

Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism Hearing
“Dangerous Partners: Big Tech & Beijing”
Questions for the Record
for Dr. Derek Scissors
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QUESTIONS FROM SENATOR WHITEHOUSE

My brief responses address cooperation on China, not Russia and not particularly cybersecurity. They are relevant to broader policymaking on China, to some extent including cyber.

1. I have long argued that the United States should not wait to get buy-in from Russia and China before establishing cybersecurity norms; it’s a bit like waiting for burglars to consult on your home security system. Instead, we should reach out to likeminded nations to develop a “treaty of the willing.”

- a. Which countries are our likeliest potential partners in such a “treaty of the willing”?

Many of our friends and allies, especially in Europe, are happy to talk endlessly about China. But few are willing to take costly action. Across a range of issues, we can only count on Japan and Australia. Canada, Israel, and Singapore have also been willing to take certain risky steps.

- b. What are the current obstacles to developing these relationships?

There are two very large obstacles. The first is that our non-Asia partners do not recognize an meaningful security threat from China. They see gains and losses as predominantly economic, as when Germany assessed Made in China 2025 as targeting its industries for the first time. The UK is leaving the door open for Huawei because it sees a sizable short-term economic gain and only vaguer security threats which appear less relevant to British national interests.

Second and related is lack of consistency in American policy. The Obama administration largely treated China as a partner. The Trump administration imposed high tariffs and rhetoric has often been harsh. But President Trump consistently seeks economic opportunities from China, as seen in the phase 1 deal. Since neither national security nor human rights have seemed important in executive branch decision-making at the highest level, it is difficult to find partners willing to cooperate if such cooperation might draw Chinese retaliation or is otherwise costly.

- c. What steps the U.S. should take to address those obstacles?

The obvious step in overcoming both our own inconsistency and the hesitation of our partners is crafting a durable and bipartisan consensus on as many aspects of China policy as possible. This hasn't happened in part because the range of issues is so broad. Areas of unresolvable disagreement should be put aside for the sake of creating consistent policy in other areas. The payoff is that, where there is shown to be an American consensus, we will be able to lead internationally. For instance, previously dubious partners began to screen investment more aggressively once CFIUS reform was passed so overwhelmingly by Congress.

A subtler step is to be flexible with regard to countries, as well. The US will be able to work with different countries on different issues, specifically with Europe on human rights and with East Asia on security. Countries unwilling to join a cyber agreement should still be approached on other topics and, conversely, countries that do not wish to cooperate on subsidies or other economic matters can still contribute to needed progress on cyber.