



Hearing on “U.S.-China Relations in 2020: Enduring Problems and Emerging Challenges”

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

Opening Statement of Vice Chairman Carolyn Bartholomew

Thank you Chairman Cleveland, and good morning. Thank you all for joining us, with particular thanks to our witnesses for the time and effort they have put into their testimonies.

This year has already proven challenging in so many ways. Adding to the tensions, as the world struggles with the coronavirus Beijing has ramped up a global campaign of antagonism characterized by aggressive diplomacy and provocative military behavior.

China escalated a conflict with India at multiple points along their long border, raising suspicion that Beijing planned the incident. China’s Coast Guard and Navy increased their patrols around Japan and grew increasingly confrontational in their efforts to prevent Southeast Asian countries from fishing or drilling in the South China Sea. And when Taiwan celebrated another successful democratic election, China sent its Navy and warplanes in an attempt to intimidate Taiwan’s people.

With India, Japan, the South China Sea, and Taiwan, China’s military is flexing its muscles all around its borders.

At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP’s) “wolf warrior” diplomats are matching China’s military in their confrontational tone toward other countries. The CCP spreads conspiracy theories accusing the United States of manufacturing the novel coronavirus. China punishes Australia with economic sanctions and cyberattacks for advocating an independent investigation into the virus’s origin. When Sweden took steps toward a national security review of Huawei, China’s ambassador to the country threatened, “for our friends, we have fine wine, but for our enemies, we have shotguns.” Last December, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi called on China’s diplomatic corps to show “fighting spirit.” They have delivered.

Unable to suffocate Hong Kong’s vibrant freedoms with tear gas and batons, the CCP implemented a draconian national security law protecting not Hong Kong’s citizens but Beijing’s absolute control. As China turns the vise, it has shut down freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and now it is attacking freedom of movement as it forcibly detains Hong Kongers fleeing for safety. China’s response is telling. To quote the executive director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office: “The era when the Chinese cared what others thought and looked up to others is in the past, never to return.”¹

¹ Quote from Zhang Xiaoming, executive director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office. See Eva Dou and Shibani Mahtani, “With Hong Kong security law, China writes broad international powers for itself,” *Washington*

Yet, China's aggressive behavior may not have the intended results, as it provokes international backlash. Positive views of China are falling in populations around the world. The U.S., the EU, Japan, India, Australia and others are responding by working to diminish their economic reliance on China and stepping up security cooperation with likeminded partners.

Today's hearing will explore factors motivating China's behavior and the capabilities it is employing to try to achieve its goals. We look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Thank you.