

**“The China Card:
Playing Politics with Sino-American relations”**

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- Abstract -

Will China become a “hot button” issue in the United States? In the past, America’s elected leaders have not hesitated to exploit public anxieties about China for partisan gain. In the 1870s, 1950s, and 1990s, public misgivings about the direction of U.S. policy toward China gave the party-out-of-power a powerful incentive to play what we call “the China card.” In each case, opposition party leaders used China as a wedge issue to politicize foreign policy and divide the president’s party, paying little heed to the geopolitical risks of doing so. Given today’s growing doubts about China’s international intentions, partisan pressure to politicize Sino-American relations is likely to intensify.

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