

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

March 25, 2022

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We urge you to use your Fiscal Year 2023 budget requests for the Department of Defense, Department of State, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to send a clear message that the United States has a comprehensive strategy to counter the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) expanding global influence and the increasing threat it poses to U.S. security interests and those of our allies and partners.

While the U.S. defense budget is still certainly the world's largest, just this month the Chinese Government announced a 7.1 percent increase in defense spending. China is by far the largest spender on defense after the United States. It is important that your administration's budget for Fiscal Year 2023 reflects the priority of this urgent and growing threat.

Though the CCP is a growing threat to the United States, Vladimir Putin's regime amplifies Beijing on the world stage and we must continue to defend our interests in Europe. Fortunately, our North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies realize they must take more responsibility for their collective security. Many NATO countries are ramping up defense spending, enhancing conventional deterrence, and recognizing that energy security is national security. They are also shouldering the daunting burden of protecting and caring for millions of desperate Ukrainian refugees. While we must continue to work with NATO allies and other European partners to support the people of Ukraine, we cannot allow Putin's invasion of Ukraine to distract us from the urgent need to prioritize the Indo-Pacific region. Putin poses an ongoing threat, but China poses an emerging threat unlike any in recent memory.

Officials in your administration have acknowledged the need for this shift of focus. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has declared that Beijing is the "pacing threat" for U.S. national security. Just last week, Admiral John Aquilino, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) stated that "over the past 20 years we've witnessed the largest military buildup since World War II by the PRC."¹

The CCP threat is not a new development, but it is one that we have been far too slow to take seriously. We must devote far more attention and resources to the INDOPACOM Area of Responsibility, as has been recognized by your administration, Congress, and industry experts alike. INDOPACOM is the U.S.' declared "priority theater," and our defense, diplomacy, and

¹ <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2022/03/21/breaking-news/u-s-admiral-says-china-fully-militarized-isles/>

assistance budgets must reflect that reality. We must develop our own capabilities and bolster those of our allies in Taiwan, Australia, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, as well as deepen our relations with other partners such as India and Indonesia. The budget request should also reflect our strong support for Tibetans, Uyghurs, and other minority communities persecuted by the CCP.

When the history of the 21st Century is written, the relationship between China and the United States will be a defining chapter. Effectively countering China's expanding influence means acknowledging the constraints we have faced in the past, and prioritizing our resources accordingly – now and into the future.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Leahy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senator