

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 17, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500-0005

Dear Mr. President,

Following the recent release of the 2022 National Security Strategy and your bilateral meeting with President Xi, we urge your administration to promptly begin developing a comprehensive strategy with respect to the People's Republic of China, as mandated by Section 6511 of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022*.

The fallacies that integrating China into the global economy would move it towards greater liberalization, adherence to the rules of global commerce, and the fostering of personal freedoms are widely acknowledged. With its brutal repression of the Uyghurs and the people of Hong Kong, its expanding military installations in the South China Sea, and its predatory economic practices, the need to shape a strategic environment that balances against China's course of ever-greater conflict is obvious and urgent. But, to date, America has reacted to Chinese strategic initiatives in an ad hoc, tardy, and largely ineffective manner. China, on the other hand, adheres closely to carefully designed plans.

In your recent meeting with President Xi, you affirmed that the United States would continue to compete vigorously with China, including by "investing in sources of strength at home and aligning efforts with allies and partners around the world." However, our lines of effort must be focused. It is past time for America to shift its posture to one appropriate for great-power competition. We must develop a comprehensive strategy, drawing on many of our best minds to foster global peace, shared prosperity, and freedom.

The updated National Security Strategy rightly calls China the "pacing challenge" of the coming decades. The United States must move rapidly to deter China's unabated aggression. Key among China's actions are its own rapid military and nuclear buildups, significant violations of freedom of navigation, aggression against India and Japan, and ever-increasing belligerence toward Taiwan—including its stated willingness to "reunite" the island by force. Combative actions by China, including firing ballistic missiles and encircling Taiwan in response to Speaker Pelosi's trip to Taiwan, are an effort to dictate U.S. policy regarding Taiwan and undermine the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

These aggressive actions build upon years of China's use of economic and political coercion. This includes engaging in intellectual property theft, making "One Belt, One Road" investments with strategic political objectives, and damming the Mekong River to control the water upon which our friends in Southeast Asia depend. These actions require that the United States have a

comprehensive strategy to guide our diplomatic, economic, and military actions, with the goal of deterring conflict and the use of force.

Historically, presidents of the United States have used different models for strategy development: utilizing expertise from inside and outside government; attempting to move the national security decision makers away from groupthink; and articulating the core goals to facilitate implementation of the strategy. In January 1950, President Truman requested what became a foundational report on the state of the world, actions taken by adversaries of the United States, and the development of a comprehensive national strategy. His team responded with a paper entitled “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security,” also known as NSC-68. This set out potential courses of action which eventually helped frame the U.S. response to the Soviet threat.

President Eisenhower was not content with relying solely on the work of his predecessor. Recognizing the need to further iterate U.S. strategy, Eisenhower utilized experts from both within and outside the United States government during “Project Solarium.” He divided those experts into teams with different mandates and policy objectives, which eventually led to the production of NSC 162/2: a “Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on Basic National Security Policy.”

President Ford later authorized the “Team B” project to draw experts from outside the United States government to question and strengthen the analysis of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). These experts endeavored to think beyond common assumptions made by the CIA about the Soviet Union which enabled them to reach alternative conclusions.

President Reagan’s National Security Decision Directive Number 75 from January 1983 exemplified the goal of creating concise objectives for U.S. policy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. This directive allowed his administration to orient actionable policies toward specific objectives.

China poses a threat to the United States and the international order as it seeks to become the world’s geopolitical, economic, and military superpower. Therefore, we urge you to build upon the successful models of strategy development from previous presidents, including those outlined above.

The *National Defense Authorization Act for 2022* includes Section 6511, which requires the administration to develop a comprehensive strategy with respect to China. Thirty days after the submission of the National Security Strategy, the President is required to begin the interagency process. A key component of this process should be an advisory board of outside experts—including from the private sector, academia, and think tanks—who will challenge assumptions and make recommendations for the strategy. To increase the likelihood that the strategy endures beyond the current administration, the advisory board would ideally include both Republicans and Democrats.

As you undertake this significant task, we stand ready to aid or assist whenever needed. We plan on requesting periodic updates about the progression of this effort. We respectfully request that

you update us on the progress of implementing Section 6511 within 60 days of the receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mitt Romney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Mitt Romney
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations
Subcommittee on East Asia, the
Pacific, and International
Cybersecurity Policy

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James E. Risch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee