BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

CHINA

1. This background paper is a brief introduction to China from three perspectives. It will cover the language, economy, and United States (U.S.) interests in China.

2. Since 1978, China has performed a series of economy reform from a centrally planned system to a market-oriented system.1 In 2010, China became the world's largest exporter.2 In October 2016, Chinese yuan was included in the Special Drawing Right (SDR) basket as a fifth currency by International Monetary Fund (IMF), along with the U.S. dollar, the euro, Japanese yen, and the British pound.3 Despite the rapid economic growth in the last three decades, there are some economic challenges the Chinese Government faces including: (a) high housing price and relatively low domestic consumption; (b) economic crimes and corruption; and (c) Deterioration in environment.4 China's per capita income is still below the world average.5

3. Over one billion people speak Chinese as their [first language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_language) in the world.6 It is the official language in China7, Taiwan8, and one of the official languages in Singapore9 and United Nation.10 There are around ten different types of spoken Chinese.11 The varieties of spoken Chinese are usually caused by different dialects in China. Mandarin is the most widely spoken Chinese. It is based on the dialect in Beijing, the capital of China. There are 897 million people can speak and understand Mandarin.12 In Shanghai, which is the most populous city in China, and its vicinity, there are about 80 million people speak Shanghainese.13 In Canton province, Hong Kong and Marco, there are about 63 Million people speak Cantonese.14 The most spoken varieties are mutually impossible to understand. However, the written form is shared by all the Chinese speakers. 15

4. U.S. is China’s largest export marketand China is currently the third largest export market for U.S.16 U.S. welcomes a strong, peaceful and prosperous China to play a bigger role in addressing global and regional challenges, for instance, nuclear proliferation concerns in North Korea and Iran, which have close economy and energy ties with China17,18. U.S. seeks to advance comprehensive and cooperative relationship with China. It is a key part of reinvigorated U.S. engagement with the Asia-Pacific region.19 Chinese is highly sought language by U.S. Government. In January 2006, the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) program was introduced by President George Washington Bush to develop the foreign language skills of American students.20 In 2009, Department of Defense authorized that some non-immigrant individuals who speak Chinese and join the military are able to become naturalized U.S. citizens by the time they graduate from ten weeks of Basic Combat Training or accept a commission as Officers.21,22

5. This background paper was on China. It briefly covered economy, language and U.S. interests in China.

END Notes

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