

January 13, 2026

10:30 A. M. – Noon

Navigating U.S. – China Relations

**Topic Leader:
Doug Marino**

INTRO TO TODAY'S TOPIC

Since the emergence of Xi Jing Ping as the paramount leader of China in 2012, U.S.- China relations have become increasingly tense and combative. While there is broad agreement in Washington that the United States is engaged in strategic competition with a rising China, there is far less agreement on what that competition should look like—or where it should lead.

In April and again in October, China enacted new export controls that allowed it to withhold supplies of rare earths and rare-earth magnets and force Mr. Trump to compromise on tariffs. “Not since the Arab oil embargo in late 1973 and early 1974 had the United States experienced such a drastic loss of access to critical minerals. And while the oil embargo affected a third of the world’s oil supply, China produces 90 percent of the world’s rare earths and rare-earth magnets. China’s actions this year on rare earths were “undeniably a major moment in geoeconomic history and international relations,” said Nicholas Mulder, a historian of embargoes and sanctions at Cornell University.” [NYT, Inside China’s Six-Decade Campaign to Dominate Rare Earths, Keith Bradsher, 12/25]

“Should the United States pursue broad economic decoupling from China? Should the United States upgrade its unofficial relationship with Taiwan and end the “strategic ambiguity” regarding its commitment to the island’s security?

Should the United States work to influence the policy orientation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime in Beijing through diplomatic engagement or resign itself to confrontation until fundamental political change occurs in China?” [Christensen, Great Decisions, 2025, p.27]

