

Opening Statement of Carolyn Bartholomew, Vice Chairman
U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission
December 1, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Cleveland, and good morning. Thank you all for joining us.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949, the CCP has viewed the United States as a dangerous opponent. For decades, the CCP has seen the United States as a strategic competitor. In previous reports, this Commission has documented how, under CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping, China has abandoned the principle of "hiding capabilities, biding time." Much of our work this year focused on examining how and where the CCP is moving from "catching up" to "surpassing" the United States on the economic, diplomatic, and military fronts.

At home, Chinese leaders stepped up repression and worked to stir up ideological fervor in Communist Party officials, calling on them to "arm themselves with Marxism" and serve as the "gravediggers of capitalism." The Chinese Communist Party's efforts to silence non-CCP thinking has had particularly devastating effects on its Uyghur and other Muslim, Tibetan, and Mongolian minority populations.

China's adversarial approach to relations with the United States and other countries reached a new level of intensity this year as China's leaders have grown increasingly aggressive and antagonistic. No longer even pretending to abide by international laws and norms, Beijing is working to expand its global influence, and to implement its "community of common human destiny"—a community that would echo China's worldview, defer to its priorities, and exercise fealty to its form of government.

The continent of Africa is a blueprint for and testbed of China's ambition to be the global and political economic leader. Our hearing on China in Africa explored how and where it is expanding its influence on the continent through lending; infrastructure development, including digital and communications technology; training of journalists and political parties; and increasing numbers of military-to-military exchanges. It leverages its increasing influence in Africa to garner support for its positions at the UN and other international bodies. Its presence at

ports around Africa, through leasing and ownership, highlights growing concern about China's future power projection capabilities and ambitions.

China's military modernization continues and it is more aggressively exercising its power—in the South China Sea, along the China-India border, and against Taiwan, for example. Its objective is to intimidate Taiwan and its regional neighbors. Since our report went to print in October, there is evidence that China is moving to take territory from Bhutan. The Commission's research this year showed that China also intends to project military force far beyond the Indo-Pacific region. Within the next 10 to 15 years, Chinese leaders aim to be capable of fighting a limited war overseas to protect its interests in countries participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative.

China's move against the people of Hong Kong—passing and then swiftly implementing a draconian new national security law—signaled the end of “one country, two systems,” China's disdain for international treaties, and any residual belief that Beijing was willing to address international concerns about its actions. China's treatment of Hong Kong raises renewed concern about the future of Taiwan and poses a threat to its vibrant democracy. To signal Congress' continued strong support for Taiwan and its commitment to the Taiwan Relations Act, we recommend elevating the status of our representative to Taiwan by enacting legislation to make the Director of the American Institute in Taiwan a presidential nomination subject to the advice and consent of the Senate.

The Commission's work this year illustrated ways in which China is using its growing power to revise the international order and place itself at the top of a new global hierarchy. Yet China's blatant use of economic coercion, most recently against Australia; its handling of the outbreak of the coronavirus in Wuhan, and the worldwide spread of COVID-19; and its aggressive and ham-handed “wolf warrior” diplomacy have all created growing public sentiment against China around the globe. Our recommendations to Congress include a number of actions the United States could take to capitalize on this divide.

As the CCP prepares to celebrate the centennial of its founding next year, Chinese leaders view themselves as in a long and complex competition with the United States and other democratic countries that they expect will last for the next several decades and beyond. We hope the

recommendations in our Annual Report this year will provide Congress with ideas for how to protect U.S. interests and values as we fully engage in this competition.