BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

CHINA

1. This background paper is a brief introduction to China from three perspectives. It will cover its economy, language 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 Nations.10 There are around 10 different types of dialects spoken in China.11 Mandarin is the most widely used dialect. It is based on the dialect in Beijing, the capital of China. There are 897 million people thatcan speak and understand Mandarin.12 There are about 80 million people that speak Shanghainese in Zhejiang Province, Jiangsu Province and Shanghai.13 In Canton province, Hong Kong and Marco, there are about 63 Million people that speak Cantonese.14 The most Chinese speak different dialects cannot understand each other. However, the written form is shared by all the Chinese speakers. 15

4. The U.S. is China’s largest export marketand China is currently the third largest export market for the U.S.16 The U.S. welcomes a strong, peaceful and prosperous China to play a bigger role in addressing global challenges, for instance, nuclear proliferation concerns in North Korea and Iran, which have close economy and energy ties with China17,18. The U.S. seeks to keep comprehensive and cooperative relationship with China. It is a key part of reinvigorated U.S. engagement with the Asia-Pacific region.19 Chinese is a highly sought language by the 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, the 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 complete 10 weeks of basic combat training.21, 22

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

End Notes

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3. *World Factbook*, s.v. “China,” (CIA).

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