

US Relations With China 1949 – 2020

Since 1949, US-China relations have evolved from tense standoffs to a complex mix of intensifying diplomacy, growing international rivalry, and increasingly intertwined economies.

October 1949: People's Republic of China Established

Chinese Communist Party leader Mao Zedong establishes the People's Republic of China in Beijing on October 1 after peasant-backed Communists defeat the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang and thousands of his troops flee to Taiwan. **The US—which backed the Kuomintang Nationalists against invading Japanese forces during World War II—supports Chiang's exiled Republic of China (ROC) government in Taipei, setting the stage for several decades of limited US relations with mainland China.**

June 1950: Korean War Breaks Out

The Soviet-backed North Korean People's Army invades South Korea on June 25. The United Nations and the US rush to South Korea's defense. China, in support of the communist North, retaliates when US, UN, and South Korean troops approach the Chinese border. As many as four million people die in the three-year conflict until the United Nations, China, and North Korea sign an armistice agreement in 1953.

While the United States recognized Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist (Kuomintang) government as the sole legitimate government for all of China, U.S. President Harry S. Truman announced on 5 January 1950 that the US would not engage in any intervention in the Taiwan Strait disputes, and that he would not intervene in the event of an attack by the PRC. However, after the outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950, Truman declared that the "neutralization of the Straits of Formosa" was in the best interest of the United States, and he sent the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait to prevent any conflict between the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China, effectively putting Taiwan under American protection. The move was also intended to deter ROC attacks against the Chinese Mainland.

August 1954: First Taiwan Strait Crisis

Republican President Dwight Eisenhower lifts the US navy blockade of Taiwan in 1953 **in order to fulfill demands by anticommunists to "unleash Chiang Kai-shek" on mainland China**, leading Chiang Kai-shek to deploy thousands of troops to islands in the Taiwan Strait in August 1954. Mainland China's People's Liberation Army responds by shelling the islands. Washington signs a mutual defense treaty with Chiang's Nationalists. In the spring of 1955, the US threatens a nuclear attack on China. That April, China agrees to negotiate, claiming a limited victory after the Nationalists' withdrawal from Dachen Island. Crises erupt again in 1956 and 1996.

March 1959: Tibetan Uprising

Nine years after the People's Republic of China asserts control over Tibet, a widespread uprising occurs in Lhasa. Thousands die in the ensuing crackdown by PRC forces, and the Dalai Lama flees to India. The US joins the United Nations in condemning Beijing for **human rights abuses** in Tibet, while the Central Intelligence Agency helps arm the Tibetan resistance beginning in the late 1950s.

October 1964: China's First Atomic Test

China joins the nuclear club in October 1964 when it conducts its first test of an atomic bomb. The test comes amid US-Sino tensions over the escalating conflict in Vietnam. By the time of the test, China has amassed troops along its border with Vietnam.

March 1969: Sino-Soviet Border Conflict

Differences over security, ideology, and development models strain Sino-Soviet relations. China's radical industrialization policies, known as **the Great Leap Forward**, lead the Soviet Union to withdraw advisors in 1960. Disagreements culminate in border skirmishes (*escarmouches*) in March 1969. Moscow replaces Washington as China's biggest threat, and the Sino-Soviet split contributes to **Beijing's eventual rapprochement with the US**.

April 1971: Ping-Pong Diplomacy -> beginning of **normalization**

In the first public sign of warming relations between Washington and Beijing, China's ping-pong team invites members of the US team to China on April 6, 1971. Journalists accompanying the US players are among the first Americans allowed to enter China since 1949. **In July of 1971, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger makes a secret trip to China**. Shortly thereafter, **the United Nations recognizes the People's Republic of China, endowing it with the permanent Security Council seat** that had been held by Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China on Taiwan since 1945.

February 1972: Nixon Visits China

President Richard Nixon spends eight days in China in February 1972, during which he meets Chairman Mao Zedong and signs the Shanghai Communiqué with Premier Zhou Enlai. The communiqué sets the stage for **improved US-Sino relations** by allowing China and the US to discuss difficult issues, particularly Taiwan. However, normalization of relations between the two countries makes slow progress for much of the decade.

1979: Formal Ties and One China Policy

US President Jimmy Carter grants China **full diplomatic recognition**, while acknowledging mainland China's One China principle and severing normal ties with Taiwan. Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, who leads China through major economic reforms, visits the US shortly thereafter. However, in April, Congress approves the **Taiwan Relations Act**, allowing continued commercial and cultural relations between the US and Taiwan. **The act requires Washington to provide Taipei with defensive arms, but does not officially violate the US's One China policy**.

*NB: The **"One-China policy"** is a policy asserting that there is only one sovereign state under the name China, as opposed to the idea that there are two states, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC), whose official names incorporate "China". Many states follow a one China policy, but the meanings are not the same. The PRC exclusively uses the term "One China Principle" in its official communications.*

The One China concept is different from the "One China principle", which is the principle that insists both Taiwan and mainland China are inalienable parts of a single "China". A modified form of the "One China" principle known as the "1992 Consensus" is the current policy of the PRC government. Under this "consensus", both governments "agree" that there is only one sovereign state encompassing both mainland China and Taiwan, but disagree about which of the two governments is the legitimate government of this state.

July 1982: China in the Reagan Era

The Reagan administration issues the **"Six Assurances"** to Taiwan, including pledges that it will honor the Taiwan Relations Act, it would not mediate between Taiwan and China, and it had no set date to terminate arms sales to Taiwan. The Reagan administration then signs in August 1982 a third joint communiqué with the People's Republic of China to normalize relations. It reaffirms the US commitment to its One China policy. Though Ronald Reagan voices support for stronger ties with Taiwan during his presidential campaign, his administration works to improve Beijing-Washington

relations at the height of **US concerns over Soviet expansionism**. President Reagan visits China in April 1984 and in June, **the US government permits Beijing to make purchases of US military equipment**.

June 1989: Tiananmen Square Massacre

In the spring of 1989, thousands of students hold demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, **demanding democratic reforms and an end to corruption**. On June 3, the government sends in military troops to clear the square, leaving hundreds of protesters dead. In response, **the US government suspends military sales to Beijing and freezes relations**.

September 1993: Prominent Dissidents Deported

In September 1993, China releases Wei Jingsheng, a political prisoner since 1979. That year, **President Bill Clinton launches a policy of "constructive engagement" with China**. However, after Beijing loses its bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games, the Chinese government imprisons Wei again. Four years later, Clinton secures the release of Wei and Tiananmen Square protester Wang Dan. Beijing deports both dissidents to the US.

March 1996: Taiwan's First Free Presidential Vote

The Nationalist Party's Lee Teng-hui wins Taiwan's first free presidential elections by a large margin in March 1996, despite Chinese missile tests meant to sway Taiwanese voters against voting for the pro-independence candidate. The elections come a year after China recalls its US ambassador after President Bill Clinton authorizes a visit by Lee, reversing a fifteen-year-old US policy against granting visas to Taiwan's leaders. **In 1996, Washington and Beijing agree to exchange officials again**.

May 1999: Belgrade Embassy Bombing

NATO accidentally bombs the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during its campaign against Serbian forces occupying Kosovo in May 1999, shaking US-Sino relations. The US and NATO offer apologies for the series of US intelligence mistakes that led to the deadly bombing, but thousands of Chinese demonstrators protest throughout the country, attacking official US property.

October 2000: Normalized Trade Relations

US President Bill Clinton signs the **US-China Relations Act** of 2000 in October, granting Beijing permanent normal trade relations with the US and paving the way for **China to join the World Trade Organization in 2001**. Between 1980 and 2004, US-China trade rises from \$5 billion to \$231bn. **In 2006, China surpasses Mexico as the US' second-biggest trade partner, after Canada**.

April 2001: US-Sino Spy Plane Standoff (deadlock / impasse)

In April 2001, a US reconnaissance plane collides with a Chinese fighter and makes an emergency landing on Chinese territory. Authorities on China's Hainan Island detain the twenty-four-member US crew. After twelve days and a tense standoff, authorities release the crew, and President George W. Bush expresses regret over the death of a Chinese pilot and the landing of the US plane.

September 2005: 'Responsible Stakeholder' *partie prenante / acteur, intervenant*

In a September 2005 speech, Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick initiates a **strategic dialogue with China**. Recognizing Beijing as an **emerging power**, he calls on China to serve as a "responsible stakeholder" and **use its influence to draw nations such as Sudan, North Korea, and Iran into the international system**. That same year, North Korea walks away from Six-Party Talks aimed at curbing Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. After North Korea conducts its first nuclear test in October 2006, China serves as a mediator to bring Pyongyang back to the negotiating table.

March 2007: China Increases Military Spending

In March 2007, China announces an 18 percent budget increase in defense spending for 2007, totaling more than \$45 billion. Increases in military expenditures average 15 percent a year from 1990 to 2005. During a 2007 tour of Asia, **US Vice President Dick Cheney says China's military buildup is "not consistent" with the country's stated goal of a "peaceful rise."** China says it is increasing spending to provide better training and higher salaries for its soldiers, to **"protect national security and territorial integrity."**

September 2008: China Becomes Largest US Foreign Creditor

In September 2008, China surpasses Japan to become the largest holder of US debt—or treasuries—at around \$600 billion. **The growing interdependence** between the US and Chinese economies becomes evident as a financial crisis threatens the global economy, **fueling concerns over US-China economic imbalances.**

August 2010: China Becomes World's Second-Largest Economy

China surpasses Japan as the world's second-largest economy after it is valued at \$1.33 trillion for the second quarter of 2010, slightly above Japan's \$1.28 trillion for that year. China is on track to **overtake the US as the world's number one economy by 2027**, according to Goldman Sachs chief economist Jim O'Neill. At the start of 2011, China reports a total GDP of \$5.88 trillion for 2010, compared to Japan's \$5.47 trillion.

November 2011: US 'Pivots' Toward Asia

In an essay for Foreign Policy, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton outlines **a US "pivot" to Asia.** Clinton's call for "increased investment—diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise—in the Asia-Pacific region" is seen as **a move to counter China's growing clout.** That month, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, US President Barack Obama announces the US and eight other nations have reached an agreement on the **Trans-Pacific Partnership**—a multinational free trade agreement. Obama later announces plans to deploy 2,500 marines in Australia, prompting criticism from Beijing.

*The **Trans-Pacific Partnership** (TPP), also called the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, was a proposed trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and the United States signed on 4 February 2016. After the newly elected US president Donald Trump withdrew the US signature from TPP in January 2017, the agreement could not be ratified as required and did not enter into force. The remaining countries negotiated a new trade agreement called Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which incorporates most of the provisions of the TPP and which entered into force on 30 December 2018.*

February 2012: Rising Trade Tensions

The US trade deficit with China rises from \$273.1 billion in 2010 to an all-time high of \$295.5 billion in 2011. The increase accounts for three-quarters of the growth in the US trade deficit for 2011. In March, the US, the EU, and Japan file a "request for consultations" with China at the World Trade Organization over its **restrictions on exporting rare earth metals.** The US and its allies contend **China's quota violates international trade norms, forcing multinational firms that use the metals to relocate to China.** China calls the move "rash and unfair," while vowing to defend its rights in trade disputes.

April 2012: Dissident Flees to US Embassy

Blind Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng escapes house arrest in Shandong province on April 22 and flees to the US embassy in Beijing. US diplomats negotiate an agreement with Chinese officials allowing Chen to stay in China and study law in a city close to the capital. However, after Chen moves to Beijing, he changes his mind and asks to take shelter in the US. The development threatens to **undermine US-China diplomatic ties**, but both sides avert a crisis by allowing Chen to visit the US as a student, rather than as an asylum seeker.

November 2012: China's New Leadership

The 18th National Party Congress concludes with the most significant leadership turnover in decades as about 70 percent of the members of the country's major leadership bodies—**the Politburo Standing Committee, the Central Military Commission, and the State Council**—are replaced. Li Keqiang assumes the role of premier, while **Xi Jinping** replaces Hu Jintao as president, Communist Party general secretary, and chairman of the Central Military Commission. Xi delivers a series of speeches on the **"rejuvenation"** of China.

June 7 – 8, 2013: Sunnylands Summit

US President Barack Obama hosts Chinese President Xi Jinping for a "shirt-sleeves summit" at the Sunnylands Estate in California in **a bid to build a personal rapport with his counterpart and ease tense US-China relations**. The presidents pledge to cooperate more effectively on pressing **bilateral, regional, and global issues, including climate change and North Korea**. Obama and Xi also vow to establish a **"new model"** of relations, a nod to Xi's concept of establishing a "new type of great power relations" for the US and China.

May 19, 2014: US Indicts Chinese Nationals

A US court indicts five Chinese hackers, allegedly with ties to China's People's Liberation Army, on charges of **stealing trade technology from US companies**. In response, Beijing suspends its cooperation in the US-China cybersecurity working group. In June 2015, US authorities signal that there is evidence that **Chinese hackers** are behind the major online breach of the Office of Personnel Management and the theft of data from twenty-two million current and former federal employees.

November 12, 2014: Joint Climate Announcement

On the sidelines of the 2014 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, US President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping issue a joint statement on climate change, pledging to **reduce carbon emissions**. Obama sets a more ambitious target for US emissions cutbacks, and Xi makes **China's first promise to curb carbon emissions' growth by 2030**. These commitments by the world's top polluters stirred hopes among some experts that they would boost momentum for global negotiations ahead of the **2015 UN-led Climate Change Conference in Paris**.

May 30, 2015: US Warns China Over South China Sea

At the fourteenth annual Shangri-La Dialogue on Asian security, US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter calls on China to **halt its controversial land reclamation efforts in the South China Sea**, saying that the US opposes "any further militarization" of the disputed territory. Ahead of the conference, US officials say that images from US naval surveillance provide evidence that China is placing military equipment on a chain of artificial islands, despite Beijing's claims that construction is mainly for civilian purposes.

The South China Sea disputes involve both island and maritime claims by several sovereign states within the region, namely Brunei, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China (ROC/Taiwan), Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

February 9, 2017: Trump Affirms One China Policy After Raising Doubts

US President Donald J. Trump says he will honor the One China policy in a call with Chinese President Xi Jinping. After winning the presidential election, Trump breaks with established practice by speaking on the telephone with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen and questioning the US commitment to its One China policy. Washington's policy for four decades has recognized that there is but one China. Under this policy, the US has maintained formal ties with the People's Republic of China but also maintains **unofficial ties with Taiwan, including the provision of defense aid**. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, visiting Beijing in March, describes the US-China relationship as one **"built on non-confrontation, no conflict, mutual respect, and always searching for win-win solutions."**

April 6 – 7, 2017: Trump Hosts Xi at Mar-a-Lago

President Donald J. Trump welcomes China's Xi Jinping for a two-day summit at the Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, where **bilateral trade and North Korea** top the agenda. Afterward, Trump touts "tremendous progress" in the US-China relationship and Xi cites a deepened understanding and greater trust building. In mid-May, US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross unveils **a ten-part agreement between Beijing and Washington to expand trade of products and services like beef, poultry, and electronic payments**. Ross describes the bilateral relationship as "hitting a new high," though the countries do not address more contentious trade issues including **aluminum, car parts, and steel**.

March 22, 2018: Trump Tariffs Target China

The Trump administration announces sweeping tariffs on Chinese imports, worth at least \$50 billion, in response to what the White House alleges is **Chinese theft of US technology and intellectual property**. Coming on the heels of tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, the measures target **goods including clothing, shoes, and electronics and restrict some Chinese investment in the US**. China imposes **retaliatory/retaliative** measures in early April on a range of US products, stoking concerns of **a trade war between the world's largest economies**. The move marks a hardening of President Trump's approach to China after high-profile summits with President Xi in April and November 2017.

July 6, 2018: US-China Trade War Escalates

The Trump administration imposes fresh tariffs totaling \$34 billion worth of Chinese goods. More than eight hundred Chinese products in the industrial and transport sectors, as well as goods such as televisions and medical devices, will face a 25 percent import tax. China retaliates with its own tariffs on more than five hundred US products. The reprisal/counter-attack, also valued around \$34 billion, targets commodities such as beef, dairy, seafood, and soybeans. President Trump and members of his administration believe that China is **"ripping off" the US, taking advantage of free trade rules to the detriment of US firms operating in China**. Beijing criticizes the Trump administration's moves as **"trade bullying"** and cautions that tariffs could trigger global market unrest.

October 4, 2018: Pence Speech Signals Hard-Line Approach

US Vice President Mike Pence delivers a speech marking the clearest articulation yet of the Trump administration's policy toward China and a significant hardening of the US position. Pence says the US will **prioritize competition over cooperation by using tariffs to combat "economic aggression."** He

also condemns what he calls **growing Chinese military aggression, especially in the South China Sea**, criticizes increased **censorship and religious persecution** by the Chinese government, and accuses China of **stealing American intellectual property and interfering in US elections**. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounces Pence's speech as **"groundless accusations"** and warns that such actions could harm US-China ties.

December 1, 2018: Canada Arrests Huawei Executive

Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Chinese telecom and electronics company Huawei, is arrested in Canada at the US' request. The US Justice Department alleges **Huawei and Meng violated trade sanctions against Iran** and committed fraud and requests her extradition. In apparent retaliation, China detains two Canadian citizens, whom officials accuse of undermining China's national security. Calling Meng's arrest a **"serious political incident,"** Chinese officials demand her immediate release. US officials emphasize an unbiased and apolitical legal process, but President Trump implies Meng's charges could be used as leverage in ongoing US-China trade talks.

In appearing to entertain a proposal for her to return to China in exchange for an admission of wrongdoing, as reported by the Wall Street Journal last December, the United States could be setting a trap for Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou. The trouble is, if Meng admits to wrongdoing, she would have a criminal record and any number of countries (including Canada) could use this against her.

March 6, 2019: Huawei Sues the US

Amid legal proceedings against Meng, Huawei sues the US in a separate lawsuit for **banning US federal agencies from using the telecom giant's equipment**. In a battle with Beijing for **technological supremacy**, the Trump administration launches an aggressive campaign warning other countries **not to use Huawei equipment to build 5G networks**, claiming the Chinese government could use the company to **spy**.

May 10, 2019: Trade War Intensifies

After trade talks break down, the Trump administration raises tariffs from 10 to 25 percent on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods. China **retaliates** by announcing plans to increase tariffs on \$60 billion worth of American goods. President Trump says he believes the high costs imposed by tariffs will **force China to make a deal favorable to the US**, while China's Foreign Ministry says the US has **"extravagant expectations."** Days later, the Trump administration bans US companies from using foreign-made telecommunications equipment that could **threaten national security**, a move believed to target Huawei. **The US Commerce Department also adds Huawei to its foreign entity blacklist.** Markets fell in the United States as the trade war escalated.

August 5, 2019: US Labels China a Currency Manipulator

After China's central bank lets the yuan weaken significantly, the Trump administration designates China **a currency manipulator**. The designation, **applied to China for the first time since 1994, is mainly symbolic**, but it comes less than a week after Trump announced higher tariffs on \$300 billion worth of goods. That means **everything the US imports from China now faces taxes**. Beijing warns that the designation will **"trigger financial market turmoil."**

November 27, 2019: Trump Signs Bill Supporting Hong Kong Protesters

President Trump signs the **Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act** after it passes in the US Congress with overwhelming majorities. The legislation authorizes the US to sanction individuals responsible for human rights abuses in Hong Kong. It also requires US officials to **evaluate every year whether Hong Kong enjoys a "high degree of autonomy" from Beijing**. Many of the pro-democracy protesters, who have been demonstrating since June, celebrate the bill's passage. Chinese officials

condemn the move, impose **sanctions on several US-based organizations**, and suspend **US warship visits to Hong Kong**.

January 15, 2020: 'Phase One' Trade Deal Signed

President Trump and Chinese Vice Premier Liu He sign the agreement, a breakthrough in the nearly two-year trade war between the world's two largest economies. **The deal relaxes some US tariffs on Chinese imports and commits China to buying an additional \$200 billion worth of American goods, including agricultural products and cars, over two years.** China also pledges to enforce **intellectual property protections**. But the agreement **maintains most tariffs** and does not mention the **Chinese government's extensive subsidies**, a longtime concern of the US, though Trump says these could be tackled in a future deal. Days before the signing, the US dropped its designation of China as a **currency manipulator**.

January 31, 2020: Tensions Soar Amid Coronavirus Pandemic

The Trump administration bars all non-US citizens who recently visited mainland China from entering the US amid an outbreak of a new coronavirus that was first reported in the Chinese city of Wuhan. By March, the World Health Organization (WHO) designates the outbreak a pandemic, after it spreads to more than one hundred countries. **Leading officials in both China and the US blame the other side for the pandemic.** A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson claims without evidence that **the US military brought the virus to China**, while President Trump makes repeated references to the "Chinese virus," (Kung Flu) which he says spread because of failures by the Chinese government. In April, top officials in both countries change their tones by highlighting areas for cooperation amid the crisis. Still, Trump faults the WHO for being biased toward China and halts US funding to the organization.

March 18, 2020: China Expels American Journalists

The Chinese government announces it will expel at least thirteen journalists from three US newspapers—*the New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*—whose press credentials are set to expire in 2020. Beijing also demands that those outlets, as well as *TIME* and Voice of America, **share information with the government about their operations in China**. The Chinese Foreign Ministry says the moves are in response to the US government's decision earlier in the year to **limit the number of Chinese journalists** from five state-run media outlets in the US to 100, down from 160, and designate those outlets as **foreign missions**.

July 14, 2020: Trump Ends Hong Kong's Special Status

Two weeks after Beijing passes a new national security law for Hong Kong, the former British colony, President Trump signs an executive order **ending the city's preferential trade status with the US**. He also signs legislation to sanction officials and businesses that undermine/crack down on Hong Kong's freedoms and autonomy. Chinese officials **threaten to impose retaliatory sanctions on US individuals and entities**. They denounce what they call **US interference in China's internal affairs**, including Washington's announcement a day earlier declaring most of **Beijing's claims in the South China Sea illegal**.

Trump: "Hong Kong will now be treated the same as mainland China, no special privileges, no special economic treatment and no export of sensitive technologies," Trump said on Tuesday during a press conference in the White House Rose Garden. "Their freedom has been taken away. Their rights have been taken away. And with it, goes Hong Kong, in my opinion, because it will no longer be able to compete with free markets," Trump added. "No administration has been tougher on China than this administration," the U.S. president said. Trump also said he had no plans to speak with

President Xi Jinping, deviating from his pattern of criticizing Beijing while tempering it with warmth and respect for the Chinese leader.

July 22, 2020: US, China Close Consulates in Diplomatic Escalation

The US orders China to close its consulate in Houston, Texas, alleging that it was a **hub of espionage and intellectual property theft**. China condemns the order and retaliates by closing the US consulate in Chengdu. In the same week, **Washington indicts two Chinese hackers for allegedly stealing coronavirus vaccine research and sanctions eleven Chinese companies for their reported role in human rights abuses against Uighurs in Xinjiang**. Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi blames the US for tensions.

July 23, 2020: Pompeo Says Engagement With China Has Failed

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivers a speech, titled “**Communist China and the Free World’s Future,**” signaling a profound shift in US policy. He declares that **the era of engagement with the Chinese Communist Party is over, condemning its unfair trade practices, intellectual property theft, human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and aggressive moves in the East and South China Seas**. He calls on Chinese citizens and democracies worldwide to press Beijing to change its behavior and respect **the rules-based international order**.

November 2020 – December 2020: Trump Ramps Up Pressure as Transition Looms

President Trump attempts to cement his legacy of being **tough on China** during his final weeks in office. Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe calls China “the greatest threat to America today,” while the Commerce Department adds dozens of Chinese companies, including the country’s biggest chipmaker, Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC), to its **trade blacklist**. The State Department **tightens visa rules** for the around ninety million members of the Chinese Communist Party. It also sanctions more Chinese officials, including fourteen members of China’s legislative body, over abuses in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and elsewhere. Additionally, the White House **bans US investments in Chinese companies it says have ties to the People’s Liberation Army**. Chinese officials vow retaliation against these and other actions the Trump administration takes.