THINK and DO

2019 Year in Review
Our Mission

A US-China Relationship for an Evolving Future

The Paulson Institute is a non-partisan, independent, privately funded "think-and-do tank" not supported by or connected to any government. It is dedicated to fostering a US-China relationship that serves to maintain global order in a rapidly evolving world.
Message from the Chairman

Dear friends,

Over the past year, I have frequently been asked how I characterize the US-China relationship. Is our decades-long economic partnership still desirable? Or are we long-term enemies headed towards Cold War 2.0?

The short answer is that we are strategic competitors: we have clashing security objectives, different political systems, different political ideologies, and we shouldn’t shy away from saying so. But for all the flashpoints between our countries, we still share important interests that will be better addressed if we work in complementary ways.

That is why I find the current trajectory of US-China relations so troubling. Today, national security concerns are bleeding into virtually every aspect of the economic relationship, refracting them through the prism of military thinking, defense requirements, and the zero-sum “win-lose” nature of military competition.

Take the US-China “tech war.” Some in the United States are so concerned about the national security implications of technological interdependence that they advocate for a Cold War-style technology denial regime. I fear that such a move would contribute to an economic iron curtain that fundamentally breaks the global innovation ecosystem.

Or look at what’s happening to cross-border investment. In 2019 we saw mounting pressure to financially decouple the United States and China, with lawmakers in Washington calling for new measures—including delisting Chinese firms from US exchanges and forcing Chinese equities out of MSCI indexes—that would restrict the flow of capital across big sectors in the United States.

I don’t expect the picture to improve in 2020. In fact, I believe the US presidential election could exacerbate these tensions. It is hard enough to think with foresight and clarity about how to pursue both military competition and winning economic strategies. But that is going to be nearly impossible in an election year, during which political incentives simply do not reward nuance.

To keep the relationship from spinning out of control, it will be essential to define a new framework that manages competitive US-China relations. In part, this means identifying opportunities for Americans and Chinese to cooperate, and building a track record of success in the areas where our interests are still shared.

That is exactly what we do at the Paulson Institute. Since 2011, we have helped to foster a US-China relationship that maintains global order amid rapid change. And in 2019, we accelerated and expanded our work in our major areas of focus.

Over the past year, our Green Finance Center published new research, convened experts in China and around the world, and continued to advocate for a greener financial system. Our in-house think tank, MacroPolo, delivered top-flight analysis and creative research products to decode the Chinese economy, including a new video and podcast series. Our Conservation program continued to promote policies and projects that protect vital ecosystems and biodiversity. We also relaunched our website to better leverage the expertise of our staff and harness resources from across the Institute to engage in thought leadership and serve as a rich resource for the key trends and topics facing US-China.

In the year ahead, we will continue to do our part to foster a more productive, balanced, and secure US-China relationship. We appreciate your support and hope you enjoy reading our Year in Review.

Sincerely,

Henry M. Paulson, Jr.
Chairman, Paulson Institute

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Letter from the Executive Director

What a difference a year makes.

One year ago, I took the helm as the Executive Director and Vice Chairman of the Paulson Institute. During that time, we have experienced both highs and lows for US-China relations. What remains constant, however, is the commitment to our mission to foster a US-China relationship that remains fair, transparent, and balanced. This includes a desire for normalized trade relations with China but also acknowledges that it is a significant contributor to carbon emissions, and its leadership and responsibility to achieve international climate goals are essential to the health of the global economy and the planet itself.

At the Paulson Institute, we tackle the critical relationship with China head-on, with a focus on developing innovative concepts in green finance and conservation, as well as exploring China’s economic arrival through our in-house think tank, MacroPolo. Through each of these pillars, the Institute supports an inclusive global economy, advocates for the preservation of natural capital, and helps with the transition to a low-carbon economy.

It’s not an easy undertaking, but with our diverse and talented staff at the Paulson Institute, we can effect real change.

Our think tank, MacroPolo, produced groundbreaking research and projects, including the China Debt Hangover, the Macro Outlook series, and the Supply Chain Jigsaw. We launched Anecdotes, a video series of real-life testimonials from people describing their experiences with the often-complicated US-China relationship dynamic. Our podcast, Heartland Mainland: The Iowa China Podcast, the product of eight months of travel to the Midwestern state, reveals how the US-China relationship is firmly grounded in the lives of ordinary people. The podcast so far is getting great reviews, and we are looking forward to bringing more inspiring content from our team in 2020.

Climate change remains part of the headlines nearly every day. Both the green finance and conservation teams have shared their expertise this year through speeches, reports, and most importantly, convening the best minds to find the solutions that will carve a path to a healthier environment and a more sustainable economy. This year, we are proud to say that the Green Finance Center celebrated its one-year anniversary and remained focused on three core areas—carbon, finance, and fintech. Through convening, advocacy, thought leadership, and expertise, the Institute is dedicated to mainstreaming green finance investing principles and supporting a vibrant international green finance market.

Last but not least, our conservation team continued to concentrate on wetlands preservation, national parks, and responsible trade and investment that advance market-based solutions for a more sustainable economy. The team is tireless in their dedication and belief that the protection and priority of our environment must remain closely tied to any kind of economic development.

In closing, as you will read, we grew our team, produced new content, hosted fantastic events, and are proud of the work we have accomplished. We look forward to the year ahead and to continue to make an impact on the issues most important to the Paulson Institute. Here’s to a wonderful 2020!

Best,

Deborah Lehr
Executive Director and Vice Chairman, Paulson Institute

About the Paulson Institute

Non-partisan and independent, the Paulson Institute brings a unique approach, diverse capabilities, and a global perspective to address one of the most consequential challenges of this century: fostering a balanced US-China relationship that maintains global order amid rapid change.

Our Approach

Our focus on US-China is dictated by the reality that it is the most consequential bilateral relationship in the world. We operate at the intersection of economics, finance, environmental protection, and policy advocacy by promoting market-based solutions to promote sustainable economic growth and develop innovative solutions to some of the most challenging issues between our countries.

Our in-house think tank, MacroPolo, produces leading analysis and intellectual products to decode China’s political economy. Working with policymakers, financial markets, and international financial institutions, our Green Finance Center promotes market-based mechanisms to finance low-carbon economic growth in China. Our Conservation program advocates for market-based solutions to climate change and environmental conservation. More broadly, we convene leading experts to generate new thinking around the challenging issues in US-China relations.
## 2019: A Year of Growth

### January
- MacroPolo launches “Supply Chain Jigsaw” Digital Project
- Host Speakers Series with Julian Gewirtz on “Reform & Opening”

### March
- Host Speakers Series with Gyude Moore on China-Africa Relations
- Set up Environmental Risk Screening Tool for China’s overseas investments

### May
- Host Speakers Series with Maria Repnikova on Media Politics in China
- Lead US Expert Field Visit to Sanjiangyuan Pilot National Park in Qinghai

### July
- MacroPolo launches “Anecdotes” Video Series
- Support China’s Yellow Sea Wetlands receiving UNESCO World Heritage Site status
- MacroPolo launches “China’s Debt Hangover” Project
- Co-host Beijing Forum on Mangrove Conservation and Restoration

### September
- Lead Chinese National Parks Training Delegation in California
- Participate in Yancheng International Symposium to advance coastal wetland World Heritage site plans

### November
- Award 6th Annual Paulson Prize for Sustainability
- Launch Decoding China Event Series at Chicago Tech Center 1871
- Hank Paulson Co-Chairs and Keynotes Bloomberg New Economy Forum in Beijing
- Deborah Lehr Talks US-China Tech Divide at Fortune Global Forum
- Launch Coastal Blue Carbon Project at Beijing Workshop
- Deborah Lehr Speaks on China’s Engagement in the Middle East on Middle East Institute Panel
- Co-Host IFF Annual Conference Global Fintech Summit on Fintech in Green Finance

### February
- Hank Paulson speaks at Center for Strategic & International Studies on the Risks of an “Economic Iron Curtain”

### April
- Sign MOU with City of Beijing to Support Sustainable Development
- Host Speakers Series with Jiyang Fan on US-China Journalism
- Host Green Finance Roundtable on margins of World Bank/IMF Meetings
- MacroPolo relaunches “The Committee” Database of China’s Central Committee Leadership

### June
- Hank Paulson publishes “Balkanising technology will backfire on the US” in Financial Times
- MacroPolo marks two-year anniversary

### August
- First Class of MacroPolo Summer Associates Presents Research
- Jerry Yu Speaks at China National Parks Forum in Xining
- Join First Plenary Meeting on Green Investment Principles for Belt & Road
- Launch research on global biodiversity funding to inform UN Convention on Biodiversity negotiations

### October
- Redesign Paulson Institute Website
- Co-host Coastal Wetland Conservation Network Annual Conference in Haikou
- Host Green Finance Roundtable on margins of World Bank/IMF Meetings
- Deborah Lehr Discusses Importance of Green Finance on Institute of International Finance Podcast
- Host Green Finance Fintech Roundtable with Tsinghua University in Beijing

### December
- Host Decoding China Event with Film-maker Hao Wu
- Deborah Lehr Joins CSIS Energy 360 podcast to Discuss China’s Role on the Global Climate Stage
- Complete Study on Ecological Restoration Funding Mechanisms for China Ministry of Natural Resources
- Complete Evaluation Report on Sanjiangyuan Pilot National Park for Qinghai Government
Decoding China’s Economic Arrival

MacroPolo is the Paulson Institute’s in-house think tank. It is decoding China’s economic arrival with incisive, market-relevant analysis and creative research products.

MacroPolo is building a truly 21st century think tank. Instead of long research papers, it specializes in thoughtfully designed digital interactives as well as dynamic content and databases. Its multinational team of experts provides timely commentary, valuable insights, and best-in-class research to market participants, corporate leaders, policymakers, and academia. Its work spans three core areas: economics, technology, and politics.

Economics
If China’s economy sneezes, the world economy catches a cold. MacroPolo’s economics work focuses on China’s shifting macroeconomic policies and complex domestic reforms, exploring changing priorities as the centrality of GDP growth wanes. Current products include a thorough examination of China’s over-leveraged financial system, one of the most comprehensive timelines on economic reforms in the market, and data-driven interactives on China’s impact as a global investor.

Technology
China is now an innovator, not simply an imitator. MacroPolo provides balanced and nuanced insight into China’s technological ambitions and the intensifying competition between the US and China. Products in this area include rich interactives on artificial intelligence, case studies on Chinese tech companies, and deep dives into technology standards.

Politics
In a one-party state, every policy challenge is a political problem. MacroPolo’s political analysis aims to unwrap the complexities of Chinese politics, shedding light on elite and bureaucratic dynamics. Current products unpack Chinese politics in an accessible way, including a unique and evolving database on “must know” politicians and analysis on how the Chinese system really works.

“Building a think tank has been challenging to say the least, but it is leavened by the pleasure of working with one of the best teams in the field today.”
— Damien Ma
Director, Think Tank
MacroPolo Digital Projects

Covering economics, politics, and technology, MacroPolo’s 11 digital projects provide interactive data and analysis on China’s economic arrival.

Supply Chain Jigsaw: Piecing Together the Future Global Economy

Today computing power and alternative energy are driving a revolution, yielding a new set of commodity-like products that will transform the global economy and reorganize production. To explore how and where this future will be built, Supply Chain Jigsaw delves into the supply chains of these key products that could determine how we move, live, and work.

China’s Debt Hangover

China has a debt problem. And it’s mainly a local one. China’s Debt Hangover maps how local government financing vehicle (LGFV) debt has put a drag on regional GDP. All 31 regions and provinces are ranked based on LGFV debt’s drag on the economy.

The Committee (Relaunched in 2019)

The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party is the locus of political power in China. It includes the rulers of today and the leaders of tomorrow. The Committee currently contains searchable bilingual biographical data for all 373 committee members and features analyses of Chinese elite politics.

Commentary & Analysis

MacroPolo analysts produce regular and insightful commentary, ranging from US-China relations and the Chinese economy to politics and technology issues.

A Macro Outlook series provides a forward-looking quarterly briefing on China’s macroeconomic conditions and policies. Other analysis illuminates China’s financial markets, elite politics, direct investment in America, and shifting energy landscape, among other topics.

Multimedia

MacroPolo expanded into multimedia in 2019, including the launch of a video and podcast series. These multimedia products bring the same expert analysis and commentary in creative and entertaining formats.

“Anecdotes” Video Series

This new video series features anecdotes from experts, journalists, and practitioners on the front lines of grappling with China’s reemergence. These stories yield insights that surprise, delight, or provoke thought on how the Asian giant is shaping the world around it.

Heartland Mainland: The Iowa China Podcast

Today, the pulsating beat of the US-China bilateral relationship is best heard somewhere in the middle of the American heartland: Iowa. The Hawkeye State—best known for its caucuses and corn fields—stands at a critical junction between the world’s two superpowers. Iowa’s relationship with China is ripe for examination because it’s both a typical Midwestern state and one with unique—and uniquely important—historic and present connections to China.

The product of eight months of travel and research, the Heartland Mainland podcast reveals an Iowa-China relationship that is firmly grounded in the lives of ordinary people. Each of the podcast’s five episodes focus on a different dimension of the relationship, including education, politics, agriculture, and manufacturing.

Summer Associate Program

MacroPolo launched its Summer Associate program in 2019, offering highly-qualified undergraduate and graduate students the unique opportunity to shape, produce, and even lead substantive work over a 10-week period. The inaugural cohort featured Eliot Chen and Lauren Baker, who both published well-received research with MacroPolo.

“The Summer Associate program allowed me to pursue what interested me and to lead my own project.”

— Eliot Chen

“Made in China 2025” Unmade?

MacroPolo

“Made in China 2025” Unmade?

— Eliot Chen
The Institute’s Green Finance Center, established in 2018, promotes market-based solutions that drive sustainable growth, investments, and green standards globally. Its work focuses on China, a dynamic laboratory for innovative concepts in green finance and carbon markets.

The Center supports the greening of the global financial system by moving green finance from a philanthropic niche to the mainstream of markets. The Center is working to support carbon market development in China, and provides non-commercial advice to the US-China Green Fund. By focusing on three core areas—carbon, finance, and fintech—the Center aims to promote market-driven solutions to foster a vibrant international green finance market through convening, advocacy, thought leadership, and expertise.

"We are honored and excited to be driving meaningful changes to green financial markets over the past year. Our Center is committed to promoting and incentivizing more sustainable economic growth through market-based solutions."
— Gracie Sun
Senior Advisor and Managing Director of Green Finance Center
In 2019, the Green Finance Center continued to lead by advancing green finance in the global financial system. By convening multiple expert roundtables, writing and speaking across platforms, and proposing innovative policy prescriptions, the Center occupied a leading role in the global conversation on green finance.

Convening & Thought Leadership

Convening Industry Experts

Roundtables on Growing Green Finance

Aug 2019, Beijing  The Green Finance team joined the first Plenary Meeting for Implementation of the Green Investment Principles (GIP) for China’s Belt and Road as one of co-drafting organizations of the GIP and a member of the GIP steering committee.

Oct 2019, Beijing  Hosted alongside Dr. Ma Jun’s Research Center for Green Finance Development at Tsinghua University, the roundtable discussion convened over 50 of China’s green finance and fintech experts to highlight the progress that fintech has made in China and discuss prospects for scaling fintech to promote robust green finance development.

Nov 2019, Guangzhou  At the International Finance Forum’s Annual Conference, Deborah Lehr moderated a high-level panel for the “Global Fintech Summit,” gathering policymakers, business leaders, and scholars from around the world to share insights on fintech’s role in global sustainability efforts.

Apr & Oct 2019, Washington, DC  Mainstreaming Sustainable Finance Series: Hosted on the margins of the biannual World Bank and IMF meetings, the roundtable series is now in its fourth year and focuses on substantive discussions among stakeholders to help mainstream the ideas surrounding green and sustainable finance by taking stock of developments from industry leaders and regulatory policymakers.

Leading with Policy Prescriptions

In 2019, the Center published two substantive policy papers:

Mar 2019  Governance of China’s National Carbon Market

Dec 2019  Strengthening Policy Coordination to Fully Operationalize China’s National Carbon Market

Driving the Conversation

The Green Finance team advanced new ideas across several platforms, examining areas of strategic importance to the United States and China, including Latin America and the Middle East.

Feb 2019, Deborah Lehr explains how “China’s green finance model shows that saving the planet can also be a savvy investment” (South China Morning Post)

Apr 2019, Gracie Sun comments on “China’s Release of Draft Rules for National Carbon Market” (Paulson Institute)

Apr 2019, Deborah Lehr pens op-ed “Green Investing: Good deal or good deed” (Egypt’s Al-Ahram Weekly)

Sept 2019, Ossman El-Naggar discusses “China’s Growing Green Engagement in MENA” (The Diplomat)

Nov 2019, Deborah Lehr joins panel on “China’s Extensive Engagement in the Middle East” (Middle East Institute)

Dec 2019, Deborah Lehr joins Energy 360° podcast to discuss “China as a Climate Leader” (CSIS)

“Using technology to transform finance, we can continuously promote inclusive development.”
—Eric Jing, Chairman and CEO, Ant Financial

“Green finance is absolutely critical to facilitating a greener global energy landscape.”
—Dan Poneman, President and CEO, Centrus Energy Corp, Former Deputy US Secretary of Energy
2019 was a challenging but very fruitful year for the Conservation program. I am very proud of what we were able to achieve under such a fast-changing environment that demands focus and pragmatism.” — Rose Niu, Chief Conservation Officer

China’s rapid industrialization and unprecedented economic growth have come at a cost to its environment. The Paulson Institute’s Conservation program is at the forefront of shaping policies and working with Chinese partners to protect ecosystems and biodiversity. The program delivers lasting impact through on-the-ground demonstration, capacity building, and policy advocacy. It focuses on three priority areas: wetlands conservation, national parks, and responsible trade and investment.

Much to Protect
China is home to nearly 20% of the world’s people, but it is also one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet, with nearly 10% of all plant species and 14% of the world’s animal species. Today, much of this biodiversity is under threat.
China’s 18,000 km of coastline is home to 40% of the country’s population and half of its cities, contributing 60% of the national GDP. Coastal wetlands are critical habitats for millions of migratory waterbirds and other species, protect cities and communities from sea-level rise and storm surges, and provide many other ecosystem services. Since 2014, the Paulson Institute has partnered with Chinese government agencies, research institutes, and NGOs to promote wetland conservation and restoration.

In 2019, we made considerable progress, commissioning a study on China’s Mangrove Conservation and Restoration Strategy, assessing the potential of China’s coastal ecosystems to mitigate climate change, advancing the China Coastal Waterbirds & Habitats Database, securing legal protection for Lunnan Nanpu wetland, and piloting removal of invasive Spartina grass. Our capacity building work also continued, as we co-hosted the 4th Annual Conference of China’s Coastal Wetland Conservation Network in Haikou and helped establish three demonstration wetland education centers. We also supported China’s effort to achieve World Heritage Site status for 16 key coastal wetlands in the Yellow Sea region. Three of these sites were approved in 2019, and we are now supporting the effort to secure similar status for the remaining 13 sites.

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Inspiring a Low-Carbon Future

Prize for Sustainability

The Paulson Prize for Sustainability is awarded annually to a project in China that represents an innovative, scalable, and market-based sustainability solution at the intersection of economics and the environment. This year, the Paulson Prize received a record number of submissions, double the amount received last year. This increase is a reflection of growing awareness around the Paulson Prize, as well as China’s increased focus on sustainable growth and urbanization.

The 2019 winning project was the Shenzhen Ecological Energy Park, an industry-leading facility that uses advanced technologies to lower harmful emissions and eliminate the need to use fossil fuels for power generation by turning waste directly into electricity. To date the project has saved more than 360,000 tons of standard coal. With its landscaped grounds, engaging public education spaces, and a visitor center for eco-tours, the facility has also become a gathering place for the community.

“Since 2013, we have highlighted creative approaches which can serve as models throughout China, and potentially the rest of the world. From new models of recycling, to better energy efficiencies, to cleaner air and water, we have sought to reward and recognize some of the most innovative sustainability projects in China today.”

— Henry M. Paulson, Jr.
Founder and Chairman of the Paulson Institute

Responsible Trade and Investment

China’s influence is felt not only in the economic realm, but also in the natural world. From large-scale infrastructure development to agricultural commodity production, China’s investment abroad can impact native ecosystems. We believe it is important to work with China to better assess and manage these risks and thus reduce its environmental footprint abroad.

In 2019, the Institute worked with partners to launch an Environmental Risk Screening Tool that will help reduce the environmental impact from China’s overseas investment projects, conduct an international comparative study on ecological restoration funding mechanisms, and initiate research to inform the upcoming 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity about narrowing the global biodiversity funding gap.

Key Initiatives

Prize for Sustainability

“Since 2013, we have highlighted creative approaches which can serve as models throughout China, and potentially the rest of the world. From new models of recycling, to better energy efficiencies, to cleaner air and water, we have sought to reward and recognize some of the most innovative sustainability projects in China today.”

— Henry M. Paulson, Jr.
Founder and Chairman of the Paulson Institute

Mayors Training Program

The Paulson Institute’s Mayors Training Program will continue to support capacity building in sustainable urbanization leadership after the Institute signed a new agreement with the city of Beijing in April 2019. To date, the initiative has successfully graduated more than 100 mayors from cities and provinces across China.

For the next program, a delegation of urban leaders from the Chinese capital will study at Tsinghua University and the University of Chicago, and learn from local experts in New York and Chicago, focusing on megacity governance, sustainable urban planning, transportation management, and emergency response.

The Institute and its partners developed an environmental risk screening tool to ensure that Chinese regulatory agencies and investors can better manage the environmental risks arising from overseas investment. Pictured above: A training session at the International Environmental Cooperation Center under the Chinese Ministry of Ecology and Environment.
In any given week, headlines are dominated by news about US-China, trade wars, and technology competition. To understand what the fuss is all about, the Paulson Institute launched a first-of-its-kind event series at the downtown Chicago tech center 1871.

As the only independent “think-and-do” tank in Chicago focused on US-China relations, the Paulson Institute offers a regular and unique slate of programming that aims to unpack the world’s second-largest economy. The event series is an opportunity for the Institute to provide a space for networking and knowledge sharing about the many tech-related aspects of the US-China relationship.

"Speaking at the Decoding China event in Chicago was one of the highlights of the year for me. Getting to share our research with a wider audience is the most rewarding part of this work for me. During and after the talk I connected with people from several different industries, learning from them and getting to share more of the Institute’s work in the process."

— Matt Sheehan
Fellow, Think Tank

PI’s Damien Ma interviews filmmaker Hao Wu (top) and author and PI Fellow Matt Sheehan (middle) at the first two Decoding China events, which both featured lively crowds and networking opportunities.

The Institute redesigned and relaunched its website in October 2019. The reimagined site leverages the expertise of our staff and harnesses resources from across the Institute to engage in thought leadership and serve as a rich resource for the key trends and topics facing US-China. Housing analysis, op-eds, articles, videos, and podcasts, our site is the definitive place for our audience to learn about China’s evolving relationship with the US and its role in the world.

New Website
Reimagining the Paulson Institute’s Online Presence
Our Team

Founded in 2011 by former Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson, Jr., the Institute is based in Chicago with offices in Washington and Beijing. Our diverse, multicultural staff brings deep experience to our work from the highest levels of business, government, conservation, and policy.

"Across multiple geographies and disciplines, our talented and diverse team joins together to strive toward our shared mission of fostering a US-China relationship that serves to maintain global order in a rapidly evolving world."

— Jerry Yu
Managing Director & Chief Representative of Paulson Institute China Office