reckless military solutions and misadventures in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and a dubious conviction that the United States has a God-given mission to transform the world, that soft power is still a flame that attracts people from all over the world. It may be burning less brightly today, but that flame is not yet extinguished.

As Parag Khanna, the Singapore-based founder and managing partner of FutureMap, who has travelled in more than 120 countries, told me in our *Polaris-Live* conversation, "If I can represent any particular demographic for the purposes of this conversation, it's the three billion Asians who are not Chinese.... In the forty-plus years of my life that I've been Asian,...I've never met any one of these three billion people who says, 'I would love to live under a Chinese authoritarian dictatorship....' Many of those...people would say it would be great to have high-speed rail; it would be great to have an innovative economy; it would be great to be employed in a high-tech, special economic zone with a good job; it would be great to have materialism, law and order, public safety. But no one says, ...'Wouldn't it be great if the government could confiscate my passport and ban me from traveling and forbid me from having a bank account? Shut off that access because I said something critical of the government? Or of something else?'" Parag Khanna said, "Let's be absolutely clear. Just because China is powerful, it doesn't mean that people view its political system as inherently legitimate and desirable."

A unique American advantage was brought sharply into focus in my conversation with Arthur Kroeber, the Beijing-based managing director of GaveKal Dragonomics, which is an independent global economic research firm, and editor of its journal *China Economic Quarterly*. He stated, "China has been successful in raising 900 million citizens out of poverty over the last four decades,...but a lot of people are not happy with the level of ideological control that exists in China. China's a very controlled society, and there are a lot of creative people who want to get out for various reasons."

The Economist of April 8, 2021, also described how, virtually overnight, the Chinese Communist Party leadership ended the independence it had given to the generation of entrepreneurs who had started world-class companies and played a leading role in making China a technology leader: China's "tech moguls indeed have plenty to fear.... After years of tolerating big tech's unbridled expansion, the central government is rewriting the rules, some tacit and some explicit, for how billionaires can behave, the degree of overt state control over data, and who owns the firms' other assets, including stakes in other businesses. This new master plan for Chinese big tech will transform one of the world's most innovative and valuable industries: a stark reminder that in China, the CCP giveth and as easily taketh away."

Given this inventory of strengths and weaknesses inherent in the United States and China today, it should be obvious that the United States cannot just stop China's growth. In fact, a good case can be made, as Arthur Kroeber told me, that even if it were in America's power to stop China's growth, it may not be in the U.S. national interest to do so. Consider, for instance, the present U.S. strategy to decouple the U.S. economy from China's.

In its 2021 report *Understanding U.S.–China Decoupling*, The U.S. Chamber of Commerce warns that rising tensions with China could have serious consequences for U.S. businesses, laying out a worse-case scenario in which some major U.S. industries would be crippled. Full decoupling—meaning a complete cutoff of sales to China—would cost the U.S. aircraft and aviation industry between \$38 billion and \$51 billion in sales annually, the report estimates. That would translate to between 167,000 and 225,000 U.S. jobs lost. Similarly, an end to U.S. semiconductor sales to China would cost the industry \$83 billion in revenue and 124,000 U.S. jobs. *The Economist* points out that "China is the largest goods trading partner of 64 countries, against just 38 for America. Instead of isolating China, America and its allies would end up isolating themselves."

And what about tariffs? The experience with U.S. farm products is discouraging, to say the least: A 2019 survey by NPR News found that instead of reducing the trade imbalance between the United States and China, the U.S. tariffs hurt American farmers. More than 80 percent of the 693 Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota farmers surveyed from February through June 2019 said trade disruptions had an adverse effect on their net farm income in 2018. Almost a third reported that their income dropped by over 20 percent.

But equally, it would be an exaggeration to believe that China's economic and industrial rise means America is destined to be an also-ran fading power whose day in the sun has ended. Many of the fading-power soothsayers rely on history when reading world power tea leaves. For example, five centuries ago, Holland was the global center of the commercial power universe. Its currency, the guilder, was the world's benchmark, and investment poured into Amsterdam. Then, in the 18th century, came the British Empire, and the pound sterling became the world's

reserve and trading currency for almost two centuries. Ending the British pound's supremacy was unthinkable. But that is exactly what transpired. In the 1940s, after World War II, the now almighty U.S. dollar replaced the British pound's global dominance. So according to this line of thinking, wake up and smell the coffee: It's now the turn of China and the yuan.

This is a line of thinking with which Arthur Kroeber disagrees. "A little bit of history is a dangerous thing," he says, a timely reminder that geopolitical displacements simply do not take place in straight-line projections based on historical data points. Nations can change their trajectories.

So, like it or not, the United States and China must learn how to coexist in the world as the two great powers of the 21st century. There is, of course, the other option: war between the two nuclear armed countries. In which case the problem would indeed be resolved. Permanently. Both countries have the weapons and delivery systems to destroy each other in minutes, and with themselves the rest of the world, ending life on Planet Earth.

The last time the United States faced such a crossroad was in its no-holds-barred competition against the Soviet Union (USSR) in the aftermath of World War II. There were, however, two key differences if one were to compare that situation with today's standoff with China. Like China today, the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them, but the Soviet Union's economy was a limping skeleton compared to that of China. The agricultural economy of the USSR was highly inefficient. The USSR also was not an industrial state with the capacity to manufacture much that the rest of the world wanted to buy. The United States does more business with China in one day than it did annually in its best trading year with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's industrial capabilities and its economy were inconsequential compared to those of the United States.

Ryan Hass, a senior fellow at The Brookings Institution and the former U.S. National Security Council director for China under President Barack Obama, believes that comparisons to the Soviet Union do more to conceal than to clarify. "It's more of an apples and oranges exercise if you ask me. For example, the Soviet Union never accounted for more than 57 percent of the United States' economy. China is already at 70 percent of the U.S. economy and growing," he told me.

Recognizing the fatal systemic weaknesses in the USSR's economy, the brilliant American diplomat and strategist George Kennan devised the policy of containment in the mid-1940s to tackle U.S.-Soviet competition. There is no need to go to war with the Soviets, he advised; rather, follow a policy of containment with active opposition to Soviet expansionist aims, and in time the Soviet Union will collapse under its own weight. And that is exactly what happened. It took thirty years, but in 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed, and the United States won the Cold War, as the containment policy came to be known.

Perhaps it is equally important to note that the Cold War is the only major war that the United States has won since World War II and that it won the Cold War without firing a shot: a powerful lesson for today's competition against China.

The second crucial difference between the USSR and today's China is their geopolitical aims: The USSR wanted to spread its ruthless communist ideology around the world by any means that worked, even if this quest meant financing revolutions, forcibly overthrowing democratic governments, and destroying representative governments allied with the West.

Professor Yan Xueong, director of Tsinghua University's Institute of International Relations and a member of the Consultation Committee of the China Ministry of Commerce, totally disagrees with the term "a new Cold War" because "Cold War refers to the competition between the Soviet Union and the U.S. through the strategy of the proxy war and driven by expansion of ideology. Ideology expansion is the engine driving the Cold War and the engine driving the car of a proxy war.... Today the engine behind the China–USA competition is technological superiority. It's not an ideology for expansion."

There is no evidence that China wishes to replace the existing global order with one designed by China or that it wishes to push its authoritarian government model to other countries, though this might happen anyway given China's economic success. On the contrary, China appears to value the global and multilateral organizations within which it has prospered, and it has chosen to influence and lead these institutions from within. As *The Wall Street Journal* pointed out on September 29, 2020, "China heads four of the 15 UN and UN-affiliated agencies or groups that collectively function as the machinery of the UN system...[and] has secured spots at the helm of UN institutions that set standards for air travel, telecommunications and agriculture."

It is a view that Bonnie Glaser from The German Marshall Fund of the United States reinforced in our conversation. "It's my belief that China cannot effectively lead the international system unless it begins to insert its norms into that system," she told me. "We see this in the United Nations on the Human Rights Council, for example, where China is very actively trying to change the way the world thinks about human rights, saying it's not universally determined but really should be defined in terms of economic development, for example, not in terms of the freedoms of individuals."

However, the relative positions of the United States and China have changed, and so has the balance of power in the rest of the world. Consider that in 2021, for the first time ever, the world invested more in China than it did in the United States. In the same year, trade between the European Union and China exceeded that between the European Union and the United States. Also Asia has become a powerhouse, and Parag Khanna projects that Asia will henceforth drive growth through consumer de-

mand more than America does, another first. In the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa, China's geopolitical and commercial position strengthens by the day.

It is high time for America to stop crafting a strategy for China based on a vision of China that is obsolete. This must change. To march ahead with blinkers, instead of leveraging America's considerable strengths to recalibrate its relationship with China within the 21st century's global power balance, is a recipe for continuing decline.

But it takes two hands to clap. Which means China too must recognize that in this quest for a stable, peaceful, and prosperous 21st century, both China and America will have to compromise to end their daggers-drawn posture. How to accomplish this without compromising the two countries' vital national interests is the challenge they will have to meet: not an easy proposition.

As Professor Lynette Ong of the University of Toronto explained, "China is now widely perceived as a strategic competitor, a competitor that poses a threat to U.S. economic competitiveness, but also to the political values that the U.S. espouses.... My understanding of the psychology of policymakers in China is that because the U.S. is losing competitions on a lot of grounds, such as high-tech, the U.S. is coming up with a lot of aggressive policies to try to rally its allies in order to contain China."

And Paul Haenle, director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center in Beijing, reinforces Lynette Ong's view. He points out the harsh language that is being used on both sides: "Speeches by the Chinese leader talk about the need for Chinese people to have a fighting spirit and to engage in a protracted struggle against external, hostile forces...i.e., a United States intent on thwarting China's rise." To which he might have added President Biden's use of the term "genocide" to describe China's actions against the Uyghur Muslim minority in Xingang, a designation that even the prime minister of Canada has refused to support as descriptive of the situation in Xinjiang.

Compounding the problems of perception and rhetoric is the difficulty Chinese and American citizens have in getting an accurate picture of what is really going on in each other's country. China, of course, has no free press. The Chinese Communist Party controls what information is disseminated to its citizens and to the world. But American media, while free, appear not to be accurately fact-checking their reports. A recent article in a highly regarded New York daily newspaper is a case in point.

Weijian Shan, CEO of PAG, one of Hong Kong's top asset management firms, points out how inaccurate the newspaper's reporting on Jack Ma was. Ma is a Chinese billionaire who was portrayed as having been punished by the Chinese government for acting too independently and for being too brash for his own good in contending with the Chinese Communist Party. The U.S. newspaper reported that one of Ma's financial technology companies, Ant Group, planned an initial public

offering (IPO) on Wall Street that was cancelled at the last moment by the Chinese government in order to punish him. Valued at \$312 billion, the IPO would have been the largest financial technology offering ever.

The truth, Weijian Shan explained, was very different. “Before Ant Group was priced for its IPO, nobody actually knew how large it was. Valued at \$312 billion, it was actually larger than JP Morgan, a 150-year-old U.S. global bank,” Weijian Shan told me. “And I think the Chinese regulators all of a sudden realized...that this is a systemic risk financial institution. It ought to be regulated as such, and the regulators cancelled the IPO.” He told the newspaper reporter about all this, to no avail. “They all wanted to say that it was pulled because Jack Ma made some remarks critical of Chinese regulators. I’m critical of regulators all the time,...but that’s just a good story to tell. And if you don’t provide the full picture, which is admittedly boring, then of course the public will not get the full picture,” Weijian Shan said.

Recommendations for a New U.S. Policy for China

The Telegram reflects my thoughts on a fresh approach to crafting U.S. policy for China. My focus is on large global strategic projects that the United States and China can execute together as they negotiate away the politically difficult blocks to a warmer relationship. These projects potentially will yield outsize returns on the investment of time and political capital made by the two superpowers.

1. Building a Strategic Pandemic Command

Unless the covid-19 pandemic is obliterated around the world, fresh strategic thinking for a more constructive U.S.–China policy will have little practical significance. China and the United States have shown a remarkable ability to contain the pandemic. Unfortunately, this is not the case for large swathes of Europe and the teeming populations in Asia, Africa, and South America. The disaster that is unfolding in India—as the pandemic spreads in a country where its already feeble medical system has almost ceased to exist—is a reminder that covid-19 is a killer of monumental reach, an equal-opportunity killer without borders. Infections can jump from country to country in hours, underscoring that pandemics are global threats requiring a global response. Unless such deadly pandemics are stopped as soon as they appear, no matter where in the world they surface, no country will be safe.

My recommendation is that the United States and China set up a Strategic Pandemic Command (SPC) and invite Japan and the European Union, plus any other country that wants to join, to participate. India is the largest vaccine manufac-

turer, but “there are many other countries that can also manufacture vaccines: South Korea, China, Vietnam, and Malaysia here in East Asia,” Professor Zha Daojiong of Peking University pointed out. The United States, the EU, and Japan are the richest countries in the world, and their heft in logistics, intellectual firepower, and wealth would ensure that the SPC is a formidable organization at start-up. This idea is based on the Cold War-era U.S. Strategic Air Command (SAC), under which a few American long-range bombers carrying nuclear weapons were always in the air to thwart a surprise Soviet attack on the United States and/or on Europe. In case of such an attack, the SAC’s ever ready bombers guaranteed that the Soviet Union would itself be incinerated within hours.

Similarly, at the first warning of a pandemic’s appearance anywhere in the world, the SPC, backed by the combined resources of the United States, China, Japan, and the European Union, would be dispatched to identify, isolate, and stop the pandemic from spreading.

To further increase its chances to fulfill its mission, the SPC should be designed to function within international organizations such as UNICEF, the United Nations agency that is already involved with COVAX (Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access). COVAX is an international initiative whose aims are to accelerate the development and manufacture of covid-19 vaccines and to guarantee fair access to the vaccines for every country in the world. COVAX is designed to work with manufacturers and partners to procure covid-19 vaccine doses and to manage the logistics to guarantee equitable access to 2 billion doses of covid-19 vaccine for low-income countries by the end of 2021.

As to the likelihood of success in setting up a U.S.–China joint venture in the midst of the heated rhetoric between the two, there’s already precedent for collaboration. As the *Financial Times* reported on April 7, 2021, China’s central bank, the People’s Bank of China, “plans to set up a sustainable finance study group, with the U.S. Treasury Department as a co-chair, to establish coordination on building a road map for advancing sustainable finance.”

The Strategic Pandemic Command could also morph to include better contact between the militaries of the United States and China, thus further reducing tensions between the two countries. The U.S. military is especially qualified to help fight natural disasters. In 2004, for instance, 3,000 U.S. military personnel were deployed to West Africa to help combat a deadly Ebola epidemic. Their work included constructing seventeen hospitals, providing field training, and deploying assistance by air to remote villages. During the height of the covid-19 epidemic, the U.S. military rapidly set up temporary hospitals in U.S. cities to handle the burgeoning coronavirus caseload.

Meanwhile, China’s People’s Liberation Army seems determined to play a more active global role in peacekeeping projects around the world, and it is already

the largest contributor to the U.N. Peacekeeping Forces. In this way, pandemic aid projects delivered through the SPC could establish deeper military-to-military connections between the two countries, something that the United States has tried to foster with China for some time. A working relationship between the two nations' militaries would contribute to a more stable geopolitical balance of power.

2. Addressing Climate Change

As another example of the ability of the United States and China to work together on global strategic problems in the midst of their ongoing competition. The two countries should tackle the reduction of carbon emissions. "Green, for me, has the strongest political support and would be easy to agree on," Michele Geraci, former Italian undersecretary of state, said. Both the United States and China are, after all, the largest emitters of carbon into the atmosphere. Here the news is already very encouraging, given the recent agreement between the Chinese climate envoy Xie Zhenhua and his U.S. counterpart John Kerry to further specific actions to reduce emissions. The leaders of both countries should ensure this deal is implemented with an action plan, an important step to encourage a global buyin to plans to reduce global warming.

3. Recapturing the American Dream

Income inequality in the United States diminishes the country's claim to an otherwise accurate description as the world's richest country. The bottom 50 percent of the American population's income has barely budged over the last four decades. The impact of this stagnation on the United States has been striking. As Professor Kishore Mahbubani of the National University of Singapore points out, "American society in the 60s, 70s, 80s was spiritually much more vibrant than the Soviet Union. Today... the American society is a hugely depressed society. Life expectancy is coming down, infant mortality is going up, suicides are going up, opioid addiction is going up." In contrast, the rise in the fortunes and living standards in China are equally striking in the opposite direction. Quoting a Stanford University psychologist, Jean Fan, Professor Mahbubani says, "There's a kind of tremendous vibrancy in Chinese society, which Americans are not aware of, because the Chinese have just enjoyed the best forty years of human development in 3,000 years of Chinese history."

To his credit, President Biden has proposed a vast infrastructure rebuilding initiative which would create hundreds of thousands of jobs to jump-start the repair and upgrade of America's infrastructure. He proposes approximately \$2 trillion to underwrite his initiative. The trouble is that the president's bold initiative is not big enough: It is approximately one tenth of the amount required to fix America's infrastructure.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) estimates that it will cost approximately \$4.5 trillion per year over ten years to repair and upgrade America's infrastructure. Of this, \$2.5 trillion can be raised on the federal and state levels, leaving an infrastructure funding gap of \$2 trillion annually over a decade: a sizeable investment. However, even the relatively modest amount proposed by President Biden has little hope of making it through Congress, given the fractured bipartisanship of today's Washington.

Yet not changing the nation's infrastructure is not an option because, in the ASCE's words, "Infrastructure's condition has a cascading impact on our nation's economy, impacting business productivity, gross domestic product, personal income, and international competitiveness."

Is there a way out of this quagmire?

I believe there is. America should find a way to fuse this country's infrastructure needs with China's proven expertise in building high-quality infrastructure, as demonstrated by its \$1 trillion Belt and Road Initiative, the infrastructure project that is transforming roads, bridges, tunnels, ports, energy, and internet connectivity in 130 countries. As just one example of what China has accomplished, it has transformed its ancient rail infrastructure in two decades. Today 22,000 miles of high-speed rail zip commuters across China's large expanse on a rail network larger than the networks of all the countries in the world *combined*.

President Biden should expand the scope of his project and its budget by using the infrastructure-building expertise of China, American workers, and the infrastructure funds that Wall Street investment banks have set up. Before I hear shouts of "that's a nonstarter" from skeptics, let me point out that the United States is already participating in the BRI in all but name!

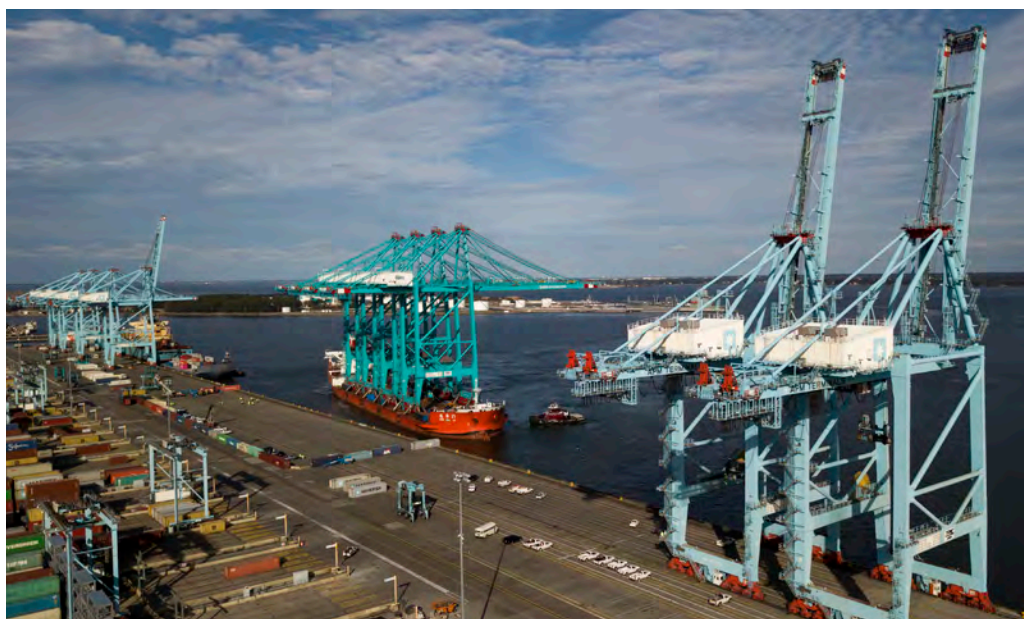
When Boston set out to replace its Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's aging commuter railroad cars, it discovered there were no U.S. manufacturers of railway cars. After an international tender, the city chose China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC) from a list that included some of the world's leading companies, including Canada's Bombardier and Japan's Kawasaki. "Not only was CRRC the low bidder by far (for instance, Kawasaki bid \$905 million to CRRC's \$566.6 million); it stood out for the quality of its product and its record of completing projects on time," then Massachusetts' Secretary of Transportation Richard Davy, who helped negotiate the bid and selection of CRRC, told me when I interviewed him for my book *China's Grand Strategy: Weaving a New Silk Road to Global Primacy*.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*: "China Railway Rolling Stock Corp., or CRRC, a state-controlled rail giant, has built two factories in the U.S. The investments helped CRRC win over local politicians and satisfy rules that require a minimum percentage of goods purchased by public-transit agencies to be made in

the U.S. CRRC underpriced the nearest competitors by as much as 20%, securing contracts with Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, according to U.S. government documents.”

To accomplish the Boston project, CRRC rebuilt a shuttered rail car manufacturing plant in Springfield, Massachusetts, where the railcar assembly takes place. This factory has created over 200 jobs, with more to be added. Despite some technical issues during the deployment of the cars in Boston, nobody doubts the long-term success of the project. So the United States already unofficially qualifies as being a part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative!

Following on the success of climate change agreements between the United States and China, President Biden should propose to China’s President Xi Jinping that America would welcome China’s help in rebuilding America’s infrastructure, under the right conditions, of course, to safeguard America’s security interests. I am sure President Xi Jinping would welcome this opportunity to partner with America, given that the BRI is now part of China’s Constitution and one of the Chinese president’s marquee initiatives. What also makes my suggestion timely is that research for my previously mentioned book revealed that U.S. private equity firms are raising large amounts of money to invest in infrastructure projects. BRI 2.0 could combine American capital and workers with China’s capital and expertise to fill the big gap in President Biden’s infrastructure budget and rebuild U.S. infrastructure in far less time and perhaps at far less cost.



A Chinese ship carrying giant cranes approaches the pier at the Virginia International Gateway terminal in Portsmouth, January 7, 2019. The four new ship-to-shore cranes are part of the \$320 million expansion of Virginia International Gateway. (AP Photo/Steve Helber)

As another example of ongoing infrastructure collaboration with China, consider that if it were not for America's purchase of large gantry cranes from China, America's port facilities would be woefully inadequate to handle the giant container ships that transport goods around the world.

"Four cranes believed to be the largest ever at a U.S. commercial port have arrived in Virginia by sea as they are delivered from China," reported London's *Daily Mail* on January 7, 2019. The new cranes in Virginia were expected to be up and running in about two months in Portsmouth, a city near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, the paper said, and went on to explain that shipping companies are using fewer but larger container ships to save on costs. Also the recent expansion of the Panama Canal has increased ship traffic between Asia and the U.S. East Coast. Similar Chinese-built cranes—the most important cog in sea-based commerce infrastructure besides the ships themselves—have operated since at least 2002 in ports in Oakland and Long Beach, California.

The Trump administration proposed tariffs on the \$12 million cranes but ultimately relented when it recognized there were no practical alternatives to buying the cranes from China and that not buying them would mean a loss of business and jobs as container ships were diverted to other ports, perhaps Canadian ports.

My point is that undisputed precedence exists for seeking China's help to keep the United States from becoming uncompetitive internationally because of its aging infrastructure.

If the United States were to boldly take this leap to join the Belt and Road Initiative, both President Biden and President Xi could claim victory in a surefire win-win deal that would also help tone down their countries' rapidly escalating animosity. But the biggest winners would be the American people and the U.S. economy. The intractable but critically important problem that has bedeviled the country for years—how to find the money, technology, and resources to repair and upgrade American infrastructure—would be permanently resolved.

If such a deal could be worked out, who knows where it might lead? The business of America, after all, is business, and so it is with China. The two superpowers disagree on many issues, but making money is not one of them.

More money at all levels of the U.S. economy would go a long way to correct the large income inequalities and the systemic racism that now plague the United States. A massive public works program that shows tangible results would be a gift that keeps on giving.

China's help in rebuilding American infrastructure through the BRI could also lead to a broader U.S. involvement in China's Belt and Road Initiative in other countries, which would increase cooperation between the two superpowers. One example of such a project pointed out by Shuja Nawaz, a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council's South Asia Center in Washington, D.C., is in Pakistan.

China–Pakistan Economic Corridor: Although the marquee project of China’s Belt and Road Initiative is its thirty-year, \$65 billion China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan offers a great opportunity for joint investments with the United States. Pakistan badly needs to rebuild its infrastructure, particularly its communications, according to Shuja Nawaz. He should know. With familial connections inside Pakistan, he helped the Atlantic Council launch its South Asia Center and was an off-and-on advisor to then Vice President Biden. “There is a huge Chinese investment already in the port of Gwadar. A Chinese firm spent \$200 million to develop that port, but it is not connected to the rest of the country and the hinterland,” he said. “China shows no inclination toward taking on this project. What is more, Pakistan is now actively looking for and discussing with the Chinese ways in which American firms can bid on some of the infrastructure projects under the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor scheme.”

The U.S. relationship with Pakistan began disintegrating after the United States’ invasion of Afghanistan in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. Pakistanis resented America’s using Pakistani land and airspace to fight its war in Afghanistan. But the people in Pakistan don’t want the U.S.–Pakistan relationship to go south, Shuja Nawaz explained: “The military doesn’t want the relationship to go south, because they value American training and American weaponry. Even though they, for the same amount of money, get larger volumes of weapons from China, the higher quality stuff they get is from America, and that’s now been stopped.”

China’s CPEC has begun to change Pakistan’s economic future, but the history of the U.S.–Pakistan relationship shows that the best and the most successful infrastructure projects that the Pakistanis proudly point to were built by the United States, beginning with the very first nuclear training reactor in Nilore, Islamabad; the Mangla and Tarbela dams; and the Lahore University of Management Sciences. These signature projects are visible and show the people of the United States assisting the people of Pakistan.

So here is an opportunity to reconnect with Pakistan, while working collaboratively with China. All the while this would demonstrate to the world that America is indeed back and getting involved again in global aid projects: a potentially win-win opportunity for the United States.

Reach for the Sky

President Biden needs to take a leap as large as the one President John Kennedy took in 1961 when he declared that Americans would land on the moon and return to earth before the end of the decade. After all, none of the electronics, systems, navigation instruments, or materials to execute the moonshot were even on American

drawing boards when the president made the announcement. But the challenge inspired Americans, and the stage was set for U.S. world leadership for decades. Likewise a bold initiative by President Biden would help Americans to break out of the Washington consensus on distrusting China and vice versa.

President Xi Jinping would need to meet the American president halfway by taking corrective actions to make such cooperative projects succeed and by demonstrating to Americans that American sensitivities do matter in the calculus of U.S.–China relations. But nothing ventured, nothing gained.

As *The New York Times* noted in a front-page article on November 18, 2018, if one were to bet today on which of two 18-year-olds of moderate means, one in China and the other in America, would make a better life for themselves in the future, the better bet would be the 18-year-old in China.

China seems to have captured what we Americans and people around the world have considered to be the American dream. *To regain the dream must be America's highest priority.*

During conversations with international policy experts between January and April 2021, Polaris-Live host Sarwar Kashmeri asked:

“If you could speak privately to President Biden, what suggestions would you offer to improve the tense relationship between the United States and China?”

Policy Experts Respond

Marc Chandler

**Managing Director and Chief Marketing Strategist
Bannockburn Global Forex**

“Yes, I think the most important thing is some kind of agreement between the United States and China that stabilizes the relationship, as happened with the Soviet Union, including creating rules of engagement, such as a code of conduct to avoid accidental mishaps—for example, ships colliding in the South China Sea. I think that there needs to be a hotline. I think there needs to be renewed exchange of defense personnel.

So I think that there are things that just these two countries can do. I think, underlying the lofty ideas that George [Magnus] (*see Page 26*) mentioned, that there needs to be an agreement between the United States and China on how they’re going to engage each other going forward. Arms control, defense sharing, intelligence: I think there are a lot of areas that can be a framework of that relationship. How are these two countries going to be engaged? What are the places that they don’t engage? Like the United States and the Soviet Union agreed, I think we need a broad framework so we don’t wake up in the morning and see the clock of the atomic scientists getting closer to Doomsday.”

To view the entire conversation with Marc Chandler and George Magnus (see Page 26), visit Polaris-Live: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcOT8cVnpi0>

Pamela Kyle Crossley

Charles and Elfriede Collis Professor of History, Dartmouth College

“I believe even more strongly now that we worry about how much the United States understands China, but how much does China really understand the United States, particularly in the post-Trump era? I think the United States is now, for various reasons, going to go through some pretty significant changes, not suddenly, but they will be substantial in terms of culture and political outlook. And I think that probably within five to ten years there is going to be a much closer connection between domestic ideology and foreign policy. A lot of it is going to focus on democracy in a way that American foreign policy has not ever focused in a serious way on democracy.”

To view the entire conversation with Pamela Kyle Crossley, visit Polaris-Live:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ip--LmGp0&list=PL4yyTisSNeBUnk7nt-j2ewvD8Vi7ofp5Ni&index=8>

Jonathan Fulton

Assistant Professor of Political Science, Zayed University

“One thing I would say is that when you cut through and look at China’s presence in the Middle East, and you look at America’s interests and China’s interests, there are very few places in the world where they line up as neatly. When you look at South Asia, Southeast Asia, or the South China Sea, there are a lot of genuine points of contention between U.S. interests and Chinese interests. But in the Middle East, that is not the case. Look at what China needs here and what the United States needs here: They are remarkably similar. Both need to ensure transport of energy to global markets, freedom of navigation, free shipping lanes, and political stability. For all the talk of China–Iran cooperation, which is dramatically exaggerated, China’s most important partners in the Middle East are U.S. allies and partners: the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Egypt, and Israel. They are all countries with important U.S. relationships.

So to me, the idea that China is a revisionist actor in the Middle East and trying to challenge American supremacy is, I think, hogwash. I think that if you look carefully, you will find many areas where the United States and China can act together.”

To view the entire conversation with Jonathan Fulton, visit Polaris-Live:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIgQ2-PD5dI>

Michele Geraci

**Professor of Practice in Economic Policy, Nottingham University Business School
Undersecretary of State, Italian Ministry of Economic Development, 2018-2019**

“My first thought is green. I think we have an alignment of both political and economic interests in the United States, with Biden, and Europe, with the Green Deal...and the [pandemic] recovery plan. China’s Xi Jinping has promised carbon neutrality by 2060, so China is going green. And the three major economic blocks in the world have the political push and the economic advantage to get it done. Green, for me, is what has the strongest political support and would be easiest to agree on. If you want to do the right thing and coordinate the effort, it’s a topic that is not, let’s say, controversial, which semiconductor technology, for example, could be. As Deng Xiaoping said: Let’s leave these to a later conversation; let’s talk first of things that we can agree upon. And I think green is one of them.

My second thought is Africa. It is a continent that, from an economic and an ethical point of view, really deserves and needs the cooperation of the northern part of the world. The West has not been the best player in Africa over the last several centuries. I think this is the time not just for charity. We need a stable Africa; we have migrant problems; and we want a market to develop because our economies in Europe are going down by 10 percent. So we want Africa to be prosperous in its own interests and also in our own interests. Again, this is where cooperation between the three blocks can come into action.”

*To view the entire conversation with Michele Geraci, visit **Polaris-Live**:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V95Y1Jdpk0Q&list=PL4yyTisSNe-BUnk7ntj2ewvD8Vi7ofp5Ni&index=12>*

Bonnie S. Glaser

Director, Asia Program, The German Marshall Fund of the United States

“I consider myself to be an objective analyst on China. You can go to my website, ChinaPower, and find all sorts of objective analyses of where China’s strengths are as a power, where its weaknesses are, where it’s narrowing the gap, and where it lags behind, including in its own domestic development. But I would say that if you read writings and statements and speeches by Xi Jinping, if you follow closely what China’s actions are, then I think you have to conclude that China wants to see itself succeed. It wants to be able to help other countries succeed, but it sees the United States and the West and democracies, I believe, as a threat.

And I don't see that China's entire foreign policy is aimed at undermining democracy. I don't think that it is its top priority either. But I think we are seeing Xi Jinping say:...Socialism will eventually prevail over capitalism. In order for China to succeed, I believe, they have to show that their system works best. Let's not forget that at the 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party [in 2017], Xi Jinping said that China's development path presents a model for other countries.

We can debate whether that means China is explicitly exporting its model, but it is certainly promoting components of its model, including authoritarian techniques like surveillance, that some countries may just use to fight crime. But others may use it for other purposes that undermine freedoms. And that's worrisome to democracies.”

To view the entire conversation with Bonnie S. Glaser, visit Polaris-Live:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bg2-4NcJSYo>

Paul Haenle

Director, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center (Beijing)

U.S. National Security Council Director for China, 2007-2009

“President Biden recognizes competition is an important feature of U.S.–China relations. This competition will hopefully improve, rather than harm, the performance of both sides. We should still cooperate where it is in our national interest to do so.

At some point, Biden is going to have to roll back some of the counterproductive and self-defeating policies and actions we saw under the Trump administration, even if it means he might get a little criticism. If the Biden administration wants to find an approach that is smarter and more effective in protecting and advancing U.S. interests, those kinds of actions are going to be necessary.”

To view the entire conversation with Paul Haenle, visit Polaris-Live:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJ59Nf_inhA

Ryan Hass

Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

U.S. National Security Council Director for China, 2013-2017

“The first thought I have is that it will be helpful for the Biden administration to reestablish a coherent policy process, one that builds in consultation with allies and partners, as well as with Congress. My sense is that the Chinese evaluate the seri-

ousness of American concerns based upon whether they view them as enduring or transitory. And the more that our position and posture are informed by the views of our allies and partners, as well as attitudes inside the United States, the harder it will be for China to ignore our priorities.

That would be my first modest suggestion. The second would be to do what the Biden administration already is working on, which is reviving our sources of strength, our international prestige, our domestic cohesion, and our alliance network. I have a book coming out next month called *Stronger: Adapting America's China Strategy in an Age of Competitive Interdependence* that really tries to get at some of these questions.

The third modest suggestion I have would be for us to have...serious internal reflection on what the nature of our competition with China is. I don't think that China is a problem with a near-term solution; I don't think there's going to be any breakthrough moment. I think we are locked into a long-term systems competition with China, where we and they will be competing to show which system is best able to unlock the potential of its people and to help realize its ambitions. And to the best system: Let it win."

To view the entire conversation with Ryan Hass, visit Polaris-Live:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W6awPgFryI>

Parag Khanna

Founder and Managing Partner, FutureMap (Singapore)

"I would say: Let's start with the framework and the objective. The key is to deepen what I've called the geopolitical marketplace, to enable countries to have options concerning whom they trade with, take investment from, and have military relations with beyond China. That requires not just idle exhortations that countries should not fall into debt traps; it requires active competition to be a substitute provider for the country, for its infrastructure financing, for its 5G and telecom networks, or for whatever the case may be. What I've found thus far is that there has been a lot more talk than action. Action is truly more important than words when it comes to this issue. Actively competing with China for the friendships, loyalties, and in-service provisions in emerging powers or underdeveloped countries is going to be the way, I would say, not to prevail but to ensure that China remains the most powerful country in Asia but not the hegemon of Asia.

This is actually going to happen through genuine engagement, country by country. This is one of the areas where I see incipient efforts that I support, whether it is the Quad, whether it is the Resilient Supply Chain Initiative, or whether it is the T10 around technology coalitions. All of these are genuinely sensible measures.

This is where the full force of diplomatic efforts should go. When it comes to the hot geopolitical territorial issues, focus should be on resolution, not just on maintenance of the balance of forces, which always opens the door to accidental escalation and conflict. I'm strongly of the view that conflicts need to be settled, not just prolonged and postponed."

To view the entire conversation with Parag Khanna, visit Polaris-Live:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXXnZg0L00E>

Arthur R. Kroeber

Managing Director, GaveKal Dragonomics

Editor, *China Economic Quarterly*

"I think you definitely want to reduce the needless confrontation [between the United States and China]. So I guess my major suggestion would be to focus: Focus on the stuff that matters, which means that the United States has to define what its interests really are and be very careful about understanding when what China is up to actually conflicts with our true interests.

And I think that the list is much shorter than what has typically been the case. It is not against the U.S. interest for China to be economically successful. Frankly, a lot of what you hear in Washington today is that anything China does that is successful, in any dimension, is a threat to the United States. I think it is really crucial to disavow that rhetoric, to get away from it, because in China there is now a very widespread perception among a broad segment of the population, which is actively supported by government propaganda every day, that the United States' mission is to keep China down.

That should not be our mission; that is not in the American interest, in my opinion. If you convey the idea that this is what we're up to, then you create a massive block of people in China who will view us, needlessly, as an enemy and as a neocolonialist power set on trying to keep China down and crush it.

So pick your targets wisely. Be clear that there's a specific harm to the United States that you're trying to address, a specific interest that's being impinged upon, and fight those specifics fiercely. We should protect our own interests without reservation, and if we have to be confrontational, then so be it. But limit the number of targets, and don't get into the trap of saying that any aspect of China's rise is by definition a threat to the United States. It's just not true."

To view the entire conversation with Arthur R. Kroeber, visit Polaris-Live:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXa-rcx7LM4>

Ed Kronenburg

**Ambassador of the Kingdom of The Netherlands to China, 2012-2017
Secretary-General, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008-2011**

“First of all, the United States should realize and accept that China is an equal partner that doesn’t take lessons from anybody and is irritated but not impressed by any threats. Furthermore, China will never change unless it feels the need to do so.

Do not try to isolate China by ganging up; it will strengthen their resolve. You need China for two of the world’s most acute threats: climate and covid. Try to responsabilize them by inviting them to the G7 meeting in June. Otherwise you will isolate them further, and they really don’t care.”

To view the entire conversation with Ed Kronenburg, visit Polaris-Live:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x75FkO9m4Dk&list=PL4yyTisSNe-BUnk7ntj2ewvD8Vi7ofp5Ni&index=5>

Xing Li

**Professor, Department of Politics and Society and Faculty of Social Sciences,
and Director, Research Centre on Development and International Relations
Aalborg University**

“I would say to President Biden: What is your identification of China, your understanding of China—whether you treat China as an enemy, whether you treat China simply as a systemic rival, or whether you treat China as an equal partner? This issue is key. I remember Professor Mahbubani, when he served as U.N. ambassador to the United States, was shocked by the fact that when he talked about China as an equal power to the United States, every American shied away. So what’s wrong with that? Biden must find a correct identification for China. China is, I think, definitely a challenger, but China is not an enemy. China does not want to destroy the United States. Actually, if you look at the financial crisis in 2008 and many other occurrences, China wishes the United States to stay stronger because the Chinese economy depends on the United States in some aspects. It is totally wrong to infer that China wishes the United States to collapse. I do not hold to that idea at all.

I believe that now the United States is on the way to decline, but I believe the United States is a country that has a lot of resilience as well. The United States is a country of innovation. I went to the United States several times, and when I sat in a bus and looked at people reading all kinds of newspapers, I saw that this is a very culturally rich country. Of course, the United States does not have a mainstream,

national culture; it's an immigrant culture. It has strengths, but now its cultural strengths are also declining. You have the racial issue that has come up. This is because of economic decline. Maybe a lot of problems also have come up because of the Trump presidency.

My advice to Biden is that you have to identify China correctly. China can be a good collaborator, cooperater.... That is most important.... And treat China as an equal partner and recognize that China now is a power. Maybe it is a power that is not ideal in your view.... You wish China to be a Christian liberal democracy like your country, but China has never been that, even during the Second World War.... The United States could not stop China from becoming a communist country. We have to understand communism in a different way.”

To view the entire conversation with Xing Li, visit Polaris-Live:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPhEKiDqTsw>

George Magnus

Economist and commentator

Research Associate, China Centre, Oxford University

“I think that we don't have to kind of scrape the barrel here. I mean, there are a number of areas where the interests of the United States and liberal democracies are aligned with China. We have common interests in climate change policies. We have common interests in securing better standards and protection of public health. We have common interests in peacekeeping around the world. We have common interests in the efficient functioning of global institutions like the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and so on. We probably have common interests in lots of kinds of scientific ventures and educational attainment mechanisms, online learning, et cetera, et cetera.

So we have to hope, I think, that our politicians—not just our politicians but, of course, Chinese politicians too—can see their way through the quagmire of conflict that is kind of new, if you want to put it that way, in commerce and technology and finance and standards and the internet and Western values that actually we hold dear and that the Chinese have banned: I mean, formally banned. There's no question: We are adversaries—ideological adversaries, I would say. But there are also areas of common interest where we should be able to work together without coming to blows. And that's the drama that will play out over the next decades.”

To view the entire conversation with George Magnus and Marc Chandler (see Page 19), visit Polaris-Live: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcOT8cVnpi0>

Kishore Mahbubani

**Distinguished Fellow, Asia Research Institute
National University of Singapore**

“I have three concrete suggestions. Point No. 1: If you live in a village where the houses are on fire—that’s what covid-19 is—you know what you do? The first thing you do is to tell your neighbor: Let’s stop fighting with each other; let’s put out the fires first. The United States and China should say: Let’s press the pause button on our geopolitical contest; let’s work together to eliminate covid-19 first, to kill it forever so that life can go back to normal. That’s the first sensible thing to do.

The second thing to do, which is something that President Joe Biden should do, is to say that Trump’s trade war against China has failed. It has made the Chinese economy stronger, not weaker. So also press the pause button on the trade war, get rid of the sanctions, and allow the global economy to bounce back so that the bottom 50 percent in America can enjoy a better life from a growing economy. That should be President Biden’s priority: taking care of the bottom 50 percent in America, not the rich elites in New York City. They don’t matter.

Thirdly and finally, climate change is real. The clock is ticking. Many of the changes are irreversible. And frankly, if we—humanity—destroy Planet Earth, we are the stupidest species on Planet Earth. I mean, let’s say you’re out at sea and your boat is sinking, which is what’s happening to Planet Earth. Do you quarrel with the guy in the next cabin on the same boat? Or do you say: Our boat is sinking; let’s come together? If the United States and China keep up their geopolitical contest while climate change is going on, they are like two stupid people on a sinking ship arguing about who sunk the ship, rather than trying to save the ship.”

To view the entire conversation with Kishore Mahbubani, visit Polaris-Live:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOecjyd4-Ng>

Shuja Nawaz

Distinguished Fellow, South Asia Center, Atlantic Council

“First off, I think Pakistan offers a great opportunity for joint U.S. and Chinese investments, because Pakistan badly needs to rebuild its infrastructure, particularly its communications. There is huge Chinese investment already in the port of Gwadar. A Chinese firm spent \$200 million to develop that port, but it is not connected to the rest of the country and the hinterland. One of my regrets is that during the period that I was with the Atlantic Council and talking to the U.S. government, I

failed to convince them that it was important for them to set up infrastructure that would connect Gwadar through Balochistan province, through Quetta, to Chaman and into Afghanistan. Linking Afghanistan and Pakistan would allow Afghanistan much easier, smoother access to the Arabian Sea and access for trade and for imports and exports. This never happened.

In fact, Pakistan is now actively looking for, and discussing with the Chinese, ways in which American firms can bid on some of the infrastructure projects in the China–Pakistan economic corridor scheme. So for the next thirty years, there’s an opportunity, but unfortunately, USAID has shied away from infrastructure projects.

When you look at the history of the U.S.–Pakistan relationship, the best and the most successful projects that the Pakistanis proudly point to are all major infrastructure projects that the United States gave to Pakistan, beginning with the very first nuclear training reactor in Nilore, Islamabad; the building of the Mangla Dam and the Tarbela Dam to provide energy to most of the country; the building of Lahore University of Management Sciences; the rebuilding of Forman Christian College in Lahore; and so on and so forth. Any number of activities are visible and are signature projects of the United States and of the people of the United States assisting the people of Pakistan.”

To view the entire conversation with Shuja Nawaz, visit Polaris-Live:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOrsJrqKCG0>

Lynette Ong

Associate Professor of Political Science, Asian Institute and Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, University of Toronto

“To President Biden I would probably say: This is a defining moment in history, and the moral leadership of the United States is more important than anything else. You can rally people together for short-term interests. But I think countering China and learning to live with China is a long-term business, not a short-term game. To have sustained leadership in the long term, any country must have moral leadership. A lot of that was lost during the Trump presidency, and people look to Biden for moral leadership. If I had the luck to meet with him, I would urge him to look at moral leadership very carefully and seriously.”

To view the entire conversation with Lynette Ong, visit Polaris-Live:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDjhVE9wYrE>

Francesco Stanislao Parisi

Chief Executive Officer, Francesco Parisi Casa di Spedizioni S.p.A.

“Negotiate with China a treaty that can reverse the escalation of confrontation. Work together on issues of common interest like a) global terrorism, b) climate change, and c) pandemics.

Confirm to the rest of the world that both powers support free trade and globalization. However, find common ways to reverse the increase of inequalities.”

To view the entire conversation with Francesco Stanislao Parisi, visit Polaris-Live: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=El-ruQuf76-U&list=PL4yyTisSNeBUnk7ntj2ewvD8Vi7ofp5Ni&index=4>

Weijian Shan

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, PAG (Hong Kong)

“The *Harvard Business Review* recently asked me what Americans don’t know about China, and I said that Americans don’t know how capitalist China is. Americans think of China as having some kind of secret China model to develop its economy. In fact, based on my experience—I was a hard laborer in the Gobi Desert when all economic activity was controlled by the state—China didn’t produce anything but poverty under Mao. China developed in the past thirty to forty years by embracing the market, by developing a private sector that now accounts for two thirds of China’s GDP. So the Chinese economy is very much a market economy. China is the largest trading nation in the world; it is the largest recipient of FDI [foreign direct investment] in the world, surpassing the United States last year.

Then the *Review* editor asked me what the Chinese don’t know about America. I said the Chinese simply don’t know how socialist America is. America has a well-developed Social Security system. China is still building its system; it is underfunded and undefined. You put money into it, but you don’t know how much you will get out of it. China does not tax the rich; there is no personal capital gains tax. China has more billionaires than the United States has and mints them at a rate of three to one compared with the United States. So both countries have very little understanding of something that they don’t like!”

To view the entire conversation with Weijian Shan, visit Polaris-Live: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyUftBuesMk>

Yan Xuetong

Distinguished Professor of International Relations, Dean of the Institute of International Relations, and Secretary General of the World Peace Forum; Tsinghua University

“The very first thing, which should be very easy for both countries, is to reach an agreement to define the nature, or character, of the competition between them, which is not a new Cold War. Based on my personal research from 2014, there were already people who labeled China–U.S. conflict as cold war. But just yesterday [April 12, 2021], people said that if the U.S. Senate passes the Strategic Competition Act, it will start a cold war! Just look at the confusion when people begin to talk about when the supposed cold war started. With Trump? No! No! With [U.S. Secretary of State] Pompeo? Why this confusion for seven years about the starting point of a cold war? Because this is not a cold war.

So if China and the United States can agree with each other to define the competition, that will lay a very good ground for both sides to talk about managing the competition between them. I would suggest to both Presidents Biden and Xi that they start by defining the nature of the competition between them. As long as they reach agreement—it doesn’t matter if it’s a good agreement or a bad agreement—on a common definition for the relationship between China and the United States, that already will be a positive signal to prevent escalation of the competition between them.”

*To view the entire conversation with Yan Xuetong, visit **Polaris-Live**:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0CCy7PgQjs>

Zha Daojiong

**Professor of International Political Economy, Peking University
Consultant, Government of the People’s Republic of China**

“I think that we have come to a time when we need to be really mindful of [the U.S.–China relationship]. Even after some forty years of largely peaceful and uninterrupted interactions—the past couple of years was a bit of an aberration in some ways—we don’t really know each other. There are different time zones; there are issues of difficulties in translation; there are backgrounds. And what really worries me at this point in time is that...you have what’s called gaslighting. That works in some political contexts, but for diplomacy, that’s really bad.

Policy Experts

And you also have, excuse me for my poor English, another tendency.... I'll basically go back to one phrase that says it all.... If I could quote your former president [Donald Trump]: China has for decades been “raping” America. Saying that very effectively evokes sentiments.

How was this done? If there was rape, where were you at that point in time? And there are other questions like that. This [allegation] works in the U.S. context, with voting and what not. And also here on the Chinese side there are similar statements about how bad America has been or blah-blah-blah or seeing through the clouds to the real nature and getting the entire universe within vision. But we have to be more modest and say: Look, we need to reserve some room for questioning ourselves, indeed for being patient in listening to the other and giving the other side the benefit of the doubt. But that space is narrowing, which is dangerous.”

To view the entire conversation with Zha Daojiong, visit Polaris-Live:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKaPkveFdoc>

Sarwar A. Kashmeri

Sarwar Kashmeri is an international relations specialist, author, and commentator, noted for his expertise on U.S. global strategy and national security. He speaks frequently before business, foreign policy, and military audiences. He is the host of *Polaris-Live*, featuring 30-minute live video-conversations on the business and geopolitical impact of China's rapid rise to superpower status.

China's Grand Strategy: Weaving a New Silk Road to Global Primacy (Praeger), his third book, was published in July 2019. It is a Centennial book of the Foreign Policy Association, where he is a fellow. The book was released at a Washington, D.C., launch on November 7, 2019, featuring former U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel.

He is also an applied research fellow of the Peace and War Center of Norwich University in Vermont, USA. He served a four-year term as a non-residential senior fellow at the Brent Scowcroft Center for International Security of the Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C., and he serves on the American Advisory Board of the Ditchley Foundation in Oxfordshire, UK.

Sarwar Kashmeri has hosted *China Focus*, a podcast series for the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and he has discussed China's Belt and Road Initiative on a television broadcast of Deutsche Welle, the German news network, and in a series of interviews with Xinhua, China's global news agency.

He is the author of the U.S. Army War College's monograph *NATO and the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy: Intersecting Trajectories*, and he is a frequent guest speaker at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Sarwar Kashmeri has written for well-known publications including *The International New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Xinhua*, and *Global Times*. He has appeared on television networks including CNN, Sky News, Euronews, C-SPAN, and Fox. Formerly the CEO of a New York-based international technology company, he has also served as a communications advisor for several Fortune 100 companies.

He earned a B.S. in aerospace engineering and an M.S. in engineering, both from Saint Louis University.



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Kashmeri". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Sarwar A. Kashmeri
Host, *Polaris-Live*

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM64ibgiPMsjEAUrF2PEagA>

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