

# DEFUSING Militarized Rivalry between the U.S. and China

May 8-9, 2025, Brown University

Sponsored by the Watson Institute's China Initiative



Watson Institute for  
International & Public Affairs  
BROWN UNIVERSITY

CHINA INITIATIVE



## Statement of Purpose

During the last decade, U.S.-China relations have lurched dangerously into intensive militarized rivalry. This rivalry has the gravest possible implications for world peace, since the threat of war now looms over disputes in the South China Sea and also the ever-volatile Taiwan issue. As in the last Cold War, there is additionally the possibility that geopolitical rivalry will intensify disputes from Eastern Europe to the Arctic to the Middle East to Africa and throughout the Asia-Pacific. Moreover, this rivalry is already diverting resources and attention from other key issues, including global health and development, economic cooperation, and the climate crisis. This conference is intended as the first in a series and has five major goals: 1) to build a community of scholars dedicated to defusing U.S.-China rivalry; 2) to debate and refine arguments that favor mitigating geopolitical tensions between the superpowers; 3) to publish and disseminate the highest quality scholarship assessing the process of growing U.S.-China militarized rivalry; 4) to develop concrete policy recommendations for curtailing military tensions among the two Asia-Pacific powers; and 5) to cultivate a new generation of experts that are capable of guiding U.S.-China relations onto a more peaceful and collaborative path.

## Day 1, Thursday, May 8

12:00-1:00pm

### Opening Keynote

Michael Brenes, *The Rivalry Peril: How Great-Power Competition Threatens Peace and Weakens Democracy* (Yale UP, 2025)

1:15-2:45pm

### Panel 1

MODERATOR

PAPER

COMMENTATORS

### Perception And Misperception

Lyle Goldstein

Ms. Megan Russell – “Misperception, Threat Inflation and U.S.-China Relations”

Mr. Matt Duss, Amb. Chas Freeman

3:00-4:30pm

### Panel 2

MODERATOR

PAPER

COMMENTATORS

### Internal Repercussions of U.S.-China Tensions

Dr. Stephanie Savell

Prof. Suisheng Zhao – “Racism Against Asian-Americans as Byproduct of U.S.-China Geopolitical Rivalry”

TBA, Mr. Kaiser Kuo

4:45-6:15pm

### Panel 3

MODERATOR

PAPER

COMMENTATORS

### The Rising Salience of Military Strategy in U.S.-China Relations

Prof. Tyler Jost

Dr. Jennifer Kavanagh – “Developing a Costs of War Framework for Militarized Rivalry with China”

Mr. Jacob Stokes, Dr. Chris Preble

## Day 2, Friday, May 9

9:00-10:30am

### Panel 4

MODERATOR

PAPER

COMMENTATORS

### The ‘Third Party’ Factor in U.S.-China Rivalry

Dr. Kyuri Park

Prof. Mike Mochizuki – “The Japan Factor in Sino-U.S. Militarized Rivalry”

Dr. Grant Rhode, Dr. Lee Seong-Hyon

10:50am-12:20pm

### Panel 5

MODERATOR

PAPER

COMMENTATORS

### The Most Delicate and Dangerous Issue in U.S.-China Relations

Dr. Michael Swaine

Mr. Paul Huang – “Seeking a Diplomatic Resolution of the Taiwan Issue – the View from Taipei”

Prof. Charles Glaser, Adm. Scott Swift [USN-ret.]

### Working Lunch

1:00-2:30pm

### Panel 6

MODERATOR

PAPER

COMMENTATORS

### An Agenda for the Future

TBA

Mr. Tedford Tyler – “Building a Washington Consensus for Peaceful Coexistence with China”

Prof. David Vine, Ms. Kelley Vlahos