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Talking Points for: Bonnie Glaser, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Mistrust is a common feature in relations between nations, even between close allies. Between the U.S. and China, mistrust is especially worrisome because it is strategic and deep-rooted. Moreover, unlike in U.S. relations with allies like Japan or the U.S., the U.S. and China distrust each other’s long-term intentions. The Chinese suspect that the U.S. hopes to undermine Communist Party rule and will seek to prevent China’s re-emergence as great power. The U.S. believes that China wants to dilute U.S. influence in the Asia-Pacific and eventually expel American forces from the region. Easing U.S.-China strategic mistrust should be a priority. First, the two nations should continue to have frequent candid and in-depth strategic dialogue at all levels on a wide array of issues that affect their separate and shared interests. Second, the U.S. and China should seek to find a better balance of deterrence and reassurance in their policies toward each other. Third, to counter the trend of intensifying competition, deliberate efforts should be made to expand cooperation where American and Chinese interests overlap, especially in the Asia-Pacific region and on global challenges.

* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.