Historic US fantasy of liberalising China has failed, new report reveals

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The failures in the United States' and Europe's 'China Fantasy' have been revealed and analysed in a new piece from LSE IDEAS, The London School of Economics' foreign policy think tank.

According to the piece, the 'China Fantasy' – the view that free trade between China and the West would lead to propensity and liberalisation in China, and thus peace between Beijing and Washington – has failed.

Authored by Charles Dunst, Associate at LSE IDEAS, the piece shows that in spite of longstanding US intentions, the trade relationship between the West and China has only ideologically benefited China. According to Dunst, while free trade was supposed to liberalise China, it has instead 'illiberalized' the West.

Within the piece it is also revealed that at least some economic 'decoupling' between the two countries is inevitable. Dunst says that this is already visible in plummeting Chinese direct investment in the US in recent years, as well as fewer Chinese students studying in America.

According to Dunst, the challenge for the US and the West more broadly is to limit the disruption of decoupling while allowing for economically and strategically tolerable levels of integration between China and the United States.

Charles Dunst, Associate at LSE IDEAS, says:

"For liberalization efforts to succeed, Western private and public sector leaders need to wake up from their decades-long dream of liberal internationalism, recognise the reality of Chinese authoritarianism, and re-evaluate their countries' and firms' relationships with a Great Power whose illiberal ruling regime demands complicity."

Link to the report, The Failures of the "China Fantasy":
https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/projects/china-foresight/china-dialogues/the-failures-of-the-china-fantasy#

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For more information or to speak to Charles Dunst, please contact Jonny Stone jonny@bluesky-pr.com or call 01582 790704.

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