



PRIMER: A Framework for American Trade Policy

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BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

- The United States must ensure its trade policy serves the American people by benefitting workers and families in the United States, leading efforts against predatory economic practices, and promoting respect for the rules of international trade and commerce.
- The United States must strengthen and enforce its trade laws to ensure that U.S. producers and exporters are not injured by unfair or non-market trading practices, and it should use all trade policy tools, including sanctions and tariffs, as appropriate to secure American economic and national security interests.
- Excessive and unchecked globalization, which included admitting a hostile China into the international economic system, has led to dangerous dependencies on adversaries for critical supply chains, trade imbalances, and harm to domestic manufacturing. The United States must protect against economic coercion, including by reshoring critical sectors and building key supply chains with allies rather than hostile powers.
- Multilateralism is a tool to advance U.S. interests in trade, investment, and other arenas — not an ideology to pursue for its own sake. The United States should act in coordination with like-minded countries where possible with respect to its trade policy, but it should limit unnecessary economic integration with adversaries.
- The United States should seek to expand market access overseas but should expect trading partners to provide, at a minimum, reciprocal market access.

BACKGROUND

The American economic model, which includes the freedom to buy, sell, produce, and trade, is fundamental to our way of life and democratic values. In comparison to the likes of Europe's stifling regulatory environment or China's unstable and centrally planned economy, the United States continues to be the best place for dynamic economic flourishing. However, American trade policy over the past few decades has not always served the best long-term interests of the American people and must be improved.

Excessive and unchecked globalization has led to dangerous dependencies on adversaries for critical supply chains, trade imbalances, and harm to domestic manufacturing. One of America's most critical errors in recent memory was welcoming China into the World Trade Organization under the errant assumption that integrating China into the international economic order would cause them to democratize and become a responsible global partner. Instead, China cheated and stole its way into becoming the world's second-biggest economy while remaining a genocidal communist dictatorship. Simultaneously, the United States became dangerously dependent on China for critical minerals and other key supply chains. Meanwhile, American manufacturing and other domestic industries have suffered as unchecked globalization and harmful overregulation by progressive politicians have pushed them overseas, hurting job prospects for many American workers.

Moving forward, the United States should pursue an active and pragmatic trade policy that seeks to advance its interests around the world, including by creating new opportunities for American

businesses and workers, ensuring a diverse and level playing field, and promoting American values. The United States has a sovereign responsibility to pursue a trade policy that enhances its citizens' general welfare and the country's economic, national security, and foreign policy goals. This policy requires fair trading relationships, with trading partners offering, at minimum, reciprocal market access. While multilateralism can be useful, it should not be pursued for its own sake, and the United States must not be afraid to act unilaterally to protect American businesses, workers, and consumers from unfair or non-market trading practices, including through the use of tariffs and sanctions. At the same time, free, fair, and reciprocal trading relationships are essential to America's long-term economic success, and the United States should continue to prioritize building and maintaining an economic bloc of like-minded nations while limiting integration with adversaries and rival blocs.

TRADE POLICY KEY PRINCIPLES

- **Protect Americans:** The United States must approach economic interaction with other countries in a manner that ensures an advantageous relationship for the American people. U.S. trade policy should strengthen our Gross Domestic Product, promote U.S. employment, advance leadership in U.S. innovation, address trade imbalances caused by unfair trade and economic practices, ensure resilient and reliable supply chains, protect critical U.S. assets from foreign adversaries, and support the U.S. manufacturing and production base. Access to strong and open export markets is essential, particularly for U.S. farmers, innovators, and manufacturers.
- **Safeguard national security:** Every country pursues policies in its economic, political, and national security interests. The United States must therefore ensure that our essential economic and national security interests take priority in any international trade agreement or in engagement with international institutions. To avoid the risk of economic coercion, key sectors like critical minerals or pharmaceuticals should also be reshored or concentrated in supply chains with trusted, like-minded allies.
- **Use trade tools to strengthen and enforce trade laws:** The United States should strengthen and enforce its trade laws to ensure that U.S. producers and exporters are not injured by unfair or non-market trading practices. Trade policy tools are legitimate instruments of economic and foreign policy and should be used pragmatically to achieve U.S. economic and national security goals. These tools include tariffs, export controls, sanctions, quotas, safeguards, investment screening, and other trade remedies. The United States should also develop new trade tools to address the challenges of a modern economy.
- **Counter China's coercive economic policies:** China represents a historic and a unique threat, and U.S. trade policy should be adapted to account for the reality that China is an adversary and a cheat. China employs massive industrial subsidies to displace U.S. firms, blatantly discriminates against U.S. goods and services, pursues forced technology transfers, commits grave labor, human rights, and environmental abuses, disregards the rule of law, and creates horribly imbalanced trade practices against the United States. While fully decoupling may not be feasible, the United States must sever trading ties for critical sectors and seek to generally limit economic integration with America's greatest adversary. Instead, the United States must actively promote the American economic model as an alternative to China's authoritarian model and compete to secure the United States' position as the partner of choice for like-minded nations around the world willing to participate in a free, fair, and reciprocal economic order.



- **Expand reciprocal market access overseas:** The United States should seek to expand market access overseas, expecting trading partners to provide, at a minimum, reciprocal market access. Access to a robust American market is a strong incentive for foreign trading partners, but the United States must ensure reciprocity and protect against undue harm to American workers or industries.
- **Work with partners:** The United States should act in coordination with like-minded countries where possible with respect to its trade policy but take unilateral action if multilateral action would be delayed or ineffective. Specifically, the United States must work with allies and partners to build an economic bloc that reduces reliance on China and other adversaries and competitors for essential goods and services and limits economic integration with these hostile powers. Multilateralism is a tool to achieve U.S. goals in trade, investment, and resiliency — not an ideology to be pursued for its own sake.
- **Promote a diverse economy:** Consistent with the history of American economic dynamism, U.S. trade policy should promote a diversified American economy, jobs for Americans at all income levels, and U.S. leadership in manufacturing, agriculture, technology, and services. U.S. trade policy should be developed alongside and complement pro-growth tax, regulatory, government procurement, fiscal, and monetary policy to incentivize U.S. employment, production, and innovation.

