

October 9, 2025

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

As you engage with the People's Republic of China on a final trade agreement, tariffs, and broader economic relations, we urge you to weigh a critical — yet largely unspoken — factor shaping Beijing's posture at the table: the United States' drift from the longstanding One China policy alongside escalating military signaling around Taiwan and the South China Sea. Reducing military and geopolitical tensions is not a concession; it is a practical prerequisite to diplomacy that can help deliver concrete economic gains for American workers.

For decades, the One China framework — recognizing the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China while maintaining robust, informal ties with Taiwan — helped prevent war in the Taiwan Strait. Successive administrations upheld “strategic ambiguity,” avoiding explicit defense guarantees while supporting peaceful resolution. That stability enabled trade and investment that benefited Americans and supported Taiwan's prosperity and high living standards.

Recent U.S. political choices have undermined that equilibrium. Speaker Pelosi's unprecedented visit to Taipei produced predictable escalation, and President Biden's repeated verbal commitments suggesting a U.S. military guarantee — followed by staff “clarifications” — have injected confusion and risk into a policy that worked for decades. In addition, your predecessor layered on expanded arms packages, high-profile visits, and provocative signaling that blurred strategic ambiguity.

This year, despite its change in leadership, the Pentagon has continued in this direction. It maligned China's intentions and sowed fear of an “[imminent](#)” war, [pressured](#) allies to expand their militaries and make clear commitments to defend Taiwan in the event of war, and [deployed](#) missile systems in Japan that China considers highly provocative.

These steps may be described by some in Washington as “deterrence,” but in practice they heighten a classic security dilemma: each side's moves to ostensibly prevent war look like preparations for war to the other, spurring further militarization and hardening positions — at the bargaining table as well as in the Strait.

Chinese officials have explicitly linked economic flexibility to geopolitical reassurance. As [reported in *Foreign Affairs*](#), former Ambassador Qin Gang told Silicon Valley Congressman Ro Khanna that China would be more willing to engage seriously on trade imbalances if the United States clearly reaffirmed its commitment to One China. The implication is straightforward:

credible diplomatic reassurance increases the odds of constructive economic outcomes that benefit U.S. industries and families.

By contrast, abandoning or hollowing out One China imposes heavy costs on the American people that have never been debated or approved transparently or democratically. First, the escalatory path raises immediate economic risks: retaliatory trade measures and export controls targeting critical inputs — for example, China's recent restrictions on rare earths that disrupted global supply chains for semiconductors and electric vehicles, or tariffs on U.S. farm exports like soybeans that continue to cause steep losses for American producers. Those costs fall on manufacturers, farmers, and downstream workers, not on Washington elites. Finally, the war path would be catastrophic. A cross-Strait conflict is widely assessed to produce multi-trillion-dollar global losses, severe supply-chain shocks, and long-term damage to U.S. living standards — costs that have never been clearly presented to or approved by the American people.

Mr. President, these negotiations will have major consequences for American workers and families, who deserve policies that reduce costs and expand opportunity. Our point is that stability in the Strait strengthens — not weakens — your leverage on the economic and trade front. Reaffirming One China and curbing unnecessary deployments, weapons announcements, and performative signaling would make room for a more pragmatic deal on tariffs and market access, while de-risking supply chains essential to U.S. industry. While some officials in your Administration appear interested in continuing past failed policies of escalatory military threats or confrontation over Taiwan, we urge you to reject such advice. You should instead distinguish your approach from prior administrations' increasingly escalatory and inconsistent posture, which raised tensions and indirectly made life more expensive for Americans without delivering durable economic or geopolitical wins.

Accordingly, as you and your team continue to engage these negotiations, we urge you to:

- Publicly and credibly reaffirm the One China policy and a commitment to peaceful resolution;
- Reduce unnecessary military signaling and freeze steps that erode strategic ambiguity; and
- Leverage that de-escalation to seek tangible economic improvements — lower tariffs, predictable access, and safeguards for critical inputs — that support American workers and communities.

If, instead, your administration concludes that following your predecessors' policy of moving away from One China — and that accepting higher prices, retaliatory measures, and an elevated risk of catastrophic war — is in the national interest, we respectfully ask that you make that case transparently to the American people and to Congress. Major policy shifts with major costs deserve democratic debate.

Should you reaffirm One China and pursue a de-escalatory path, we stand ready to support efforts that advance peace, economic pragmatism, and a foreign policy organized around improving Americans' lives and reducing the risk of catastrophic and unnecessary war.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee
Antiwar.com
Bring Our Troops Home
Demand Progress Education Fund
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Just Foreign Policy
Justice is Global
Libertarian Institute
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
ReThinking Foreign Policy
RootsAction
Women Cross DMZ
World BEYOND War

CC: Elbridge Colby, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; Jamieson Greer, United States Trade Representative