CURRENT SITUATION

China is a relative newcomer to peacebuilding, but its recent moves to participate in Afghan peace talks, fund and influence progress in Burma’s peace process, invest in Pakistan, and contribute to United Nations peacekeeping missions demonstrate its expanding role in conflict zones of strategic interest to the United States. China’s increased engagement presents opportunities for reducing violent conflict, but U.S. and Chinese interests and approaches do not always align. In countries where China exerts a strong influence, it can have a substantial impact—positive or negative—on local and international efforts to curb violence and extremism.

USIP’S WORK

The U.S. Institute of Peace has been engaged in the Asia-Pacific region for decades to support an international system that is more willing and able to manage violent conflict. The new China Program, established in 2016, continues that tradition. Through research, dialogue, and training, USIP provides evidence-based analysis of China’s activities and impact, identifies areas for collaboration where appropriate, and develops strategies for preventing differences from exacerbating instability or undermining broader peacebuilding.

Research and Analysis. USIP supports research and analysis that examines China’s effect on peace and conflict dynamics around the world. Early projects studied China’s budding peace diplomacy, including its approach to the Burma peace process, its evolving support for the U.N.’s “Responsibility to Protect” framework, and its growing involvement in U.N. peacekeeping
operations. USIP seeks to shed light on the structural and theoretical underpinnings of China’s influence overseas, facilitating analysis of the domestic forces behind China’s foreign policy and China’s “economics first” approach to peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

The Institute also supports research on the execution and impact of China’s major investment projects in conflict-affected areas, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and its components, including the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

**Collaboration to Improve Peacebuilding.** USIP designs, develops, and funds dialogues that help partners in the U.S., China, and third countries learn from one another and identify concrete actions to strengthen peacebuilding efforts. By partnering with scholars and practitioners to share their respective insights, experiences, and expertise, USIP helps peacebuilders around the world develop the tools to do their work more effectively.

For example, USIP supports consultations among key stakeholders from the U.S., China, and Africa to discuss ways the U.S. and China can help address some of Africa’s most pressing security challenges. In 2016, USIP also facilitated a range of discussions that allowed U.S. and Chinese experts to share views on, for example, the causes of conflict in Burma, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria, or to identify opportunities for the U.S., China, and third countries to work together to promote peace in other conflict-affected countries.

**Building Skills for Peace.** USIP facilitates education, training, and exchanges for Chinese scholars, educators, and other key stakeholders. Drawing on the expertise residing in other USIP programs, the China Program aims to help key elements in the U.S., China, and third countries develop the institutional, legal, and technical capacity to resolve conflicts without violence.