



Surveying the Experts: The State of U.S.-China Relations

Participants in this CSIS China Power Project survey received the following questionnaire in an online form.

Overall U.S.-China Relationship

1. Which of the following descriptions best characterizes how China currently views the United States?
 - a. A close partner
 - b. A normal partner with which to cooperate and compete
 - c. A strategic competitor
 - d. An adversary

2. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statement: U.S.-China relations today are more stable than they were a year ago.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Somewhat disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

3. Please complete the following statement based on your assessment of the trajectory of U.S.-China relations: "In 2026, U.S.-China relations are likely to ____."
 - a. Become much more cooperative
 - b. Become slightly more cooperative
 - c. Stay about the same
 - d. Become slightly more antagonistic
 - e. Become much more antagonistic

4. How likely is it that the United States and China will meet the commitments they made at the October 2025 Trump-Xi meeting in Busan, South Korea?
 - a. Both sides are likely to keep their commitments
 - b. Both sides will make efforts to some commitments but fall short on others
 - c. Both sides are unlikely to keep their commitments
 - d. The United States likely will keep its commitments but China likely will not
 - e. China likely will keep its commitments but the United States likely will not



Economics and Trade

5. How would you characterize the motivations behind China's tactics and overall approach to the trade and tariff negotiations with the United States?
 - a. Defensive—China largely responded to U.S. measures against China
 - b. Offensive—China sought to gain an upper hand or leverage against the United States
 - c. Mixed—China embraced defensive and offensive measures approximately equally
6. How do you assess China's recent use of rare earth export restrictions against the United States and U.S. allies and partners?
 - a. China played its hand well
 - b. China overplayed its hand
 - c. China neither played its hand well nor overplayed its hand
7. How long do you think China will be able to effectively wield its dominance over rare earths and other critical minerals?
 - a. 1-2 years
 - b. Up to 5 years
 - c. Up to 10 years
 - d. 10 to 20 years
 - e. Indefinitely
8. Do you think China's economic slowdown will impact the country's foreign policy?
 - a. Yes, it will cause China to behave more assertively
 - b. Yes, it will cause China to exercise more restraint
 - c. Yes, but it will cause China to behave more assertively in some areas and exercise more restraint in other areas
 - d. No, it will not have a significant impact

Diplomacy and Geopolitics

9. How do you assess China's willingness to escalate against Japan following Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's remarks on Taiwan when she was at a hearing in the Japanese Diet?
 - a. China is willing to engage in moderate escalation, but for a short period (less than one year)
 - b. China is willing to engage in significant escalation, but for a short period (less than one year)



- c. China is willing to engage in moderate escalation for a prolonged period (more than one year)
 - d. China is willing to engage in significant escalation for a prolonged period (more than one year)
 - e. There is no limit on China's willingness to escalate against Japan
10. Do you assess that China believes it can successfully negotiate or pressure the United States to change U.S. policies towards Taiwan?
- a. Yes, Beijing believes the United States could be willing to make major concessions/changes in U.S. policy towards Taiwan
 - b. Yes, Beijing believes the United States could be willing to make minor concessions/changes in U.S. policy towards Taiwan
 - c. No, Beijing does not believe it is possible
 - d. I do not have enough information to assess this with confidence
11. As China seeks to deepen its influence in the Global South, where do you believe China will make the most gains in the next three years? (Please pick up to two regions)
- Africa
 - Central Asia
 - Latin America and the Caribbean
 - Middle East
 - Oceania
 - South Asia
 - Southeast Asia
 - None of the above—China has limited ability to expand its influence in the Global South
12. How concerned are you about cooperation between China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea in terms of the collective threat they pose to U.S. interests?
- a. Very concerned—they are de facto allied against the United States and pose a major threat
 - b. Somewhat concerned—their cooperation is strong and poses a considerable threat
 - c. Not very concerned—their cooperation is worth watching, but only poses a minor threat
 - d. Not at all concerned—their cooperation is weak and does not pose a clear threat



Military and Security

13. How much of a negative impact do recent large-scale purges of senior leaders within the People's Liberation Army (PLA) have on China's military readiness during the next two years?
 - a. High—the purges likely prevent China from using significant military force
 - b. Medium—the purges are a major problem for the PLA but will not prevent China from using significant military force
 - c. Low—the purges have little to no impact on PLA readiness or China's willingness to use significant military force
 - d. None—the purges may increase China's military readiness if more competent or less corrupt leaders replace their purged predecessors
 - e. I do not have enough information to assess this with confidence

14. In 2026, where do you see the highest risk of Chinese military escalation (either intentional or accidental)?
 - a. China-India border
 - b. Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands
 - c. South China Sea
 - d. Taiwan Strait
 - e. Equally likely in all the above areas
 - f. None of the above—China is unlikely to escalate in any of the above areas

15. Compared to a year ago, is the risk of a U.S.-China military conflict over Taiwan (e.g., a Chinese blockade or invasion) higher or lower between now and 2028?
 - a. Much higher
 - b. Slightly higher
 - c. About the same
 - d. Slightly lower
 - e. Much lower

16. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statement: Compared to a year ago, China believes that the United States is now less committed to supporting and defending Taiwan.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Somewhat disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree



17. If China were to invade Taiwan, what types of support do you think Russia would be willing to provide to China?

- a. No support
- b. Diplomatic and political support only
- c. Diplomatic, political, and economic support
- d. Diplomatic, political, and economic support, with limited military aid (such as intelligence sharing, offensive cyber operations, and arm transfers)
- e. Diplomatic, political, and economic support, with direct intervention of Russian forces to aid China

Participant Demographics

These demographic questions are optional.

18. What is/are your primary area(s) of expertise? Please select all that applies.

- Economics and Technology
- Domestic Chinese Politics or Society
- International Relations
- Defense and Security
- Other

19. How many years of professional work experience do you have in your field?

- a. 0–5 years
- b. 5–10 years
- c. 10–20 years
- d. 20–30 years
- e. 30+ years

20. Do you have advanced proficiency/fluency in Chinese?

- a. Yes
- b. No