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China

An Opponent or an Opportunity?

Rear Admiral Eric A. McVadon, U.S. Navy, Retired

I AM ESPECIALLY HAPPY, AFTER SEVERAL YEARS AWAY, to be here again at the Naval War College, this time to talk about China and East Asia. Part of my happiness in being before this audience is because I am not satisfied that the U.S. Navy and others in Washington have given adequate and appropriate attention to China. Let me explain.

In 1989 I was the U.S. and Nato commander in Iceland. I volunteered to leave Iceland and go to China when the Navy's turn to fill the defense attaché billet came around. No other Navy flag officer even put his hat in the ring for that assignment. Why would a U.S. Navy flag officer want to go to China?

Following a year in school, my wife and I arrived in China on 2 August 1990 and were greeted at the Beijing International Airport by virtually the entire Beijing attaché corps. There was not a single Chinese uniform to be seen. I was snubbed by the Chinese not only because of the Tiananmen Square aftermath but also because we had snubbed the PLA, the People's Liberation Army, the day before, refusing to attend their important Army Day receptions after they had accepted invitations to, and had attended, our Fourth of July celebrations. This was a foolish diplomatic spat, all too typical, but one that affected bilateral relations. My arrival and snubbing, however, were not the most significant events of the day; 2 August was the day Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. After a long delay, I was finally accredited—swallowing my pride to meet unceremoniously with the most junior deputy in the Foreign Affairs Bureau. I was then promptly dispatched by Washington to have my first meeting with a PLA general officer, to demand

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An address delivered on 11 September 1995 to the students of the College of Naval Warfare at the Naval War College.

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of him that China support the United States in its condemnation of Iraq, cease shipments to the Hussein government, and provide prompt documentation to Washington that it was complying with these demands.

As you may have guessed, Ambassador James R. Lilley and I had to pull out the stops to gain Chinese support for the subsequent eleven United Nations resolutions concerning Iraq; but we and others succeeded. How we did so in that very negative environment is another story, but we did. I wondered whether Washington had any idea what it had asked of us and what we, primarily Ambassador Lilley, had accomplished.

I had not long to wonder. DESERT SHIELD was about to become DESERT STORM. The Iraqi armed forces, in addition to all the systems they had acquired from us and other Western countries, had much equipment supplied by China. I wanted to talk with Chinese officers about that equipment. The PLA, incidentally, asked if I could give them reports on any aspects of the war from which they could learn. We, thereby, had the potential to influence the PLA's view of this milestone event in warfare and possibly to read their reactions. Washington's answer was that I must rely on news reports for any information I supplied to the Chinese. Many of us regarded CNN as a timely and accurate source of information during DESERT STORM. I hope the Chinese remember my reports similarly—but I vividly recall how often CNN got it all wrong or parroted the words of some overoptimistic U.S. spokesman. At least the Chinese, who were also watching CNN, did not correct my errors to my face.

I excused much of this, rationalizing that Washington had a war to fight and that my problems were lost in the noise. The end of DESERT STORM, however, did not change things. For example, when U.S. Navy carrier aircraft mistakenly intruded into Chinese airspace, I—and the Ambassador—learned of it first from the Chinese; in response to my message, I eventually got a reluctant, partial explanation from Washington. There were, of course, many other similar oversights that must remain unmentioned.

In my final report from Beijing, I pointed out that the Navy flag officer in Beijing, the only U.S. Navy officer in China, was the least well informed person concerning the U.S. Navy and China of all those who cared. There was only one notable exception to this attitude of neglect. I asked then-Vice Admiral Stanley Arthur, an old friend who was the Seventh Fleet commander, how I should respond to questions by the Chinese and my fellow naval attachés in Beijing about U.S. Navy initiatives with the Indian Navy. He answered my questions promptly and fully. It felt good to give the PLA Navy a meaningful report, and, of course, our side of the story. In return, I got the only early and factual statement from the PLA Navy that it had decided, at least for the time being, not to acquire an aircraft carrier—because it cost too much, and also for all the reasons I had been

giving my PLA Navy contacts about why it did not make operational sense for them and would not sit well with their neighbors.

Anecdotes like these should illustrate that there is much that both sides have to gain from consultation and cooperation and that much is lost absent those things, things of far more sweeping consequences than in the cases I have mentioned. One of the major consequences of this situation is the loss of an ability for us to see the world as the Chinese see it. In an attempt to remedy that difficulty a bit, let me give a quick *tour d'horizon* from Beijing's perspective.

When Beijing looks north it breathes a sigh of relief and sees a Russia that is no longer an immediate threat to its survival; Russia now is a country to be cultivated as a source of high-technology military equipment. There remains, however, great uncertainty in China about the Russia of the future. No Chinese assessment of security threats omits mention of an unpredictable Russia.

Turning to the east, Japan is prominent as the most deeply hated of China's neighbors, primarily for the treatment China received at the hands of the Japanese in the 1930s and '40s. The Japanese now are tolerated as investors, as a source of aid (despite the freeze on grants imposed recently by Tokyo to protest Chinese nuclear testing), and as important joint venture partners, but the specter of resurgent Japanese militarism is another looming component of the security threat that China envisions.

Korea is not seen by the Chinese as simply a divided peninsula composed of an isolated and obstreperous North and a prosperous South. Korea is also remembered historically as a bordering state that has been a source of problems. The Chinese say publicly that they value their trade and new diplomatic relations with the South, that they support sympathetically the communist regime in the North, and that they want a stable, non-nuclear Korean peninsula. Privately some Chinese say that their interests might be well served by a continuing divided Korea, one that cannot so readily renew its ancient struggles with its big neighbor. What is left unsaid in most Chinese conversations about Korea is that "reunification" means absorption of the North by the South, a non-communist South that has clearly won the contest over which type of regime spells success for the Korean people. Chinese Communist Party ideologues and many other loyalists in China do not relish the demise of yet another communist government. It is already feeling very lonely at Communist Party headquarters in Beijing.

Beijing worries about a cozy Washington-Pyongyang relationship and active U.S. planning for continuation of an alliance relationship in Korea after reunification. Put more broadly, China does not view continuing American alliances with Japan and Korea, after the end of the Cold War, in the same benign light that most Westerners might. Chinese ask themselves against whom, if not China, these alliances are formed. We jar Beijing when we suggest, for instance, that the

U.S.-Japanese-South Korean cooperation that devised the light-water reactor deal for North Korea might evolve into a Northeast Asia multilateral security forum—is this not, they wonder, yet another ploy to get together and menace peace-loving China?

China being the biggest country in Asia and having the fastest-growing economy and military, should China be a part of our security arrangements for Asia or the target of them? Both sides need to keep that question squarely before them as the security calculus in Asia changes. It is not overlooked in Beijing's calculations.

Continuing the tour, due east is Taiwan. As we have all heard often during the latest serious crisis in Sino-American relations, there is no doubt that older Chinese leaders firmly hold the view that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. We, in recent years, have had our bilateral spats with the People's Republic over human rights, trade, and missile sales. We rode out those bumps in the relationship. Then came the issue of the visit of Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui; that bump upset the apple cart, and we are still working hard to get it right side up again. Taiwan remains the most volatile factor in our relationship with China, the factor about which the Chinese will act most irrationally, from our viewpoint, and *the* issue that the Chinese say they would go to war over regardless of the projected outcome of the conflict.

From the Chinese perspective, the issuance of the visa to *the president of Taiwan* was a clear provocation, amounting to American support of Lee's campaign to break out of international isolation and attain for Taiwan a new role in the world—all anathema to Beijing, of course. When I have accused Chinese officials of overreacting to the Lee visit, they have responded that they reacted just as they have said for decades they would: President Clinton was the one who had not acted rationally. In any case, if we were uncertain before, we know now exactly where Beijing's sorest spot lies.

Let us turn to the South China Sea, another sore spot. China insists on its sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly islands. The intensity of the claims by both China and others has kept pace with the (unsubstantiated) projections of large oil reserves in the area. Beijing aggravated the situation in early 1992 by enacting a law that suggested the Chinese might restrict passage through the South China Sea, based on their assertion of historical sovereignty over all the islands. They did nothing to implement that nebulous 1992 document, but concern lingered among various nations of the world. Following the incident early in 1995 with the Philippines, after the Chinese built facilities on Mischief Reef in the Spratlys near Palawan, Admiral Richard Macke [then the U.S. commander in the Pacific] made a firm statement about what the United States might do if freedom of navigation were threatened in the area. The reaction in Beijing was surprisingly favorable, that China "fulfills, according to international

laws, obligations guaranteeing the free passage of foreign vessels or aircraft in the South China Sea.”

Six governments, including Taiwan, claim all or part of the Spratly Islands. China, at least until very recently, has been bullying its way, dealing with the countries of Southeast Asia one-on-one to get what it wants, all the while spouting the conciliatory line that it favors joint economic development of the resources of the area while setting aside the territorial issues. China has avoided multinational diplomatic engagements, where the smaller countries can collectively reduce Beijing's advantage. However, China said at the 1995 session in Brunei of the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (or ASEAN) that it will negotiate with others making claims in the South China Sea, using international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, as a basis.

Many people are keeping an eye on the South China Sea dispute, for all sorts of reasons. It is interesting in the present connection because it is displaying, for all the world to see, an orchestrated undertaking by Beijing that combines diplomatic finesse, economic factors, military power, and traditional Chinese patience. I do not necessarily imply that this is a sinister exercise by Beijing. History is rife with far more noxious examples of the employment of national power to achieve a goal. I do mean to imply that it is informative as to what we should expect of China as a rising world power.

Although the most recent brouhaha in the South China Sea was the occupation of Mischief Reef, a spat primarily between the PRC and the Philippines, the most serious confrontations in the area have been between China and its long-time enemy, Vietnam. The incidents have been numerous, including China's taking of six Spratly atolls in 1988, when the PLA Navy sank two armed Vietnamese resupply ships with the loss of over seventy lives. Vietnam is a rival in the South China Sea, and especially for the oil both nations hope is there; but beyond that, over the centuries China and Vietnam have learned to hate each other, for reasons many Chinese and Vietnamese probably cannot or do not bother to remember. Both sides do remember 1979, however, when the PLA invaded Vietnam to a distance of fifty kilometers over sixteen days to teach Hanoi a lesson for what it was doing in Cambodia. Most contend that China, although claiming victory, learned the bigger lesson, when it bogged down and found that it did not have the fighting forces or the logistics to carry out such a campaign. Beijing learned that the army it still proudly touted as having defeated the Americans in Korea was, twenty-five years later, capable of doing very little. The Chinese are still smarting from that military misadventure, a major impetus in their present effort to modernize their antiquated armed forces.

Sixteen years after the invasion, though there is still not much love lost between Beijing and Hanoi, relations between the two countries have turned

upward, with the normalization of relations in the early 1990s and establishment of many bilateral ties, primarily commercial. Beijing is now less inclined to hammer Hanoi, and Hanoi is less inclined to strike back, even when the two annoy each other over, say, an oil claim in the Spratlys. There is now much to lose for both countries in economic and diplomatic terms; Hanoi is doubly disposed to accommodate, because of China's size and weight. The two countries have agreed to keep negotiations over their land border separate from the contentious issues of claims in the South China Sea. In late July 1995, Vietnam became a member of ASEAN. It will be interesting now to see the effect that membership has on Vietnam and the effect Vietnam's membership has on ASEAN's interactions with China.

“ . . . [The] South China Sea dispute . . . is displaying . . . an orchestrated undertaking by Beijing that combines diplomatic finesse, economic factors, military power, and traditional Chinese patience[:] . . . what we should expect of China as a rising world power.”

In my opinion, the most important thing going on in ASEAN today is its Regional Forum, the ARF. This body had its second session during the ASEAN meetings mentioned above in Brunei in mid-1995, trying to come to grips with regional security issues—a novel undertaking in that part of the world. Of course, the real regional security issue is China: its military modernization and the absence of Chinese candor or transparency. China is participating in the ARF, as are we and several other non-ASEAN states, including Japan, Russia, and South Korea. (Taiwan is not part of the ARF, because the PRC, of course, adamantly opposes its presence in the group.) China's participation is one of many indicators that nowadays those in China who want the PRC to be a constructive member of the world community are more often carrying the day in the internal arguments in Beijing. For many Westerners it will be hard to give up the convictions, the preconceived notions, to the contrary, but Chinese government officials are not all troglodytes, and the government is not a monolith. Despite tendencies to retreat to these characteristics when pressed, there are many Chinese officials who are reasonable and ethical—even personable.

One can disparage the results of the first two meetings of the ASEAN Regional Forum, pointing out, for example, that China has not committed itself to confidence-building measures to assuage the concerns of its neighbors over its military modernization program. On the other hand, in the ARF meetings, which are continuing, very senior Chinese officials are repeating assurances that they seek a peaceful solution of South China Sea disputes, that (surprisingly) they will now

negotiate the matters collectively with ASEAN members, and that they will publish a defense white paper.* The more often these things are said, and the more ways they are embellished by various Chinese leaders, the better. Putting all this another way, it is absolutely amazing that not only has ASEAN put together a multinational forum for discussing security issues, but that the PRC sits at that table, and also that Vietnam has been allowed to join the Association years ahead of when most experts expected that to happen. The ASEAN Regional Forum is certainly no Nato, but it is surely an organization worth watching, whether from Beijing or Washington.

Moving westward, Burma, or Myanmar, is the next location where the Chinese are causing consternation. The concern is not in Rangoon but, most intensely, in New Delhi, in other regional capitals, and even in Washington. China's trade with and military support of Myanmar are significant, but an item of specific concern is naval cooperation. China has built a naval facility of some sort on an island in the mouth of the Irrawaddy for the purpose, as the Indians put it, of expanding into the Indian Ocean and further threatening Indian security. Some Indian officials have advocated bombing the site. Appropriately for the Orient, both the Chinese and Burmese are being inscrutable, keeping their own counsel, in this matter. Those who know even a little about the PLA Navy find it hard to believe that China is routinely operating ships remote from their homeports; to put it bluntly, the PLA Navy has its hands full trying to operate and support its traditional three fleets—North Sea, East Sea, and South Sea—from its own bases in China. Further, Chinese officials who have been forthright about other things deny that they have a base in Myanmar. They also deny reports, by the way, that China has formed a fourth fleet, to be known as the Ocean Fleet, with headquarters near Shanghai.†

My conjecture is that a few years ago China became flustered when the Indian Navy seemed headed for a regional hegemonic role, and that Beijing began to work with a willing Burmese government to set up a way to monitor Indian Navy activities more closely than they had been. Although the din over that purported Indian naval threat has subsided somewhat as the means for Indian Navy expansion have faded, Beijing has had nothing to lose by keeping an outpost on the Burmese coast.

Despite the reciprocal Chinese and Indian concerns about the extension of naval power and over their lingering border dispute, there has been an improvement in Sino-Indian relations. Rajiv Gandhi's fruitful 1988 visit to Beijing and

* That occurred in late 1995, with publication of a paper that was less specific than had been hoped for, but was a start.

† I have been able to discover nothing more since this address was delivered about the rumor of a new fleet and headquarters.

also a détente in 1993 greatly eased tensions. India has reportedly moved three divisions away from the Chinese border area, to Kashmir. In the summer [1995], India and China agreed to withdraw forces from four border points in eastern Tibet, where the proximity of troops from the two sides had made clashes more likely. Complicating the Sino-Indian situation, however, is the bitter struggle between India and (China's friend) Pakistan. Possibly the best example of these complications is the Indian development of advanced ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons against Pakistan. China has long supported Pakistan, clandestinely in nuclear weapons technology, openly in the sale and production of conventional arms, and mysteriously in the acquisition, somehow, of something at least resembling the M-11 missile.*

Many in the United States are convinced that China has delivered that missile, assembled, to Pakistan; many more are convinced that at least major components have been transferred. Pakistan, in carefully couched statements, officially denies those assertions, as has China. It fell to me officially in Beijing in 1991 and '92 to make some sense of all these contradictory statements and bits of evidence. It is still unclear today, but I would not be surprised to find that China has on one or more occasions, probably at times when they were most unhappy with the United States and vice-versa, transferred to Pakistan missiles approximating the M-11. If this is verified, the Chinese will likely assert that the transferred missiles did not violate the Missile Technology Control Regime guidelines and parameters that China considered applicable to itself at the time of the transfer—that is, the range or payload were below the MTCR limits. They will then launch into the usual diatribe about how the United States provides other countries with the F-16 and other aircraft at least as destabilizing as any missile China has transferred.

All this may make one wonder what value there was in China's agreement (during Secretary of State James Baker's November 1991 visit to Beijing) to comply with the MTCR or in its confirmation in fall 1995 that it would not export to any country missiles "inherently capable" of a range of three hundred kilometers with a payload of five hundred kilograms. I would argue that, absent these constraints on the Beijing bureaucracy—imperfect as they may be in practice—China might have transferred to Pakistan more, and more capable, missiles. India, in response, would probably have put greater effort, even earlier, into its own missile program, a problem many in Washington fear may be rearing its head again now. What could have happened then in South Asia would have made the

* The Chinese M-11 (also known as the CSS-7) is a modern, two-stage, solid-propellant ballistic missile with a range of three hundred kilometers and a payload of five hundred kilograms. Also known in China as the Dong Feng ("East Wind") 11, it can deliver conventional and, probably, nuclear warheads with an accuracy of about one-tenth of one percent of the target range. Developed for export, it is in the same "family" as the longer-range M-9 (Dong Feng 15 or CSS-6) used in the 1995-1996 missile "tests" intended to intimidate Taiwan. [Ed.]

enduring Kashmir conflict and the 1995 beheading of the Norwegian tourist only unpleasant cocktail-party chatter.* There is, therefore, a good chance that this is a case where the good—if not the perfect—has been achieved by our diplomatic efforts with a reluctant China, a new sort of China where, in the internal debates in Beijing, level heads can sometimes prevail.

China's worrisome reach in southwest Asia extends beyond Pakistan. Aside from the famous 1988 sale of outmoded, liquid-fueled CSS-2 ballistic missiles to Saudi Arabia and the supply to Iraq of military material, China also continues to assist Iran—in its nuclear reactor program, in the acquisition of first-line cruise missiles, and reportedly in medium-range ballistic missile technology. Earlier this year [1995], President Clinton was stepping up efforts to isolate Iran, and getting nowhere in trying to get the Chinese to cooperate in that anti-Iranian endeavor.

"We and they can continue to dwell on the issues that divide us, and we can convince ourselves of all that is bad about China, while they do the same about us. In the end, both will have a fully defensible and remarkable list—but an indefensibly and remarkably useless one."

I have been ridiculed, albeit in a friendly way, by a Pakistani brigadier for puzzling over the affinity that exists among China and these countries of South-west Asia. I had asked if the ties were, especially in the case of Iran, based to a great extent on a Chinese desire to perpetuate its access to petroleum; of course, in the case of Pakistan, there is the matter of a common enemy, India. The Pakistani officer's response was an enigmatic smile.

It is my impression that there is, among these countries, a feeling of camaraderie, a sense of being kindred spirits in a developing world—a world not of their making, dominated by countries that do not understand how deeply many Western concepts are despised by some Asians. I do not offer this conclusion with complete conviction, but it is worth keeping in mind as one ponders other things that have come about, such as the 1995 naval exercises Iran and Pakistan held, saying the exercises fostered "a greater strategic alliance."

I now have come almost full circle in this *tour d'horizon*, to the Central Asian states, former republics of the Soviet Union, in an area that earlier had the name Western, or Russian, Turkistan. China is not happy to have to deal with this motley group of sometimes chaotic new countries bordering its volatile western

* In July 1995, near Srinigar, India, an obscure guerrilla group kidnapped several Western hikers, threatening to kill them unless India freed jailed Muslim militants. India refused, and in August the decapitated corpse of a Norwegian hostage was found ("1996 Asia Yearbook," *Far East Economic Review*, p. 130).

reaches. China's far western Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (significantly, once known as Eastern, or Chinese, Turkistan) is largely populated by people who look far more Turkic than Chinese and speak a Turkic language. As many know, Beijing had ample practice before the Tiananmen massacre in suppressing dissent by killing demonstrators; prominent among the places where dissent was suppressed by bloody force is Xinjiang. It is now Beijing's fear that dissidents in its far west will be supported or joined by factions in the Central Asian republics, demanding further autonomy or self-determination. Beijing has no intention of letting that flower bloom or even begin to bud, not only because of a firm intention to hold on to that territory and its oil reserves (and the Lop Nor nuclear weapons testing area) but also because the Chinese do not want the sprouting of independence to spread to Tibet and Inner Mongolia or, even worse, to inspire those who advocate independence for Taiwan. Strong actions by dissidents or separatists in Xinjiang or Tibet could be a catalyst for chaos throughout China.

I have tried briefly to provide an annotated Chinese view of Asia. China is a central figure in much that is transpiring in Asia, including many of the things we care most about on that continent. I did not mention the arrest in Xinjiang (and tardy but timely release) of the Chinese-American citizen Harry Wu, the visit of Hillary Rodham Clinton to Beijing and Ulan Bator, or the 1995 Women's Conferences in Huairou and Beijing. I did, however, mention regional issues of real interest to the United States and China, issues with which we should be engaged with Beijing, issues on which, as the case may be, we should be consulting, disagreeing, agreeing, accommodating, holding the line, resolving the problem, setting the matter aside, finding ways to help, or making quite sure we do *not* help. These forms of engagement happen rarely in our relations with China. To examine that phenomenon of non-cooperation and why it is occurring, let us now see how things look when those in Beijing raise their eyes and peer out beyond Asia, eastward across the Pacific, and see the United States.

Many of the Chinese who know something of the United States see our country most of all as an almost magic realm in which to get a college education and get rich—but many also see it as a perilous place, where violent crime is commonplace; where elders are treated with disrespect; where people do not save money but compulsively buy things they do not need; where parents let their children become hoodlums and then criminals; and where greed, unsavory conduct, sexual promiscuity, and lewdness are unbounded. Our government is frequently called imperialistic, hegemonic, and arrogant—guilty of repeated interference in the internal affairs of other nations, the cultures of which it little understands.

I have mentioned that the latest really big upset in the relationship between the United States and China resulted from our permitting the president of the Republic of China, Lee Teng-hui, to visit the United States, unofficially, and take

part in a ceremony at his alma mater, Cornell University. Beijing has reacted in an extreme way to what it sees as a blatant violation of the mutually agreed one-China policy—as contrasted with two Chinas (a PRC on the mainland and an ROC on Taiwan) or with one China and one Taiwan. They want us to adhere to that one-China concept and also to say often, and even believe as firmly as they, that this concept, not the Taiwan Relations Act, serves as the basis of the U.S. position on Taiwan's status. Like it or not, the one-China policy, formally established in 1979, is the accepted basis of our diplomatic relations with China, to which Republican and Democratic administrations have given innumerable affirmations over these sixteen years.

From our viewpoint, letting the president of Taiwan come here was altogether reasonable. Taiwan has proven itself a world economic power and over the last several years has moved from an authoritarian government to an affluent democracy. The United States has good, if unofficial, diplomatic arrangements with Taiwan. A compelling argument can be made, even absent the congressional pressure for the visit, that President Clinton was right to permit Taiwan's president to make an unofficial visit and should continue to permit visits by senior officials from Taipei.

From Beijing's viewpoint, this was not only unreasonable but the last straw, an action that demanded forceful reaction. The Chinese saw us as yet again blatantly violating the three communiqués that they very firmly hold as fundamental to the diplomatic relations between the PRC and the United States.* They have long been unhappy with our sales of military equipment to what they consider the illegal government of their sovereign province of Taiwan, and even some of the most balanced China specialists in the West considered that we had violated the 1982 communiqué when President George Bush, during the 1992 presidential campaign, announced that we would sell 150 F-16 fighter planes to Taiwan. (The Chinese, remarkably, stomached that announcement with only a modicum of grumbling. Beijing is not always joining with Washington in sabotaging the bilateral relationship—just most of the time.)

With the Lee Teng-hui visit, it appeared to Beijing that the United States was openly abandoning the one-China policy, encouraging Taiwan's independence movement, and setting an intolerable precedent for other countries to follow. Next, Beijing feared, Japan and others would invite or allow senior Taiwanese officials to visit, undermining the firm PRC position that Taiwan is just a renegade province. As I was told by a Chinese representative soon after the Lee

* The 1972 Shanghai Communiqué was a milestone American acknowledgement that "there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China." In a 1978 communiqué on the "normalization" of diplomatic relations the United States recognized "the Government of the PRC as the sole legal government of China." A 1982 joint communiqué included an American pledge to limit arms sales to Taiwan, and also a promise by Beijing to seek peaceful reunification.

visit, whether the American Congress understands and agrees or not, Beijing is adamant about Taiwan. "How could the White House have misunderstood that point, made so clearly and often by my government?" he inquired incredulously. "How could this preposterous White House explanation about congressional pressure to issue a visa be offered? All know that American presidents, under the U.S. Constitution, are responsible for foreign policy, not the Congress. Clinton had only to ignore the congressional grumbling." It was a ploy, he had concluded: there had been collusion between Capitol Hill and the White House, a conspiracy. But, he announced with conviction, the Chinese had seen through it.

Furthermore, in this episode the professed current American policy toward China of comprehensive and constructive engagement was revealed as a hoax. Just look at the facts: the United States has long been trying to weaken and contain China, just as it did with the Soviet Union. With respect to the pompous American meddling in China's internal affairs under the guise of human rights, why has the United States singled out Beijing, a government simply enforcing its domestic laws? Washington has turned a blind eye to Russia's excesses in Chechnya, and it reacted far less vigorously over the years to so-called human rights problems in South and North Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, and elsewhere. American condemnation of China for its alleged violations of human rights, and all the noise made over Tiananmen, were not about justice and concern for Chinese citizens, but empty words. They come from a country that, at a point in its history resembling China's current situation, imported many thousands of slaves from Africa, still treats those former slaves as second-class citizens, and cares nothing for the homeless and jobless who populate its cities. The American actions are meant to undermine the Communist Party and the Chinese government, to bolster immature or misguided dissidents who wish to bring about chaos, maybe even civil war; and the U.S. government wants to do so at a crucial time, when China is on the brink of becoming a world economic power. China needs domestic tranquility to continue its march toward greatness, and the United States encourages those who foster discontent. It is quite clear: this is, in fact, all part of a U.S. policy actively to weaken and even divide China.

Not only has the United States supported Taiwan but it has also recognized Vietnam, a long-time Chinese adversary and the country with which China is seriously struggling over sovereignty of the Paracel and Spratly islands. Americans, even congressmen, advocate the separation of Tibet from the PRC, a prospect that resembles the Americans' relinquishing Alaska, Hawaii, or Puerto Rico, and just because of the inevitable, vociferous hecklers. U.S. officials attempt already to undermine the restoration of China's sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997, a matter in which the United States has no role.

Beijing's long list continues. The United States has dug up excuses not to let China enter the World Trade Organization. The U.S. government threatens trade

sanctions every few months, strangely whines today about trade deficits instead of sticking to its former line of free trade, and accuses China of proliferating missiles and nuclear technology and material. Meanwhile, Washington is selling dangerous combat aircraft and transferring nuclear materials and know-how to a far greater degree than China. And what of American motives in the diplomatic and security arenas in Korea and Japan? Are not the Americans trying to put together with those two countries a continuation of Cold War security arrangements in Northeast Asia, but with these alliances now directed against China? Why does the United States strongly criticize China for its forty-third nuclear weapons test when it has itself conducted a thousand? The Americans have found their new communist enemy, the peaceful People's Republic of China, and have developed a coordinated policy of containment, an intent that has now been revealed by these and many other American actions.

I did not contrive or embellish this scenario; many in Beijing have long believed it or its essence. They are led by the hard-bitten octogenarians who recite tales of over a hundred and fifty years of American and Western mistreatment of China dating from the Opium War of 1840. Many more Chinese leaders are coming to believe it now. The People's Liberation Army commanders are beating the drums to this rhythm. Those in China who dislike and distrust the United States and those who are simply uncertain about it have now joined the top PLA leadership in a chorus of anti-American chants along the lines just described. Even many dispassionate, not particularly ideological, Chinese have become convinced, or are afraid to say otherwise. In Brunei in July 1995, the astute and sensible Chinese foreign minister said U.S. forces should leave Asia, apparently abandoning the view that American forces have contributed to stability in the region and, to put a finer PRC point on it, have kept East Asia safe from Japan. There is now even talk that the United States is forming a worldwide coalition, including Japan and others of China's neighbors, to contain China's military and economic growth. All this cacophony drowns out the already weakened arguments of a few brave souls in Beijing who take a more measured—and we would say more accurate—view of the United States policy toward China.

The intensity of the anti-American voices is amplified by the leadership succession underway in Beijing. Paramount leader Deng Xiaoping has grown too decrepit to exercise influence and will not live much longer. His potential successors do not have Deng's political clout and connections with the military. They cannot afford to be seen as showing weakness toward the United States, of kowtowing to foreign forces bent either on the destruction of China or on changing China by "peaceful evolution." To do so would mean their political demise, effectively their elimination from the post-Deng political scene.

The American view of China and its policies is not much clearer than its view of us, especially since the suppression by the Chinese military of the Tiananmen uprising in 1989. China, as big as it is, has to a great extent been hidden from Americans for more than seven years by the smoke that arose from the reprehensible actions by the People's Liberation Army against the students who filled that huge square, students who were searching for democracy and seeking an end to corruption, misrule, and massive mistakes by the Beijing government and the Chinese Communist Party. As terrible as that event was, however, China is too big, too diverse, and too important in Asia and the world to remain obscured by the pall of American disgust and distrust that arose after those events of 1989 in the heart of Beijing.

To make things worse, U.S.-Chinese relations since that time have been further clouded for Americans gazing westward ten thousand miles across the Pacific. Trade disputes, more human rights issues, missile sales, military modernization, nuclear testing, spats over the Spratly Islands, and, most recently, tussles over Taiwan have led many Americans—and what is particularly important, American congressmen and some senior officials, civilian and military—to see China as an enemy, or at least a potential adversary. All these factors obscure our view of a country of 1.2 billion people and prevent us from seeing that there is much more to understand about China than disagreements in the bilateral relationship.

Plainly, our view of China, although it contains much that is true, is about as useful in understanding that country as is the Chinese view of our own. We and they can continue to dwell on the issues that divide us, and we can convince ourselves of all that is bad about China, while they do the same about us. In the end, both will have a fully defensible and remarkable list—but an indefensibly and remarkably useless one.

I rush to say at this point that having lived in Beijing for two years, traveled repeatedly throughout China, worked intensely on China since 1989, I know well how corrupt and cruel the Chinese Communist Party can be, how arrogant that authoritarian government can be, how bungling the Beijing bureaucracy can be, how viciously the Chinese people can treat one another. I do not suggest that Americans should learn to like these things. I do suggest that they should have a broader view of China, a view that will not only help put China in perspective but allow us to have a relationship with China that will serve our interests. Such a view will also foster an environment where the best of the Chinese people, with American support, may have a chance to bring salutary change to that huge and dramatically developing country.

As I have heard Ambassador Jim Lilley, for whom I first worked at the embassy in Beijing, say, history is strewn with the corpses of those who have tried to change China. However, China has changed and is changing rapidly—changing for the better. As I and others see it, the force behind those changes has been the economic

development of China and the many influences from the outside that have either brought about the economic growth or are a consequence thereof. I often assert, to the annoyance of Beijing officials I am sure, that China is now undergoing a *real* revolution. The revolution they celebrate incessantly, the one culminating in the 1949 defeat of the Kuomintang by the Communists, certainly made a profound difference in China, with many good and bad consequences. The revolution underway in China today, however, will change not only China but Asia, and the world as well.

The Chinese people today are fed, housed, and clothed. Meat and even vegetables are sold throughout the year; store shelves now hold items people want and need to buy. Annual per capita national income has soared to about \$1,200. There is at least some medical care for most Chinese. Life expectancy has more than doubled, reaching seventy-eight years. Literacy is at the level of a developed country, 85 percent. Of course, the Communist Party claims credit for these incredible accomplishments in the most populous and difficult-to-control country in the world. I argue, again to the annoyance of Chinese Communist cadres, that it may be more accurate to say the progress has been despite the Party, that all this has been accomplished while the Party has acted erratically and even destructively. There were decisions of former Chairman Mao that led, among other things, to the disastrous Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s and to ten years of terror, destruction, and death during the Cultural Revolution, from 1966 to 1976. But the devil must be given his due. Chinese citizens, under their present government, now have economic opportunity, real chances to provide for their families, and even to get rich. Some have become obnoxiously wealthy. Unlike in the past, they can change jobs, move from rural to urban areas or to other cities, express unhappiness with conditions, sue the government, and do other things that we have long considered natural but that have been unheard-of in China. United Nations reports characterize China as one of the "top ten" in improved human development from 1960 to 1992, taking into account such factors as health, infant mortality, life expectancy, education of children, adult literacy, absolute poverty, and similar standard measures.

There are still 800,000 mostly backward peasants in China. And yes, as a recent book on China points out, among them are some who do not know that the earth revolves around the sun or why anyone would care about that phenomenon. As a PLA Navy officer told me, there are many farmers who favor democracy because they think it will give them the right to have more than one wife. That cannot long remain the case; every villager can now see national television, and many see international TV via quasi-legal satellite dishes. In even greater contrast, there are very competent Chinese airline pilots training at Boeing in Seattle to be better at the job of flying 767 airliners, and Chinese air traffic controllers can now say what they previously could not: "Roger, 802, *radar* contact." There are Chinese

women who stride out of hovels in the hutongs of Shanghai's dense housing areas in heels, hose, short skirts, and stylish hairdos headed for jobs at foreign joint ventures that demand computer skills, three languages, advanced training, and much more. The millions of people who resemble these folks will never wear the Mao suits and think the Chairman Mao thoughts from the little red books by which their fathers and mothers lived.

Travelers to China, even the most casual tourists, see that China is a country under construction: hotels, office buildings, apartment buildings, roads and bridges, factories, even single-family homes. But China is a country under construction in more ways than that. China has had economic growth averaging about 9 percent per year since 1979, when Deng Xiaoping instituted reforms. China seems destined to be one of the greatest economic powers on Earth, even if it encounters some dips along the way. Some international economists say it will surpass all others early in the next century. China wants to have a military that matches these prospects. Chinese military officers are tired of the old joke that the PLA is the world's largest military museum. To them, military modernization is not a threat to anyone but something natural that any responsible flag or general officer would see as a top priority for China.

The Chinese political structure is also being reconstructed. The Party still plays its role as a spoiler of freedom for the citizenry; its Public Security Bureau remains able to make life unpleasant, or far worse, for those who openly disagree with Party policies and practices. However, there has been severe erosion of the Party's means of enforcement among the masses. To varying degrees, primarily as a consequence of economic modernization, it has lost control (that it had for decades exercised tightly through the *danwei*, or work unit) of the systems for household registration, rationing of commodities, allocation of housing and jobs, and the provision of schooling, recreation, and other services, and even retirement. To the millions of dynamic young people of China, and many others as well, communist ideology and the Party have no bearing whatsoever on their lives. For the cosmopolitan Chinese entrepreneur, often seen with a cellular telephone to his ear, the Party is something to be tolerated, something to be joked about and largely ignored.

The Party itself has recognized that it cannot survive if the opportunity for improved economic welfare of China's people, the promise of a better life, is not sustained. Economic growth must continue, or the Party will further falter. The citizens of China tolerate the Party now because they do not want the instability, the chaos, that is the anticipated result of widespread dissidence, of movements like that which resulted in the Tiananmen massacre. It is widely acknowledged that internal stability is essential to continuing economic development and improvement in the living conditions of the country. The reality of a better life *now* looks better than the fuzzy, long-term dream of freedom, a concept that many

in China do not comprehend and may not even value. Many think the students and other dissidents are just young and immature idealists who will, as at Tiananmen, fail to appreciate the consequences of ill-conceived actions.

When we look at China we should by now be seeing, through the much dissipated smoke of Tiananmen, a country achieving enormous economic growth and progressive change. We should see also an almost desperate Chinese Communist Party hanging on to power, a Party fully aware that if the opportunities to make money and lead a better life are taken away from the Chinese people now, the Party will face dissent and opposition that will precipitate its downfall or bring about drastic changes in the power structure. As China scholar Professor Tom Robinson puts it, "the party is no longer a pyramid, with all power concentrated at the top, but an umbrella, spreading ever wider and thinner to contain within its bounds the swirl of politics among many organizations and factions that could eventually form the basis of a multi-party, proto-democratic polity." The Party faces great difficulty in sustaining its membership. In important decisions in local communities, it is the person who can bring jobs who has the clout, not the Party hack. I recently heard a Chinese diplomat react to this assessment of the Party, starting his rebuttal with "But, but. . . !" I wanted to tell him I agreed only with the "but, but" part of his statement, though I would spell those "buts" with two "t"s. The Party still has two capabilities: to butt heads and to be the butt of some of the best jokes told in China today. The Chinese diplomat would not, I suspect, have found my play on words amusing—or at least not have felt free to show it. Even that could soon change.

We in the United States do not like all we see in China today. We may not like all that we see as change continues there: greater crime, new forms of corruption in a country where corruption seems to have been invented, greed and conspicuous consumption that may rival the West. We are certain to continue to dislike the way the Chinese people treat each other. Not even the Japanese treated the Chinese like they mistreat each other.

However, regardless of our likes or dislikes, we in the West must remain more relevant to China itself than to the waning Communist Party. We need better to understand China and what is happening there. We must strive not for only economic and cultural influence in China but also for the ability to consult regularly and seriously with the Chinese government on things that matter to Asia and the world. Beijing must be convinced that its interests are served by such consultations and cooperation. We want further successes like those we had in the early 1990s, when China curbed its exports to Iraq as we asked, agreed to alter its policies on export of ballistic missiles, and finally, after more than two decades of refusal, acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We currently want Beijing actively engaged in the ASEAN Regional Forum, as that body works

to lead China to be more transparent about its military modernization and to undertake confidence-building measures to reassure neighbors about that modernization. We want Chinese help both up front and behind the scenes as we try to solve the problems on the Korean peninsula, where China has better influence and more interests than anyone else.

More broadly, we do not want twenty years from now to have to explain to our grandchildren how we in the United States grew so far apart from that awakening giant of Asia; how we could not find a way to bridge the gap, to solve the (admittedly very difficult) problems; how we failed to consult, understand, and conceivably even influence military developments for that huge armed force; how we failed to be a part of Chinese strategic thinking; how we lost our opportunities to be vitally engaged in the biggest market and largest economy on Earth. The hardest thing for me to explain will be how I, first as a senior naval officer and then in my work on Sino-American relations, failed to convince others that to consider China an adversary was a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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Samuel Eliot Morison Supplemental Scholarship

The Director of Naval History has established a \$3,000 supplemental scholarship in honor of the late Rear Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, USNR, an eminent naval and maritime historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author. The scholarship, intended to pay for expenses related to research, travel, and the purchase of books, is awarded to a selected active-duty, unrestricted line, U.S. naval officer (grades O-2 through O-5) who is pursuing graduate study in history, international relations, or a closely related field. The objective is to promote the study of seapower in the context of the American political-military decision-making process.

Officers wishing to compete for the scholarship for the 1997-1998 school year should submit a letter of application, via their commanding officer, to the Senior Historian, Naval Historical Center, 901 M Street, S.E., Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., 20374-5060. The application should identify the graduate program and detail relevant qualifications.