

Report Card: Joe Biden's China Policy

President Joe Biden's first 100 days in office have come and gone. He has set a tone for what his top priorities will be and when it comes to foreign policy, it appears as though dealing with China has been placed on the back burner.

Our team at the American Security Institute reviewed Biden's decisions, ranging from personnel to policy, to see if he is taking the threat China poses to the United States seriously. After all, Biden's presidential term will run until 2025--the year the Chinese Communist Party hopes to realize its "Made in China 2025" initiative to dominate key technologies. These next few years are critical.

Our take: While Biden has made some decisions that weren't bad, his administration is overall failing to respond to the Chinese Communist Party on many fronts.

Here's how the Biden administration has done so far:

- **American Privacy:** Chinese-owned apps, including TikTok, could be used to spy on Americans and pilfer data to the CCP. President Biden, however, **scrapped a ban** President Trump tried to put in place on TikTok. Biden replaced that executive order with a weaker order which requires the Commerce Department to develop criteria for assessing the potential national security risks associated with apps "owned, controlled or managed" by companies tied to foreign adversary militaries. The executive order didn't name any Chinese-owned companies directly. Commerce Sec. **Gina Raimondo** has also refused to answer questions about whether the administration will keep the ban on Huawei, another Chinese tech company accused of spying on Americans.
 - **Grade: D**
- **Chinese Investing:** Biden **expanded President Trump's** ban on investments in some Chinese companies that are known to be supporting China's military. This expansion is important because it helps ensure that U.S. dollars are not funding China's military or surveillance technology. This policy could stand to be strengthened, however, because **a new report** from the Foundation for Defending Democracies has found that the Pentagon is likely underestimating the number of organizations tied to the Chinese Communist Party that are operating in America.
 - **Grade: B**
- **Confucius Institutes:** **Biden suspended** a Trump executive order requiring schools to disclose their ties to Chinese-funded Confucius Institutes. Confucius Institutes are university programs in the United States that the Chinese Communist Party uses to push propaganda to American students. It is one of many tools the Chinese use in their soft power campaign in the U.S. The Chinese also fund Confucius Classrooms which target K-12 students. Biden is doing nothing to stop this threat which directly targets future generations of Americans. He may be waiting for Congress to pass a bill on the matter,

but Congress isn't known for acting with haste--and there's nothing to say he can't have a similar executive order in the meantime.

- **Grade: F**

- **Coronavirus Origin:** No matter how the first person was infected, China bungled the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic by forbidding outside investigations and lying about the extent of the outbreak. Trump responded to this by cutting off funding of the World Health Organization, which parroted a lot of **China's propaganda** about the virus. On his first day in office, Biden **rejoined the WHO** without any repercussions for how the organization gave China cover. Biden also **shut down an investigation** into the origins of the coronavirus only to **reverse his decision** after a Wall Street Journal report showed that workers in a Wuhan lab fell ill with a serious disease mirroring COVID-19, giving credibility to the lab-leak theory. From his early decisions, it appears Biden had no intention of holding China accountable for the pandemic that killed more than 500,000 Americans.
 - **Grade: F**

- **Infrastructure: Biden suspended** a Trump executive order that bolstered the U.S. power grid to protect it from foreign hackers. Under Trump's executive order, restrictions were placed on electric equipment made in adversarial countries, including China. After four months in office, Biden reversed his suspension and signed an executive order reinstating the policies. Though Biden corrected his error, it is unclear how much damage could have occurred in the four months the policy was suspended.
 - **Grade: C-minus**

- **Tariffs:** Although **Biden was critical** of some of the tariffs the prior administration put into place, he has since come around to support the tariffs. Biden **opted to keep** all of the tariffs against China in place. His Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo **praised the tariffs** as "effective" while U.S. Trade Rep. Katherine Tai said she does not foresee the tariffs going anywhere soon. Tariffs are strong economic tools that help protect key U.S. industries while also allowing the U.S. to recoup some of the trade deficit with the Chinese government (which has used unfair trade practices for years) and create pressure in negotiations.
 - **Grade: A**

- **Personnel:** Staffing up the executive branch is no easy task, but it is clear that President Biden was not thinking about China when he started hiring. Here are just a few of the problematic hires:
 - National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said in 2017 that the U.S. should "**welcome**" and "**encourage**" the rise of China. In **2019**, he referred to China as an "essential U.S. partner."
 - Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas Greenfield has **routinely dismissed** the threat of China's growing influence in Africa. Greenfield spoke at a

Confucius Institute event **in 2019**, something she admitted was a “huge mistake.” She also worked for Albright-Stonebridge Group which has **senior CCP officials** as clients.

- Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas was part of an **Obama-era scandal** during which he helped secure many improper visas giving special access to the U.S. to many foreigners, including the **Vice President of Huawei**.
- Under Secretary of Defense for Policy **Colin Kahl**, Secretary of State **Tony Blinken**, and Treasury Secretary **Janet Yellen** all have financial ties to China from past employers or speaking engagements.
- CIA Director William Burns was the former president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. As president, he **welcomed several officials** with ties to the CCP. Carnegie received millions of dollars from the U.S. to **establish a think tank** based in Beijing.
- **At least 17** of Biden’s nominees have ties to the Brookings Institution, a leftwing think tank that has been accused of **pay-for-play research** that **benefitted companies including Huawei**. Yellen, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, and Rush Doshi, the China director for the National Security Council, are among those who have Brookings Institution ties.
- With this many conflicts of interest for the CCP in the White House, it is clear Biden did not consider the threat of China while staffing his administration.
 - **Grade: F**
- **Recognizing the CCP Threat:** Before becoming president, Biden infamously dismissed claims that China would “**eat our lunch**.” In February, Biden reversed his position to acknowledge that China is a severe threat to the United States and said he believes China could, in fact, “**eat our lunch**” if the U.S. does not remain competitive. Better late than never.
 - **Grade: C**

While Biden has taken some steps to oppose China, most of his anti-China policy is choosing not to suspend existing measures to stop China that were signed by the previous administration. Biden is loosening opposition to China at a time when he should be strengthening it. At the same time, he chose to hire a staff filled with people who have a history of dismissing or assisting China’s rise. Biden still has several years in the White House to change his course, but for now, he is not doing nearly enough.

Overall Biden Grade: D

We’re hopeful that Biden’s latest action--an expanded ban on investing in companies linked to the Chinese military--is setting the tone for more good policies. But we can only judge him for now on what he’s done, or hasn’t done, to date.