

COMMENTARY

Trump's China policy the real 'present danger'

By [George Koo](#)

<https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/04/opinion/trumps-china-policy-the-real-present-danger/>

Danger: China (CPDC). The obvious intent was to drill down and focus on the danger China represents. A cohort of geriatric warriors in Washington has resurrected an old organization first established when Dwight Eisenhower was the US president. It was called the Committee on the Present Danger.

The first CPD consisted of a blue panel of patriots formed to warn the federal government and the American public of the threats of the Soviet Union and spreading international communism.

After most of the members were appointed to serve in the Eisenhower administration, the CPD dissolved. Some years later, a second iteration came along, followed by a third. Each had a different roster of members and emphasized a different danger to national security. Technically, these were not direct descendants of the original CPD.

Committee on Present Danger: China

The latest and fourth iteration was formally introduced at a two-hour press conference held last week. The organizers didn't just borrow the name but modified it by calling it the Committee on the Present to the US.

A parade of speakers went to the podium to state their case on why China is such a threat to [American](#) national security. Every imaginable and unimaginable threat was described. Some were blatant exaggerations and some so outlandish as to be humorous.

Here are some examples of accusations that made this group look wacky.

"China has 3,000 miles of hardened tunnels to move their missiles around." Hard to

know the basis for this statement. We know that American intelligence has actually visited China's nuclear-weapon development center, but thousands of miles of hardened tunnels? Perhaps the speaker heard of the tunnel near Tiananmen Square, which has been converted into restaurants and a place to get away from summer heat. And he "extrapolated" that into 3,000 miles.

Another speaker said one indication of lack of personal freedom in China was that 1.4 billion Chinese citizens have no [Internet access](#), implying that they suffered from information deprivation. Apparently, this speaker did not know that more than 800 million Chinese carry smart mobile phones and enjoy a lot better access than people in the US.

Another claimed that China has been terrifyingly effective in influencing the minds of the American public, such as via movies made in Hollywood with Chinese investments. He practically suggested that Americans have become brainwashed Manchurian candidates. Even The Washington Post has become a mouthpiece for Beijing, he went on to proclaim.

US cities 'bombed out'

China has been so effective in moving jobs away that every American manufacturing city has been bombed out, just like Germany was by the end of World War II. As a result, the speaker went on, more Americans have died (he didn't say how) than the total killed in Vietnam and World War II! (exclamation point is mine).

A retired general got so carried away when it was his turn to talk that he claimed China attempted to interfere with the 1996 US elections. He offered no elaboration or substantiation. Maybe he had Russia in his mind?

Despite all that, the convener of the conference emphasized that CPDC was nonpartisan and the reconstituted organization was for the purpose of informing the American public of the dangers China represents.

[Steve Bannon](#) was credited as one of the movers behind the new version of CPD. Curiously, he did not appear at the podium to speak. Perhaps he didn't want to be seen with this motley collection.

However, Bannon's handprint was evident, as many speakers praised President Donald Trump and his hard-nosed approach to China, protestations of nonpartisanship notwithstanding.

Rather than fade away, this band of old soldiers appears to be spoiling for one last glorious global war, or perhaps just lining up to be appointees for the next round of vacancies in the Trump administration.

Trump's wrong-headed China policy

Alas for them, Trump is already executing a disastrous policy on China and needs no help. For instance, a retired [general](#) who spoke at the press conference claimed that China had penetrated every conceivable American institution that mattered, meaning every university, every high-tech company, and even US intelligent agencies and embassies.

Trump's remedy has been to deny or delay re-entry for Chinese graduate students who went back to China for the summer break. This tactic certainly halted any imagined threats of penetration. But it also interrupted research projects at the universities and stopped any advances that would reinforce American leadership in science and technology.

Trump has pointed to the large trade deficit with China as an indicator of unfair trade practices and vowed to punish China with tariffs on imports from that country. He has repeatedly asserted that the tariffs would be good for America and narrow the trade gap.

Instead, the US trade deficit, based on figures for last year, is higher than ever with the world and specifically with China. Obviously, he doesn't understand how global trade is supposed to work.

US trade negotiator Robert Lighthizer has been most vociferously accusing China of wanton intellectual-property theft. If China had only depended on stealing and copying, how does one explain advanced fifth-generation telecommunication technology from Huawei?

Huawei has been offering 5G around the world with capabilities far more advanced than its nearest competitors. Despite Washington's vigorous efforts to suppress and stymie Huawei, the company's worldwide sales have broken through US\$100 billion for the first time.

Trump has put US allies in a quandary. Do they accede to US pressure and pass on Huawei, or do they jump in and [install](#) the latest enabling technology? Fifth-generation tech means leaps in [mobile](#) computing, Internet of Things, autonomous driving, and remote medical diagnosis, to name a few. Can any modern economy afford to reject 5G just to appease Uncle Sam?

Pompeo's conflicted contradiction

The same contradictions hold for China's Belt and Road Initiative. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo goes around the world warning of China's bogus deals and "predatory" financing. With nothing to offer as an alternative, other countries find Pompeo's words hollow and hard to swallow.

Chinese President Xi Jinping went to Europe last week and Washington pushed hard and urged the European Union to stand with the US and resist China's blandishments.

Italy became the first to value China's investments over Pompeo's empty rhetoric. Thus Italy became the first of Group of Seven countries to sign on and partner with China as part of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Paris was the next stop for Xi, where President Emmanuel Macron vowed that France would stand with all the members of EU in solidarity to China. Then an order for 300 Airbuses dazzled Macron. France did not sign on to the Belt and Road Initiative but did agree to \$45 billion worth of deals with China and promised close multilateral collaboration.

The reality is that China has been going around the world offering to finance and help build infrastructure projects with developing countries in Africa and Latin America. With developed economies, China has offered to collaborate on investments and trade. China's emphasis is more friendly relations, not military bases.

China works within a multipolar world and focuses on building a coalition of nations with shared economic interests. Unlike with the US, no one nation has dominance over another.

China has consistently worked within the confines of the United Nations and not in spite of the UN. And China has shown no inclination to displace the US as the world hegemon – except in the overworked imagination of the CPDC.

The truth of the matter is that Trump's "America First" policy, unilateral withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord, reduced spending on international diplomacy and many other self-inflicted body cuts have earned general disrespect and eroded America's stature as the world's leader.

The real present danger to America is the failure of its leaders to recognize that the world is no longer a unipolar one with the US sitting on the apex. To insist that the US must win, and China must lose, is unrealistic. China will not accept such an outcome and American persistence will surely lead to tragic lose-lose outcomes.

Clearly, it's in the US national interest to work with China and find win-win accommodations.

Asia Times is not responsible for the opinions, facts or any media content presented by contributors. In case of abuse, [click here to report](#).



[George Koo](#)

Dr George Koo recently retired from a global advisory services firm where he advised clients on their China strategies and business operations. Educated at MIT, Stevens Institute and Santa Clara University, he is the founder and former managing director of International Strategic Alliances. He is currently a board member of Freschfield's, a novel green building platform.