

TAKE CONTROL OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SETTING IN EMERGING TECH

ISSUE	The United States faces an urgent challenge in global technology standards setting as China's state-driven approach increasingly shapes standards for emerging technologies including AI, 5G/6G, and quantum computing. These standards will define future digital systems, with far-reaching implications for global security, economic competitiveness, and the interoperability of critical technologies.
SIGNIFICANCE	China's growing influence in international standards bodies, such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), allows it to promote closed, state-centric models that align with its surveillance-driven policies and its agenda, undermining innovation and openness. Without a coordinated response, U.S. companies and allied nations risk falling behind in setting the global rules that will determine technological competitiveness and security. A strategic approach is essential to counterbalance China's state-backed efforts and ensure that international standards reflect U.S. priorities such as security, transparency, and interoperability.
RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION	<p>The Trump administration should establish a "Standards Alliance" with Japan, South Korea, Germany, and the United Kingdom to focus exclusively on standards setting for emerging technologies. Unlike broader initiatives such as the Quad or the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, this alliance would directly address standards issues, countering China's efforts. Led by a senior official at the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), with support from the Departments of State and Defense and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), the alliance would align member positions, coordinate standards proposals, and adopt unified voting strategies in international bodies.</p> <p>To support this, the administration should allocate funding to help smaller U.S. tech firms participate in standards bodies, counterbalancing China's state-subsidized presence and helping ensure robust private sector engagement. The alliance should also coordinate joint proposals and leadership roles in standards committees, while funding training programs in technical universities and industry associations to build a pipeline of standards experts. An industry consortium of leading tech firms and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across member countries would provide practical input to align standards proposals with industry needs. By establishing this focused Standards Alliance, the administration can protect U.S. interests, offer a strong alternative to China's approach, and secure a global technology environment aligned with U.S. values and economic goals.</p>