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ARTICLES

REVIEWS

The Importance of Diplomacy

Dr. Chi Wang

For this special edition of the Washington Journal of Modern China, we are highlighting the vital role diplomats have played in the development of U.S.-China relations. In light of current bilateral tensions and increasing hostility between the U.S. and China, it is useful to reflect on past challenges the countries have faced and how strong diplomacy, engagement, and communication have allowed the U.S. and China to overcome these hurdles. When tensions are at their worst or unexpected roadblocks occur, it is the strength of diplomatic ties that allow the two countries to find a path forward.

In my nearly 50 years working for the U.S. government[1] — teaching at the Foreign Service Institute and as head of the Chinese and Korean Section of the Library of Congress — and then in my role as president of the U.S.-China Policy Foundation, I have had the great honor of meeting almost every U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China and PRC Ambassador to the U.S. Before normalization, I also stayed engaged with the heads of the Liaison Offices in both capitals.

Through these interactions, I saw firsthand the dedication, passion, and effort that went into the role of ambassador and how these individuals helped shape the course of U.S.-China relations. From my

[1] Dr. Chi Wang spent nearly fifty years working at the Library of Congress, where he oversaw the development of the Library's Chinese collection. He served as the assistant head of the Chinese and Korean Section from 1966 to 1975, when he was appointed head of the Chinese and Korean Section. He served in this position until his retirement in 2004. Wang is the president of the U.S.-China Policy Foundation and has played an active role in the promotion of U.S.-China relations since the 1960s.

experience, the best ambassadors are those who truly understand the scope of their mission. Their job is not just to represent their country's policies abroad, but also to build bridges and forge connections with their host country's leaders and people. They must strike a difficult balance between asserting their home country's goals and gaining their host country's trust so they will retain access during difficult times. They also must be able to use the relationships they build to paint an accurate picture of their host country's goals and motivations to send back home to policymakers. In order to be successful, there must be a true sense that the ambassador is striving to build positive ties and improve overall bilateral relations.

In the pages of this journal, both U.S. and Chinese diplomats will offer insight into their tenures as ambassador. They will outline the most difficult challenges they faced, highlight their greatest successes, and explain what their experiences taught them both about diplomacy and about the U.S.-China relationship as a whole. I have known most of the authors since well before their tenures as ambassadors. Some, like Ambassador J. Stapleton Roy, I even had the deep pleasure of having as my student. They all do credit to the role of ambassador and their words, taken together, paint a deep picture of U.S.-China relations and diplomacy.

Twenty-five years ago, I joined two former diplomats — the late Ambassadors John H. Holdridge (1921–2001) and Arthur Hummel, Jr. (1920–2001) — in founding the U.S.-China Policy Foundation. Throughout their careers, they embraced the role of diplomacy and engagement. After seeing how international incidents had stalled U.S.-China relations in the past, however, they feared official diplomacy might again face periods of weakness. Because of this, they sought to build unofficial ties between the two countries to serve as an anchor during any future difficulties. On the occasion of this special anniversary, it feels appropriate to honor their legacy by featuring the

good work of diplomats.

Hopefully, these articles will serve as an example to readers of the power of strong diplomacy and encourage policymakers to reinvigorate the diplomatic service. As strong rhetoric, tweeting, and "wolf warriors" gain prevalence, only serving to increase tensions further, it is time to look back, reflect, and reset U.S.-China diplomacy so the two countries can find common ground, effectively address areas of conflict, and build positive groundwork for future progress.

(L to R): Amb. Arthur Hummel, Jr., Amb. John H. Holdridge, Amb. James Sasser, Dr. Chi Wang

A Conversation with J. Stapleton Roy

Phone interview with the U.S.-China Policy Foundation, June 15, 2020. Edited for clarity and formatting.

J. Stapleton Roy served as the 5th U.S. Ambassador to China (1991–1995) under Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. His diplomatic postings also included Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore, Bangkok, Jakarta, and Moscow. From 1999–2001, he was the Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research. Roy served in the U.S. Foreign Service for 45 years, ending with the rank of Career Ambassador.

To start, could you talk a little bit about your childhood in China?

My parents were educational missionaries in China. I was born in the mid-1930s in Nanjing, where my father was a teacher at the University of Nanking. A year after I was born, my family returned to the United States for a two year furlough, during which my father got a master's degree from Princeton University.

We returned to China for another seven years in 1938, when I was three years old. As a result, my earliest memories as a child were of growing up in China. I had no memory of my two years in the United States.

At the time of our return to China, the Sino-Japanese War was already underway. When the Japanese occupied Nanjing in 1937, my father's university had moved to temporary quarters in Chengdu, which was the capital of Sichuan Province. And that's where we spent the next seven years, under wartime conditions in China.

Many of my earliest memories were of Japanese bombing raids on Chengdu. For the first several years, these occurred in the daytime. But, by the early 1940s, bombing raids occurred at night. When the sirens went off, we had to walk to public bombing shelters until the

raid was over. Eventually, we built a dugout in our backyard, which made it easier to get to a shelter in time.

The university area, which sheltered a number of refugee universities from China's coastal provinces, was located across the river from the walled city of Chengdu and was not a prime target for the Japanese. Nevertheless, the bombs fell close enough to shatter windows and knock floorboards loose in our house.

Although Chengdu was the provincial capital, the wartime capital of China was located in Chongqing,[2] which was several hundred miles away. Chengdu had a population of about 450,000 people. Conditions were very primitive. There were no paved roads. Inside the city walls some of the main streets had cobblestones, but not the smaller streets. Rickshaws were the only means of public transportation, since three-wheeled pedicabs had not yet reached the interior of China. In the mountains, you could hire sedan chairs consisting of a cloth sheet slung between two long bamboo poles with a carrier at each end.

The house where we lived for most of our seven years had no heating or plumbing. Our water came from a well in the courtyard, supplemented by a cistern that collected rain water. Our toilets consisted of seats over large wooden buckets that had to be emptied into a cesspool. Electricity was sporadic and was only available several times a week. So, we depended heavily on kerosene lamps and candles.

The climate of Chengdu was mild, with a light sprinkling of snow maybe every two years. The summers, however, were ferociously hot. For two summers, we spent a month living at Buddhist temples high in the mountains to escape the heat. Traveling to the temples was an adventure since there were no bridges over the numerous canals that crossed the Chengdu plain. We traveled in charcoal burning trucks that carried large boards in the back that were used to bridge the

[2] During the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), the government of the Republic of China was forced to move their capital out of Nanjing as the Japanese continued to take over Chinese territory. After a brief move to Wuhan, Chongqing remained the capital for the rest of the war.

canals.

Life in Chengdu changed enormously with the arrival in 1944 of a large contingent of U.S. Army Air Corps troops to staff four airfields, which had been built around Chengdu for long-range bombing of Japan. These airfields became the targets for the Japanese nighttime bombing raids. So, we no longer had to go to the air raid shelters or dugouts.

The troops brought with them plentiful supplies of chocolate bars, chewing gum, comic books, and other luxuries that we had only dreamed of before. The foreign missionaries in Chengdu all opened their homes to the young troops, who welcomed opportunities to enjoy some home cooking and family life. My parents let my brother and me ride out on the back of motorcycles to the tent cities housing the troops, to spend the night with the troops and watch the air operations.

The one international school in Chengdu, run by the Canadians, had closed in 1941. So, just as I was ready to enter first grade, we had to switch to homeschooling by missionary parents. That continued for four years. Since these were educational missionaries, the quality of the schooling was first rate and I had no difficulty fitting into American schools on my return. When the war in Europe ended in May 1945, it became possible to travel to the United States, which we did that summer for a three-year furlough, during which my father earned a PhD in philosophy from Princeton.

We returned to Nanjing in September 1948, just in time for the final portion of the Chinese civil war. My brother and I were in the Shanghai American School in May 1949 when the Communist forces fought their way into the city, just as we were taking our final exams. A month later, we were able to get permission from the Communist authorities to rejoin our parents in Nanjing.

We arrived just in time for a small private July 4th reception the American ambassador hosted in his residence for the very small American community. This was my first exposure to diplomatic life, which was so different from that of missionaries. We spent the next

year being homeschooled in Nanjing.

With the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, China's capital was moved from Nanjing to Beijing. This precipitated a mass movement of foreign embassies to Beijing by those governments that recognized the new Communist government, leaving only a tiny American community in Nanjing. The American diplomats had all left China in the fall of 1949.[3]

When the Korean War broke out at the end of June in 1950, my parents immediately decided to send my brother and me back to the United States. So, the two of us departed in July 1950. Our parents remained in Nanjing, only to be expelled nine months later after house arrest and a public trial.

Before you were U.S. Ambassador to China, you were posted at the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing.[4] What was it like to be posted in China during this transition period and to participate in the secret negotiations leading up to normalization?

It was an exciting and difficult period.

During the eight months I spent in the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing, our ability to function as a representative office for the United States government was very restricted. The only Chinese government office we could deal with was the American and Oceanian Affairs Department in the Foreign Ministry. We weren't allowed to call on other Chinese government ministries. We were invited to some diplomatic receptions, but we were treated in protocol terms as ranking with nongovernmental organizations, who were listed below

[3] After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the United States kept their diplomatic recognition with the Republic of China (Nationalist) government, which had retreated to Taiwan. Because of this, instead of moving to Beijing, the American diplomats left China completely. Ambassador John Leighton Stuart (1876–1962) was recalled from China in August 1949.

[4] The U.S. Liaison Office was opened after President Nixon's 1972 trip to China. The Chinese government opened a similar office in Washington, DC. These offices functioned in place of embassies, since official diplomatic relations had still not been established.

diplomats and international organizations. We were, however, assigned apartments in the diplomatic compound.

The travel restrictions applied to diplomats were applied to us as well. This meant that to travel outside of Beijing, we had to register the details of the proposed travel two days in advance. I was used to this from having served in Moscow.

So, you got all the downsides of being an embassy, but none of the perks?

That's basically it.

I'll just briefly touch on the negotiations. The problem we had was that these negotiations were so secret nobody in the Liaison Office knew that we were conducting them except for Ambassador Woodcock[5] and me. That complicated the problem of preserving secrecy.

We began the negotiations with the Chinese Foreign Minister, but then, when we got to an advanced stage, we shifted to dealing with Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping. The location then shifted to the Great Hall of the People. Each time, Deng met us in a different room in the Great Hall. In some cases, we had to sneak in through the back door to avoid anybody seeing us entering the Great Hall and raising questions about what we were doing.

Aside from the importance of the negotiations, the human factor was also interesting. When we assembled the entire staff of the Liaison Office on a Saturday morning to listen to the statement by President Carter announcing the successful conclusion of the negotiations, I think it's fair to say that, while the staff was astonished at hearing the announcement, there was also some resentment that a matter of such significance had been going on behind their backs.

I imagine it was difficult communicating with DC during this

[5] Leonard Woodcock (1911–2001) served as the Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office from 1977–1979. When official diplomatic relations between the U.S. and China were established, he became the first U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China (1949–1981).

period.

It was so secret we couldn't use normal State Department channels to communicate with Washington. So, we had to use special intelligence channels to send our cables back to the President and Secretary of State.

Only six people in Washington, actually, were officially aware of what was going on. The remarkable thing is that we began the negotiations on July 5th and concluded them in the middle of December, and the secret was kept that entire time. The U.S. government is usually not very good at keeping such secrets.

That was an exciting period because the negotiations themselves were, of course, of great significance since China was an important country. The complicating factor was our relationship with the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan. The Republic of China was an ally of ours, and we had friendly relations with the ROC government. And yet, if the negotiations were successful, we would have to break diplomatic relations with them, end the security treaty, and remove all of our troops from Taiwan. These were not easy issues to manage. Frankly, to this day, I admire President Carter for being willing to take the political flack that predictably resulted.

Before we began the secret talks, we had actually briefed the very top leadership in Congress, both Democratic and Republican, and both the House and the Senate, on our negotiating position. We informed them that we would, if successful, be breaking relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan, ending the U.S.-ROC security treaty, and removing our troops from Taiwan. They responded that we were doing the right thing, but that they would probably criticize us when we did it, which tells you something about how Congress behaves.

Basically, this was a thrilling moment in history because our relationship with China was a very important factor in the Cold War. I had been serving in the American embassy in Moscow when Dr. Kissinger showed up in Beijing in July 1971, followed seven months later by the visit of President Nixon. Of course, this was a devastating blow to the Soviet Union. It completely changed my work environment

in Moscow. When I first got to Moscow, the Soviet Foreign Ministry wouldn't permit me to meet with any Soviet Asian specialists. After the Kissinger trip to Beijing, they kept calling me in to meet with their Asian specialists. It really was the turning point in the Cold War. And it was the moment when we regained our psychological assurance, which was an important factor.

What is the accomplishment you are most proud of as a diplomat?

Participating in the successful negotiations to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China is the accomplishment I'm most proud to be associated with.

It was the culmination of a six-year effort, under three U.S. presidents and a succession of Chinese leaders, to find a mutually satisfactory method of handling the Taiwan issue, which was a problem left over from the Chinese civil war, and rendered even more difficult by the two decades of enmity between Washington and Beijing that resulted from the Korean War.

Neither side was able to get their preferred outcome. We wanted to retain some sort of an official relationship with Taiwan, and we couldn't. And Beijing did not want us to continue arms sales to Taiwan, and we would not agree to that. So, neither side was completely happy with the outcome, but it actually worked very well.

The framework created by the agreement to establish U.S.-PRC diplomatic relations in January 1979 lowered tensions in the Taiwan Strait, permitted Taiwan to democratize and prosper, and facilitated the emergence of vibrant economic and trade relations between mainland China and Taiwan. So, for 40 years, essentially, the framework that we negotiated in 1978 enabled Taiwan to reach a per capita income level of European countries, while tensions have remained largely low in the Taiwan Strait area.

So, I would say that's a policy that worked out pretty well.

Moving ahead to your time as U.S. Ambassador to China, what are some of the key historical events that shaped your tenure?

First and foremost was the lingering effect of the repression of the Tiananmen demonstrations in June 1989.

The first President Bush had spent a year as head of the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing, from 1974–75, and had formed personal friendships with many top Chinese leaders. So, when he became president, he attached great importance to trying to improve, even further, U.S. relations with Beijing. But the Tiananmen events made this impossible.

The Democrats had seized on this issue to lambaste President Bush on the one foreign policy issue where developments in Beijing had made him vulnerable. They knew that he had a good grasp of foreign policy and, generally, they couldn't find fault with his handling of other foreign policy questions. So, the Democrats seized on the Tiananmen events as a tool to pummel a Republican administration over China.

As a result, many government-funded cooperative programs with China, such as a newly established and flourishing U.S.-China business school in Dalian, had been terminated. Government departments were not willing to risk having their funds cut by an angry Congress if they used some of their funds for cooperation with China. So, you had a wholesale abandonment of very useful programs for us.

At the time, we had cooperative programs with the People's Liberation Army, which involved training and the provision of non-cutting-edge military technology. All of these programs were frozen. Moreover, the U.S. government refused to return to China the military equipment we were upgrading in the United States for them. China still owned the equipment and, just because we were angry with them, it was no excuse for not returning it.

Senior U.S. government officials were afraid to visit China because of the vicious congressional and media attacks to which they would be subjected if they ventured on a trip to China. These are just some examples of the constraints on the relationship when I arrived in China as the U.S. Ambassador in August 1991.

The second important factor was the disintegration of the Soviet

Union toward the end of 1991, just a few months after I arrived as U.S. Ambassador. In fact, I presented my credentials as Ambassador to Chinese President Yang Shangkun[6] while the 1991 August 19–22 coup against Gorbachev was taking place in Moscow.[7] It turned out that we both had been watching these developments on CNN, and we spent much of my call on him discussing the events in Moscow.

The collapse of the Soviet Union had a fundamental impact on U.S.-China relations. President Nixon's breakthrough to China with Chairman Mao had been made possible by the shared concerns of China and the United States over the threat posed to both countries by the Soviet Union. This common interest had been the driving force behind the U.S. desire to normalize relations with the People's Republic of China and to seek positive development of the relationship after we established diplomatic relations with Beijing in January of 1979.

So, the collapse of the Soviet Union had two consequences. One was an actual consequence and the other was a potential consequence. The actual one, was the elimination of the Soviet threat at a moment when the U.S.-China relationship was already under severe strain. It removed the motivating force, in American eyes, for seeking to improve relations with Beijing. It took us longer than it should have to overcome this problem. And this was compounded by the fact that when President Bush was not reelected, we ended up with a series of presidents who lacked experience in foreign and national security affairs.

The potential problem was the possibility that the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union would convince the U.S. government that China would be the next communist regime to collapse as well. The June 1989 events in Tiananmen Square had illustrated for many Americans the vulnerabilities of the communist

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[6] Yang Shangkun (1907–1998) served as president of the People's Republic of China from 1988–1993 under paramount leader Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997).

[7] The August 1991 coup was a failed effort to oust President Mikhail Gorbachev (b. 1931). However, not long after, Gorbachev resigned and the Soviet Union dissolved.

system in China. So, this could have resulted in a U.S. policy of seeking to promote the collapse of communism in China, instead of trying to improve relations with a regime that was going to continue for the indefinite future.

I believed such a conclusion was unwarranted. I was aware of the vulnerabilities in the communist system in China, but my analysis suggested that the security forces in China remained loyal to the state and could prevent such an outcome. As a result, one of my first actions as ambassador was to send a telegram to Washington cautioning against jumping to the conclusion that China's communist system was headed for collapse as part of the general downfall of communist systems in Europe. Fortunately, President Bush shared this view and the potential problem did not become a real one.

What was the turning point?

The turning point took much longer than it should have. The United States became so ideological in looking at China that it couldn't see what was going on there.

During the three-year period from Tiananmen until 1992, the reform and openness policies had been put on hold and hardline elements in the communist party had gained influence in the Chinese government. However, in the fall of 1992, at the Fourteenth Communist Party Congress, the hardliners were routed and liberal elements were strengthened. So, in 1992, China reaffirmed that it would continue on the path of reform and openness.[8]

The American business community saw this immediately. The U.S. government paid no attention to our reporting from Beijing and continued to act as though nothing had changed in China. The U.S. media also failed to capture the significance of the Fourteenth Party Congress.

[8] China's reform and opening up policies were initially announced in 1978 at the Third Plenum by Deng Xiaoping. In 1992, Deng went on a Southern Tour, promoting his economic policies. During the Fourteenth Party Congress later that year, the Party recommitted to reform and opening.

The result was that — for the only time in my diplomatic career — I encountered a situation where every American who came to China in 1993 was literally shocked to find conditions in China much better than how they were being reported in the United States. It was truly stunning. Here was a free press that was reporting on China in such a distorted manner that it mirrored the way the controlled Soviet press had covered my country when I was serving in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

I would meet regularly, as ambassador, with the American press corps in Beijing every few weeks. We would have long discussions about what was going on in China. And I raised this with them. I said, look, you are the best and the brightest in the journalistic world. That's why you're here in Beijing. And, yet, your reporting is conveying an inaccurate vision of what's going on in China.

And so, they said, well, what are we supposed to do? If we write a positive story on China, either it's not carried or it's buried on page 26. And if we write a negative story on China, it gets front page coverage. So, in other words, the incentive structure built into the way our press functions, resulted in distorted reporting by a free press. It's something worth thinking about.

What was the most difficult challenge you faced?

One of the most difficult challenges you face as an ambassador is correcting misconceptions on the part of your host government, or your own government, concerning the motivations, intentions, and circumstances of the other.

I mentioned this problem I had in 1993. What I discovered was, the only people who came to Beijing and weren't shocked to discover conditions so much better than they thought, were U.S. government officials who would come to China and learn nothing about what was going on in China. In one case, a senior official came to China and left thinking China was exactly the way the distorted views in Washington portrayed it. And then he left the government and came back six months later and came into my office saying, my god, things in China are so remarkable. And my question was, why is it that as a U.S.

government official you couldn't see what is obvious, but when you leave the government you're able to see it.

That's what happens when you put on ideological lenses that distort your view of what you're looking at. And that can be a big problem for us in looking at other countries. But it can also be a problem if you're dealing with a foreign government that has a completely distorted view of what your intentions are and what you are trying to do.

And so, an ambassador has to try to correct such misperceptions, both in your own government and in the other government. And that can be very challenging.

What are some of the key lessons you learned as ambassador?

Well, I've been reflecting on that and, to boil it down, I would say that there are several requirements for an ambassador to be successful.

First, you have to gain the confidence of the host country that you are a reliable channel for communication between the two governments.

There's always a competition. In other words, your own government can either convey a message through you, or they can call in the foreign ambassador and convey the message through that ambassador. That depends on which they consider the more reliable channel. And so, an ambassador has to try to convince the host government that he is not only utterly reliable in accurately conveying the views of his or her government, but that he is also an accurate reporter of the views of the Chinese government to Washington.

Secondly, your influence will be enhanced if you are seen by the host country as sincerely dedicated to improving bilateral relations.

You can convey some very tough, nasty messages if the other government, nevertheless, believes you really are interested in improving relations. Whereas, if all they see is that you're out to score points by banging up on them, then they won't like you. They'll cut you out. They won't include you in meetings. They won't use you as a channel for communication.

And, thirdly, you can only be effective to the extent that you retain the confidence of your own government concerning your reliability.

In other words, if your government suspects that you are not saying to the Chinese what they want you to say, then they'll convey it in some other fashion. And that undermines the authority of the ambassador.

So, those are some of the lessons I've learned by serving as ambassador in a number of different countries.

How would you describe the changes you have witnessed in the U.S.-China relationship through the years?

Well, it's really quite remarkable. Essentially, we've been through four different phases in our relationship with China.

The hopeful early period extended from 1971–1989. This is when the relationship was based on joint concern about the Soviet Union.

It included the eight years leading up to the establishment of diplomatic relations — Henry Kissinger showed up in Beijing in July of 1971 and we didn't get diplomatic relations until January 1, 1979. And then there were ten years trying — essentially starting from ground zero — to establish a normal type of relationship with China. And that includes trade relationships, educational exchanges, the other components of ties between two major countries. One of which was the most developed and powerful country in the world, that's us. And the other was China, struggling to emerge from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution.

In the first phase we had a strong sense of why we wanted to cooperate with China — because of the Soviet threat. And that was an important factor that enabled us to overcome all sorts of obstacles in the way of getting a cooperative relationship between two countries with such different political, economic, and social systems, with many substantive areas of difference, and many important areas where we wanted to cooperate together.

The second phase extended from 1989, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, right up until the second term of President Clinton,

toward the end of the 1990s. This was a confused transition period, caused by the extreme damage to China's image in the United States resulting from the suppression of the Tiananmen demonstrations in 1989, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, which removed the Soviet threat that was the foundation for bilateral cooperation.

This period was marked by a lack of consensus in Washington over how to deal with China. During much of this period, U.S. policies toward China were driven by domestic factors, such as human rights concerns and ideological opposition to China's communist system, which blinded U.S. officials to China's restoration of reform and openness policies in 1992 that led to China's burst of extraordinarily rapid growth.

The American business community, as I mentioned before, unlike the U.S. government, immediately spotted the significance of this change and in 1993 began flocking to China to explore business opportunities.

Beginning with President Clinton's second term, in 1997, the U.S. government belatedly began to recognize that we needed to deal with China as a major power. Its economy was expanding rapidly, and we needed to deal with it realistically rather than through ideological lenses.

So, we had this period of, what I would call, a confused lack of direction in our relations with China.

The third phase extended from the late 1990s until the global financial crisis in 2008 at the end of the second Bush administration. During this period, China gained entry into the World Trade Organization, at a time when U.S. foreign policy attention was shifting to the Middle East as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States followed by extended U.S military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Washington recognized the importance of dealing with China as a major power that offered significant business opportunities and whose cooperation on terrorist related matters was valuable.

I would call the third phase a sort of normal phase in U.S.-China relations. China was a major country. We were dealing with it as a

major country. We were no longer using ideological lenses to look at it.

The factors that led us to support China's entry into the World Trade Organization were not the idea that we could change China, but that entry into the World Trade Organization would enhance business opportunities for the U.S. business community in China. That was the driving force on World Trade Organization entry. And, in fact, it turned out to be exactly that.

The fourth phase began with the global financial crisis in 2008 and extends up to the present. During this period, U.S. self-confidence was damaged by the economic consequences of the financial crisis, which enabled the size of China's GDP to converge with that of the United States more rapidly than expected. People had thought that China's economy wouldn't catch up with us until the end of the 2020s. Yet, after the global financial crisis, China's economy first passed the size of Japan's and now, in purchasing power terms, is already larger than ours. Although, in standard terms, it's still not quite as large as ours.

The financial crisis fostered an exaggerated impression of the United States and Europe as declining powers soon to be overtaken by China. This enhanced U.S. anxiety over the erosion of its position as the world's sole superpower. As a result, American policymakers began to see China's rapid rise as posing a fundamental threat to U.S. interests that undercut the rationale for continued cooperation with China.

And that's the state we find ourselves in now. I attribute a great deal of this to a loss of U.S. self-confidence. We know that we're not managing our domestic affairs well. We see China continuing to respond better than we can to everything from the financial crisis in 2008 to the current COVID-19 crisis, where China's measures have been more effective in curbing the pandemic than the measures that we have taken in the United States.

So, it's this loss of self-confidence in the United States, which we cover up with bluster, that is causing us to see China as a bigger threat than it actually poses to us. It's not that China wouldn't be a threat if we end up in a hostile relationship with China, but what we're failing to see is,

we don't have to have a hostile relationship with China.

If we were prepared to give more attention to how we can expand cooperation with China, we would find that a more powerful China is not necessarily a greater threat to the United States. And that's what's completely missing in our mental apparatus at the present time.

What advice would you give American and Chinese diplomats working on this vital relationship?

Well, I would just give four propositions.

One, avoid inflicting more damage on the bilateral relationship pending the outcome of the presidential election in November this year.

We have an administration, essentially, without any policies. It's the only time in my long time in the U.S. government, or associated with the U.S. government, that I have seen a complete absence of a coherent policy process. So, now is not the time to try to make fundamental improvements, or to inflict fundamental harm, on the bilateral relationship. We need to see what comes out of the presidential elections. And this applies to both countries.

Second, each side should reflect on how their own country's behavior may be influencing the behavior of the other.

This is the area where our intelligence community is least successful. Because, in many cases, a foreign country's behavior may be a reaction to what you are doing. But if the intelligence community points that out, it's seen by government officials as criticism of their policy. And, therefore, the intelligence community won't point it out. And that means, when China reacts to something we're doing, we blame them for doing something bad toward us, without seeing our hand in the way that China's behaving.

China makes the same mistakes. It's showing all the characteristics of a rising power. It's arrogant, it throws its weight around, and it expresses exaggerated ambitions, etc., etc. We behaved that way. So did the Germans, the Japanese, and the French when they were rising

powers. This is what I would call standard behavior for rising powers. And, yet, many people don't understand how your behavior affects the other side's behavior.

Point number three: consider that no country or combination of countries is likely to be successful in dominating the world.

This is a phony issue. I read articles everyday about how China's goal is to dominate the world. The United States came closest to achieving such a position following the collapse of the Soviet Union. And we demonstrated that we could not achieve our political goals through reliance on military power alone, for which we paid a high cost in degraded infrastructure in the United States and our failure to address our own domestic problems.

So, the idea that one country can dominate the world is simply not accurate. And, yet, much of the discourse on China is motivated by the view that China's trying to dominate the world and, therefore, we've got to block them from achieving that ambition.

Point number four: remember that a stable international system will be impossible if the United States and China are incapable of identifying common interests on which they can cooperate.

In other words, we have an enormous responsibility to the world at large not to mishandle our bilateral relationship in ways that contribute to an unstable international system.

What is your hope for the U.S.-China relationship moving forward?

My four and a half decades as an American diplomat have reinforced my view that there is nothing preordained about the future of U.S.-China relations. We can have good relations with China. We can have bad relations with China. Both are attainable, in my opinion. Under proper leadership, both countries have the capability to avoid unnecessary confrontations and to develop areas of common interest.

China is displaying well-known characteristics of rising powers. Instead of overreacting, the United States is well positioned to accommodate China where it needs to be accommodated and to hold

firm where this is necessary to protect vital U.S. interests. It should neither demonize China nor grant it special favors.

Both countries will benefit from a stable relationship, which is attainable if both countries focus on influencing the external behavior of the other, which is the proper sphere for foreign policy, and restrain impulses to interfere in the internal affairs of the other.

In other words, I think that we have enormous scope for either having a good relationship with China or a bad relationship with China. And, it doesn't just rest on us. I am convinced that there are people on the Chinese side who look at things in a very similar fashion. They see the advantages for China in having a good relationship with the United States. And they see the costs for China of having a bad relationship with us. We have to somehow find a way to strengthen the hand of those forces in China. And, to do that, we have to offer something to China that can attract them. And that's what we're failing to do at the present time.

Finally, are there any other stories or personal anecdotes from your time as a diplomat you would like to share?

Well, I'll tell you one story, just because it illustrates the perils of being an ambassador.

As I arrived in China to assume my new position, the Chinese government had refused a visa to none other than Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi. During my first call on the Chinese foreign minister, I raised the issue with him. I was not doing this on instructions from Washington. I did this on my own.

And I argued that, while her visit might entail some problems given her strong position on human rights in China, on balance I felt it would create more problems to block her from visiting. For whatever reason, the Chinese relented and issued the visa.

Toward the end of her visit, Congresswoman Pelosi returned to her hotel, claiming she needed to take a rest. Instead, accompanied by a television cameraman, she went to Tiananmen Square, where she unfurled a poster critical of human rights in China with a television

camera marking the event. She then departed from China.

The next day, I went to the Beijing airport to welcome former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who was visiting China for a few days. A Chinese vice foreign minister had gone to the airport to greet him. When he spotted me, he became apoplectic with anger, shouting at me that I had embarrassed the Chinese government and the foreign minister personally.

I tried to calm him down, but every few minutes he would again erupt into anger. I stuck to my position. I said that China had done the right thing and that we should be planning the next visit by Congresswoman Pelosi. This did not ease his mind.

Fortunately, Dr. Kissinger arrived in the nick of time and went with the vice foreign minister to the guest house riding in his car, while I followed in my own car. When we arrived at the guest house, Dr. Kissinger leapt out of the car, pulled me aside, and asked why the vice foreign minister was erupting in anger every few minutes? Apparently, the vice foreign minister had been unable to control his anger even when riding with Dr. Kissinger. So, I briefed him on what had happened.

This was not, I might say, an ideal way to begin your tour in China as an ambassador. But, two years later, I was able to get Congresswoman Pelosi back into China for a second visit that went smoothly. So, all's well that ends well.

Amb. Roy (right) speaks with Zbigniew Brzezinski (1928–2017) at the U.S.-China Policy Foundation's 2012 gala dinner. Dr. Brzezinski was President Carter's National Security Advisor and played a key role in normalization.

A Conversation with James Sasser

Phone interview with the U.S.-China Policy Foundation, July 14, 2020. Edited for clarity and formatting.

James Sasser served as the 6th U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China (1996–1999) under President Bill Clinton. He previously served as the U.S. Senator from Tennessee (1977–1995) and chaired the Senate Budget Committee (1989–1995).

What are some of the key historical events that shaped your time as Ambassador?

The first key event was when I'd only been at my post for about 90 days and the Chinese started firing rockets into the Taiwan Strait toward Taiwan. President Clinton sent two carrier battle groups down into that area.[9] And I realized that we didn't have anybody to talk to. The Chinese and ourselves were just like two ships passing in the night. We weren't really exchanging any information and we were sending mistaken signals to each other.

When that crisis subsided, I went to Washington immediately and met with the vice president, the secretary of state, and the national security advisor and set up some better lines of communication between ourselves and the Chinese. National Security Advisor Tony Lake came to China and met with his Chinese counterpart for two days and they explained to each other what their foreign policy

[9] In March 1996, the Chinese fired ballistic missiles into the Taiwan Strait and announced military exercises. In response, the U.S. deployed the *USS Independence* and the *USS Nimitz*. This all happened in the lead up to the 1996 elections in Taiwan. Many analysts see the 1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis and the aftermath as a turning point in the U.S.-China relationship.

objectives were. And, thereafter, we had a more reasoned relationship and had an open line of communication between the White House and operation lines of the Chinese government.

What was another key event?

Of course, when we bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and went through all the subsequent turmoil.[10] Chinese assaulted our embassy in Beijing in retribution.

When the White House first alerted me, we didn't know who had done it. We didn't know whether we had bombed the embassy, or the British had made a mistake and bombed it, or whether it was some sort of terrorist operation. Then I learned later that day it was an American bomber that had bombed it. And that's when all the problems started.

I went immediately to the embassy. This was on a weekend, and we had a skeleton crew there. All the marines were gone except three or four. And then the demonstrators arrived that afternoon and surrounded the embassy. So we couldn't get out for three or four days.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry wouldn't answer my telephone calls. Then, I was summoned to the Foreign Ministry. I told them I couldn't go because I couldn't get through the mob surrounding the embassy. And they said, well, you can climb over the back fence into the Irish embassy and we'll send an unmarked police car to bring you over here. This made me angry. I said, I'm not coming to the Foreign Ministry until I can come in my car, with my flag flying, and you guarantee my personal safety. They called me back in about an hour and said, well, the foreign minister will read his remarks to you over the telephone. You won't need to come. He called me and chewed me

[10] On May 7, 1999, U.S. bombs hit the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia as part of the Kosovo War.

out in a very tough way.

And I was in contact with Washington all the time. And so, over a period of four days we got the thing resolved, at least temporarily. But in the interim, they burned the consul general's house in Chengdu. And there were some demonstrators in Shanghai against our consulate there. And there were some demonstrations in Guangzhou against the consulate there.

And that came just after I had escorted the premier, Zhu Rongji, to Washington, meeting with the president, the vice president, and the secretary of state.[11] And I had just gotten back for about, I guess, a week, when we bombed their embassy in Belgrade. We had had very good relations, up to that point. Then, of course, they went back in the tank temporarily.

But, I felt like over the period I had been there, over three years, that we had solidified and built up the relationship to a point that we'd get over this problem. And we did. I guess about two weeks after the assault of our embassy, I went over to Zhongnanhai and met with President Jiang Zemin. And he was very courteous, very thoughtful. He inquired about my wife, how she fared during all this. Then the secretary of state came over and worked out a financial package to compensate them for the loss of life and for the physical damage.

What is the accomplishment you are most proud of as a diplomat?

I'm most proud of the fact that we opened up. We improved the relationship between the two countries substantially. During my

[11] Premier Zhu Rongji was welcomed to the White House by President Clinton on April 8, 1999. During the welcome remarks, Premier Zhu said, "Our two countries might have some disagreements or differences. But I think only friends who can discuss and resolve their differences are good friends; and only true friends are sincere friends, are friends who can tell each other in the most sincere and open manner." (full remarks: https://bit.ly/3m3NJtt)

period there, President Jiang Zemin came to the United States to the White House and toured the U.S.[12] That was the first time in over a decade. And then the Chinese premier also followed him in about six weeks. He also toured the U.S., went to the White House, met with the president, the secretary of state, etc. They toured the U.S., going to New York, California, and various other places.

And then President Clinton also had a return visit and came to China and stayed for a number of days.[13] It was the longest overseas visit to a single country he made during his eight years as president. He came to Beijing, Shanghai, a number of other Chinese cities. I guess the highlight of it was seeing the stars and stripes flag flying over the Forbidden City along with the Chinese flag.

What are some of the key lessons you learned as Ambassador?

I learned it's always important to respect your interlocutor, your counterpart in the government to which you're accredited to. That is, respect them and be courteous and truthful with them, even if they're not always the same toward you. It's important to try to develop some sense of trust between your interlocutor and yourself. In my case, it was Yang Jiechi, who later became ambassador to the U.S. and is now, I think, a senior diplomat in the Chinese government.[14]

What are some of the changes you've witnessed in U.S.-China relations?

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[12] President Jiang Zemin traveled to the U.S. from October 27–November 3, 1997. In addition to visiting Washington, DC, he made stops in Boston, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Williamsburg.

[13] President Bill Clinton and his family traveled to China from June 25–July 3, 1998, visiting Beijing, Guilin, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Xi'an.

[14] Yang Jiechi is currently a Politburo member and Director of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission. He previously served as the Chinese Foreign Minister (2007–2013), a State Councilor (2013–2018), and as the Chinese Ambassador to the U.S. (2001–2005).

When I first arrived in China the relationship was not good. We had had an excellent ambassador who preceded me, Stapleton Roy, but it was following the problems with Tiananmen, and Washington was very hostile toward Beijing. I'm sure that put Ambassador Roy in a tough situation. When I arrived, the hostility still existed.

Washington and Beijing worked very hard in that three and a half year period to establish trust and, most importantly, to establish lines of clear communication so there could be no misunderstanding of what the foreign policy of each country was aimed at. So that there would be no misunderstandings, misapprehensions, that sort of thing. I think the most important thing I contributed was working toward getting that basic sense of trust.

And that remained after I left — as long as Jiang Zemin was president and later on under his successor, Hu Jintao. Under Xi Jinping, I think things are going backward. They appear to be more aggressive, less amenable to compromise than they were during my period there. They've gotten back into the old period where they are difficult to deal with. But I'm hopeful that will improve.

What advice would you give to American and Chinese diplomats now?

To American diplomats, I would say be patient, but be forceful on matters of great importance that are of vital interest to the United States. To the Chinese diplomats, I would say to them, don't endanger the great progress China has made over the past 30 years by making miscalculations about where the vital interests of the two countries clash.

What's your hope for the relationship moving forward?

I'm optimistic. I always said, when I was there and after I left, that I was very optimistic about the future of the relationship and I felt it

was the most important bilateral relationship in the world. We had an obligation — the two great powers — to act responsibly, and I was optimistic. I'm still optimistic. I think when the chips are down, both the Chinese and the United States will realize how much there is at stake between the two countries. We've become sort of mutually interdependent in some ways — economically and in other ways. There will always be misunderstandings and tensions. But we need to work together to try to ameliorate those.

We need to work out techniques so that there are not miscalculations and to avoid accidents that can push us over the edge. That's why I'm so concerned about the possibility of military clashes in the South China Sea and other places. It would be inadvertent. For example, when we bombed the embassy in Belgrade, traditionally, that's an act of war. We inadvertently and accidentally killed three of their people at the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. And had we not, at that time, had a solid relationship and a more trusting relationship between the two countries, that could have escalated. You don't want to get into a situation where another accident like that could precipitate a dangerous confrontation.

Are there any other stories you would like to share?

There's one that's sort of funny. When President Jiang Zemin and I went up to Harvard for him to make his speech when he came to the United States, he was apprehensive about going up there because of demonstrations.[15] We arrived and there were massive demonstrations everywhere. When we got off the plane to go up there, he said, you know, I feel like I'm going to take an examination. As if he were

[15] When Jiang Zemin traveled to the U.S. in 1997, he was met with protests in every city he visited. Demonstrations were about human rights and Tibet. This was also the first Chinese presidential visit since the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. (Read more about the speech here: https://bit.ly/3hcpoOw)

nervous.

So, we went up to Harvard and there were thousands of people demonstrating. They had the Boston police out on horses. Then there were counter demonstrations from the Chinese populous there. He went in and made his speech and made a great hit. Very successful. And we came back on the plane and he said, well, did I pass the exam? And I said, Mr. President, you passed it with flying colors.

Amb. Sasser (left) shakes hands with
President (then vice-president) Xi Jinping in 2012.

A Conversation with Zhou Wenzhong

Digital interview with the U.S.-China Policy Foundation, May 2020.
Edited for clarity and formatting.

Zhou Wenzhong served as the Chinese Ambassador to the U.S. (2005–2010) under President Hu Jintao. His long career includes positions as the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs (2003–2005), Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of American affairs (2001–2003), and Chinese Ambassador to Australia (1998–2001) and Barbados (1993–1994). He was also Secretary General of the Boao Forum for Asia (2010–2018).

What are some of the key historical events that shaped your time as Chinese Ambassador to the U.S.?

I was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the United States of America on 24 March 2005. I arrived in Washington, DC on 3 April, a sunny spring day in the U.S. capital. It was the third year into Mr. Hu Jintao's presidency. At the time, the international landscape continued to undergo profound and complex changes. China's overall strength and its international standing continued to rise. China-U.S. relations continued to assume greater strategic and global significance. Cooperation between the two countries was expanding, and so were their differences and frictions to some extent.

That was the general background around the time of my appointment. My first important mission as the new ambassador was to prepare for the first visit to the United States by President Hu Jintao since he came into office. But unexpectedly, the sudden strike of Hurricane Katrina

postponed this mission, and it wasn't completed until 2006.

I presented my credentials to President George W. Bush on the afternoon of 26 May 2005. I conveyed to him greetings from President Hu Jintao. Then I noted that China and the U.S. were two major countries with important influence in the world. A sound and growing China-U.S. relationship was not only in the fundamental interest of the two peoples, but also conducive to peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and the world as a whole. I said that the China-U.S. relationship was faced with important opportunities as well as new challenges, and that the state visit by President Hu in the second half of the year was very important for the steady growth of this relationship. I also stressed that China was ready to work with the U.S. to steadily push forward the constructive and cooperative relationship on the basis of the three China-U.S. joint communiqués.[16]

President Bush said that China was a great country. He and the U.S. government always valued U.S.-China relations, and he was pleased to see the relationship growing in both breadth and depth. As he had noted to President Hu, the two countries must work together to build a world of peace, prosperity, and security. President Bush stated that he looked forward to an in-depth exchange of views with President Hu during his state visit to the United States.

However, 11 days before the visit, Hurricane Katrina hit the U.S. on its southeast coast on 25 August 2005. The category-five storm swept across Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi, causing severe human and property losses and leaving places such as New Orleans, Louisiana on the brink of anarchy. At a press briefing on 1 September, a State Department spokesperson said that the U.S. would accept offers of foreign assistance. The Chinese government provided U.S.$5,000,000 of assistance in cash and sent relief supplies by charter flights to the

[16] The Three Communiqués, signed in 1972, 1979, and 1982, formed the main framework for U.S.-China normalization.

United States. On 2 September, Dr. J.D. Crouch II, the Deputy National Security Advisor, called and asked me to come to the White House for an urgent meeting. I had a hunch that President Hu's visit might be postponed, as President Bush was in Louisiana directing disaster relief at the time. My hunch was right. Dr. Crouch told me the U.S. side hoped to postpone the visit and planned to announce the news after our meeting. I replied that the postponement was understandable since the U.S. was preoccupied with disaster relief. But because the visit had been agreed upon by both sides, a change of schedule should not be unilaterally decided by the U.S. I suggested that President Bush call President Hu to explain that he was busy with disaster relief and he hoped to postpone the visit, and then the two sides could announce the decision together.

The U.S. side accepted my proposal. On the morning of 3 September local time (evening of the same day in Beijing), President Bush had a phone call with President Hu. He talked about the heavy casualties and economic losses caused by Katrina in the three southern states. He stressed in particular that the U.S. government and people were grateful to the Chinese government and people for the friendship and assistance. He regretted that President Hu's visit had to be postponed, and looked forward to meeting him during the summit marking the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. President Hu responded that he was confident the U.S. government and people would overcome the disaster and rebuild their homes. He said the postponement of the visit was understandable, and he hoped to meet President Bush soon in New York.

When the United States was stricken by a catastrophic natural disaster, China immediately offered a helping hand. Such an expression of true friendship from the Chinese government and people was well received, and the U.S. people deeply appreciated it.

Another post-disaster diplomatic interaction between China and the

United States occurred a few years later during my posting. At 2:28 p.m. on 12 May 2008, an 8.0-magnitude earthquake hit the Wenchuan County of China's Sichuan Province, taking away tens of thousands of lives and causing direct economic losses of over 845 billion yuan.

Soon after the earthquake, my colleagues and I began to provide updates to the U.S. government and people on the disaster to get moral and material support. The Embassy launched an emergency response plan, and opened a special page on its Internet website to provide news updates and information about urgently needed relief supplies. A 24/7 hotline and a designated bank account were opened to receive donations.

For quite a long time after the earthquake, I had been truly impressed by the love and compassion of the overseas Chinese communities and students in the United States, and was deeply moved by the humanitarian assistance from communities across the United States to the quake-hit areas.

On 12 May, President Bush issued a statement on the earthquake, extending condolences to China and expressing U.S. readiness to help in any way possible. On 13 May, President Hu received a phone call from President Bush, who reaffirmed his readiness to help. Five days later, U.S.$1,600,000 worth of U.S. disaster relief supplies arrived in Chengdu by charter flights.

The House of Representatives observed a moment of silence for earthquake victims during its plenary session. Congressmen Rick Larsen (D-WA) and Mark Kirk (R-IL), co-chairs of the U.S.-China Working Group, both called me to offer their condolences. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce invited me to its China Business 2008 forum, and I gave a keynote speech introducing China's rescue and relief efforts.

Between 19 and 21 May, China's national days of mourning, the

Embassy prepared a book of condolences in its reception hall. On the morning of 20 May, President Bush and the First Lady came to the Embassy and signed the condolence book. The President wrote, "We stand with you during this tragic moment as you mourn the loss of so many of your loved ones and search for those still missing. I admire the generosity of spirit and the strength of character shown by the Chinese people as you confront this natural disaster. Our country stands ready to assist in any manner that China deems helpful." He went on, "We extend our sympathies to those whose lives have been torn apart during this terrible tragedy and pray for recovery." Mrs. Laura Bush then wrote that she extends "love and sympathy" to the people of China from the people of the United States. After signing the book, President Bush and the First Lady observed a moment of silence in front of a banner that read "Profound Condolences to All the Victims of the Earthquake on 12 May."

It was the first time a U.S. president visited a foreign embassy to offer condolences over the loss of lives in an earthquake. Before his visit, I had heard that the President asked a number of times about the mourning arrangements in the Embassy. Surely, he had paid quite some attention to the Embassy events. But I had not expected he would actually come to mourn in person.

During the three-day national mourning in China, many Americans came to the Embassy to express condolences, including over 40 representatives from 32 member companies of the U.S.-China Business Council (USCBC). Altogether about 80 USCBC member companies donated over U.S.$30 million in cash and provided a great amount of relief supplies to China.

On 29 June, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made a special trip to the epicenter during her visit to China. Standing by the debris of a sports club in Dujiangyan, she was briefed on the devastation of the earthquake. She also visited the water purification facility donated by

a U.S. NGO to Yonggu Village of Yutang Township. After the visit, the Secretary said she was tremendously impressed with the resilience and spirit of the Chinese people.

During my tenure as ambassador to the United States, the two countries each went through a big disaster — Hurricane Katrina and the Wenchuan earthquake. As China's envoy, I helped with disaster relief following Katrina on behalf of China, and then I received U.S. assistance in the wake of the Wenchuan earthquake. During the days and nights following the two disasters, I lost count of the many times that I was moved and heartened to see the two governments and peoples coming together to pull through the incredibly difficult times.

The sudden onslaught of the hurricane and earthquake was a disaster, but it also brought the Chinese and Americans closer to each other. As China's ambassador to the U.S., I saw firsthand that after the two disasters, Americans had a fresh perspective on the Chinese people and deeper respect for the Chinese nation. I also realized that the general public are actually the best diplomats.

What is the accomplishment you are most proud of as a diplomat?

China and the United States are visibly different — one being the biggest developing country, and the other the youngest "super power" in the history of Western civilization. Neither can change the other. At the same time, in this global village, the two countries need each other more than ever, and share more common interests. Neither can do without the other.

There is both competition and cooperation, friction and coordination between the two countries. We have learned from each other without changing who we are, and we have not allowed our differences and competition to sow discord, or unravel the overall relationship. The dynamics in our interactions have propelled our relationship forward

through ups and downs.

These points are something I tried hard to get across to our American friends during my years working on China-U.S. relations, hoping that more and more of them would appreciate this reality and subsequently handle our relationship prudently. I remember repeating the same message almost on all occasions: for the sake of the world and of humanity, China and the U.S. have a shared responsibility to keep a cooperative relationship while competing.

For more than a decade I was in charge of China-U.S. relations and then served as the Chinese ambassador to the U.S. for five years. Over those years, I pushed back resolutely repeated U.S. attempts to sell arms to Taiwan. I lodged serious representations over the mid-air incident above the South China Sea in 2001. I worked tirelessly to prepare for high-level visits, and traveled far and wide in the United States to promote friendship between the two peoples. I helped bring about the first G20 summit, and overcame all kinds of difficulties to ensure a smooth Olympic torch relay in the U.S. in 2008. I also spent a lot of time in getting a deeper understanding of the country I was posted to, its economy, society and foreign policy, and in addressing specific issues in day-to-day interactions between the two countries.

Looking back at those years, what makes me most proud was that I fulfilled my responsibility and lived up to the trust placed in me.

What is the most difficult challenge you faced?

In 2001, I was transferred from the post of Chinese Ambassador to Australia back to the Foreign Ministry to serve as Assistant Minister in charge of China-U.S. relations. Just one month into my new job, I was faced with a thorny issue.

On 1 April, a U.S. navy reconnaissance aircraft was found operating above the waters southeast of China's Hainan Island. Two Chinese jet

fighters took off and trailed it. At 09:07 a.m. Beijing Time, as the Chinese fighters were flying normally 104 km (about 65 miles) southeast of Hainan Island, the U.S. spy plane abruptly veered and rammed into one of them, and caused it to crash. Its pilot, Wang Wei, was forced to eject. He went missing and was later presumed dead. After the incident, the U.S. plane entered Chinese airspace without permission and landed at Lingshui airfield on Hainan Island at 09:33 a.m.

It was the U.S. action that caused the incident, and the U.S. side shouldered the full responsibility. But the U.S. side unilaterally claimed, without communicating with China, that it was the Chinese fighter that rammed into the U.S. plane. Not only did the U.S. demand an immediate return of its plane and crew, it also wanted China to let it repair and fly the plane back.

On the evening of the incident, I urgently summoned Joseph Prueher, U.S. Ambassador to China, to make a solemn demarche and protest.

At first, the two sides were at complete loggerheads. Ambassador Prueher disagreed with China that the U.S. should take full responsibility for the incident. Trying to play it down, the U.S. side only expressed "regret" over the crashed plane and the missing Chinese pilot. Though they offered to help with search and rescue, their focus was on pressuring the Chinese side to release the crew and return the aircraft. I refuted their argument right away and rejected the demand.

In the following days, I had two more conversations with Ambassador Prueher, urging the U.S. to revise its statement.

It was a difficult step for the Americans to make an apology at that time. Colin Powell, then Secretary of State and a Vietnam War veteran, believed that the military must be subordinate to politics. He once had an 80 percent approval rating during his time as the Secretary of State.

He wanted to bring the incident to a solution for the sake of the overall U.S. strategic interests. With his efforts, the U.S. side gradually accepted China's demands.

In the first draft of the U.S. apology letter, the U.S. side conveyed to the family and fellow servicemen of pilot Wang Wei that they were sorry for the incident. We asked the U.S. to add the Chinese people to whom they should apologize. The U.S. side agreed with the addition after consideration.

Another difficult issue was how the apology should be expressed in words. The word "sorry" could be used to apologize, but we thought that was not enough. The U.S. should go further to say it was "very sorry." Seven days later, the U.S. side came back with its fifth draft. It stepped up and changed the wording to "very sorry."

Now that the two sides had finally agreed on the apology, which had been the most crucial step, it was time to tackle another issue — how to return the U.S. spy plane. At first, the U.S. wanted to repair the plane and fly it back. Ambassador Joseph Prueher and I had many rounds of informal consultations on this. The U.S. side argued that the plane could fly without much repair work. We insisted that it should not fly back, because it had come off Chinese waters on a close-range reconnaissance mission, threatening China's security and violating China's sovereignty. The solution agreed to in the end was to bring it back in pieces. The U.S. rented an An-124 civil cargo aircraft from a Russian airliner, sent people and equipment to dismantle the reconnaissance aircraft, and shipped the parts back — first the fuselage, then the wings, and then the empennage. It took them more than a dozen flights to finish the shipment.

The issue was wrapped up with the U.S. apologizing to China six days after the incident occurred. I had altogether nine rounds of consultations with Ambassador Prueher on the issue. The incident,

seemingly accidental, was in essence the result of U.S. continued close-range reconnaissance and electronic surveillance over China. It reflected the Bush administration's view of China as a strategic competitor and its growing hegemonic tendency in its China policy. Since taking office as the 43rd President, George W. Bush had departed from Bill Clinton's pursuit of a strategic cooperative partnership with China. He defined China as a strategic competitor during his presidential campaign, yet changed his views of China-U.S. relations in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and agreed that the two sides should build a comprehensive, constructive and cooperative relationship.

What's an experience you learned a lot from as ambassador?

In March 2007, near the end of my second year as ambassador to the U.S., news broke that pet foods with Chinese ingredients caused animal sickness and even death. By the end of April, the American Veterinary Medical Association had reported several thousand cases of sickened pets, with deaths of 15 cats and one dog. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted a swift investigation, and traced the sickness to ingredients imported from China. They concluded that a chemical substance called melamine found in those ingredients caused kidney failure that killed the pets. For me, that was another PR crisis.

Americans see pets as friends and even family members. It is not difficult to imagine how concerned the American families are about pet food and how much public attention the incident had drawn in the U.S.

The two Chinese companies involved, Xuzhou Anying Biologic Technology and Binzhou Futian Biological Technology, were "blacklisted" by the FDA. The pet food ingredients they exported to the U.S. in late 2006, wheat gluten and rice protein, were found to contain

melamine. As a result, the quality of Chinese products came under the spotlight. U.S. media began to question the safety of Chinese food products, and some of them even called into doubt everything "made in China."

The incident captured much attention from the governments and peoples of both countries. I continuously updated the competent departments in Beijing, and recommended remedy steps. I also called on the Americans who were concerned by the incident. I first made contact with Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Chair of the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration of the House Appropriations Committee. They had held hearings in the Senate and the House respectively, and publicly urged the U.S. government to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident.

On 26 April, I met Senator Durbin and Congresswoman DeLauro on Capitol Hill to update them on China's investigation of the two Chinese exporting companies involved in the pet poisonings and deaths in the U.S. as well as actions taken by the Chinese authorities. The investigation, I said, found that the Chinese-made plant-based protein powder in question was declared not as feed or food-processing raw materials, but as "other protein substances and their derivatives" under HS code 35040090 before its shipment to the U.S. I also said that China never allowed the use of melamine in pesticides or rodenticides, let alone in pet feed. If an importing company chose to accept raw materials containing melamine for producing pet feed, it would be violating Chinese as well as U.S. and Canadian laws and it was the importing company that should be held responsible.

I also informed them that on 18 April, a joint investigation team formed by China's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) and Ministry of Agriculture headed for Jiangsu and Shandong provinces to probe into the two

Chinese companies, namely, Xuzhou Anying Biologic Technology and Binzhou Futian Biological Technology. I mentioned the letter sent on 20 April to invite the FDA to China to share information on each other's investigations and methods for melamine testing and to determine next steps. Senator Durbin and Congresswoman DeLauro thanked me for the update, and hoped that China could provide the specifics about the customs declarations made by the two companies and written materials of the work done by China.

On 2 May, I had a meeting with FDA Commissioner Andrew von Eschenbach, who had been in the headlines and under pressure lately because of the pet food issue. He said he hoped the two sides would work together to find a best way to resolve this issue. I expressed full agreement with him. On 9 May, I had another meeting with Senator Durbin and Congresswoman DeLauro to brief them on the results of China's investigation. Commissioner Eschenbach was also present.

I stressed that the suspected use of melamine by the two Chinese protein powder manufacturers was a serious violation of China's animal feed safety regulations, but it was an isolated case. It was not right to view the violation as a widespread phenomenon in China because of one single case. I underscored the serious commitment of the Chinese government to food safety and the need to enhance cooperation, rather than pointing fingers at each other in a situation like this. I said that the Chinese government had already acted promptly to shut down and investigate these companies. China's public security authorities had launched investigations into the executives of the companies, and put them under surveillance. And these companies and individuals would be held fully and legally accountable according to the investigation results. I conveyed the readiness of the AQSIQ to continue its close cooperation with the FDA and explore the possibility of making animal feed safety part of their food safety cooperation and getting an agreement signed soon on

establishing such a mechanism.

In as short as a month or two, the pet feed incident caught so much public attention. Narratives about Chinese food posing a safety threat started to emerge. Senator Dick Durbin introduced legislation to amend the *Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act*. He even wrote a letter to President Bush, and exaggerated the safety aspects of Chinese products. All this was deeply disturbing to me. At stake was American people's confidence in the quality of Chinese products. The Chinese Embassy, being the frontline representative of China, must do something to manage this PR crisis. So, I set out to push Chinese departments to engage more with their U.S. counterparts. At the same time, I also urged the U.S. side not to politicize trade.

With my lobbying and proposals, a delegation of product quality and food safety professionals led by Deputy Director Wei Chuanzhong of China's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine paid two visits to the U.S. in mid-September and early November that year. Following those visits and thanks to the hard work of both sides, China and the U.S. held in Beijing the 18th session of the Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT) on 11 December, back to back with the third Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED). During these meetings, the two sides signed the *Agreement on the Safety of Food and Feed* and the *Agreement on the Safety of Drugs and Medical Devices*.

Throughout 2007, I spent a lot of time on matters related to the quality of pet feed and other Chinese products, including children's toys. I used every opportunity to communicate with U.S. government officials and people of various sectors. I visited Wyoming, Illinois, California, Michigan, Montana, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, Kentucky, New Jersey and Ohio — more than ten states in all. Wherever I went, I reached out to the Americans from all walks of life. I tried to tell them about the extensive measures underway in China to improve product

quality. By the end of that year, the issue was no longer the source of public attention it had been.

The very topic of how "Made in China" should shift its comparative strength from price to quality is a big one. Under economic globalization, China must bring its product quality inspection and control up to international standards. This is essential for a sustainable growth of our trade with other nations.

As for China-U.S. relations in general, I believe one thing that both sides can learn from this case, especially the U.S. side, is that the two countries' interests are deeply entwined. Whenever disputes arise, the two sides must resort to communication and consultation. It is important for both sides to act on what has been agreed by the two presidents on 29 June 2019,[17] namely, China and the U.S. should manage differences on the basis of mutual respect and expand cooperation on the basis of mutual benefit to jointly advance China-U.S. relations based on coordination, cooperation and stability.

How would you describe the changes you have witnessed the U.S.-China relationship go through over the years?

When President George W. Bush was elected, for some time, he saw China as a "strategic competitor." It was not until the 9/11 terrorist attacks that the Bush administration, out of counter-terrorism needs, adjusted its China policy and expressed the desire to develop a constructive cooperative relationship with China.

During the Obama administration, China was regarded as both a partner and a competitor.

Since President Trump took office in January 2017, China was viewed as a "revisionist country" and a "rival state," and became a target of

[17] Presidents Trump and Xi met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Japan and agreed to resume their discussions on trade.

aggressive accusations in areas of economic relations, its role in the region, and ideology, to name just a few.

The prevalent negative rhetoric at the moment shows that the U.S. policymakers are arriving at a new consensus on China, considering it as their primary, comprehensive, and global strategic competitor.

For now, and for some time to come, the U.S. strategic thinkers are and will be approaching China policy from the perspective of strategic competition. It reflects major shifts in China-U.S. relations in terms of the balance of strength, policy orientation, areas of competition and international standing. Both countries need to adapt to the new normal of "competitive coexistence."

On our part, we in China have no intention of changing or unseating the U.S. Neither will we allow ourselves to fall under the sway of the U.S., or allow it to impede our development. As cooperation expands and exchange increases, the two countries will see their interests getting more and more entwined, with far more to share than to disagree on. That, in my view, will remain unchanged.

Cooperation leads to win-win, and confrontation can only lead to lose-lose. This is the reality recognized by those with a strategic vision and sober mind. Such a plain fact will not bend to anyone's will. As such, China and the U.S. must find ways to better reconcile with each other. China stands ready to live peacefully with the superpower on the basis of mutual respect. The U.S. in turn must understand and accept a China that follows the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, a development path that suits its own realities.

When engaging with each other, both countries should observe the rules, which include the widely recognized international law and basic norms governing international relations, the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués.

Both countries should discard the outdated mentality of zero-sum game and confrontation. The right way forward is to seek common ground despite the differences, and pursue win-win cooperation for a brighter future.

Amb. Zhou Wenzhong speaking at the
U.S.-China Policy Foundation's 2008 gala dinner.

A Conversation with Gary Locke

Phone interview with the U.S.-China Policy Foundation, June 2, 2020. Edited for clarity and formatting.

Gary Locke served as the 10th U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China (2011–2014) under President Barack Obama. Prior to serving as Ambassador, Locke was the 36th U.S. Secretary of Commerce (2009–2011) and the 21st Governor of Washington (1997–2005). He was the first Chinese-American to serve as either governor or as U.S. Ambassador to China.

Ambassador Locke, how do you feel about your time as U.S. Ambassador to China?

Even though my father did not live to see me nominated and confirmed as ambassador — and while he had been most proud of my appointment as U.S. Secretary of Commerce — I think he would have been most proud to know that I was returning to the land of my father's birth as a representative of the U.S. government.

It was a great experience serving as U.S. Ambassador to China under President Barack Obama. The Chinese people and the government officials were so warm and friendly to us on a very personal level.

It was a great opportunity for our children to discover the land of their ancestors, to travel throughout China, and to truly see the real China. Not just the cities of Shanghai and Beijing, but the countryside as well. And to go back to the family village in rural parts of Guangdong Province, which is very much like walking back into the 1800s or early 1900s.

Our children had been to China before to visit their maternal grandparents, but for very short visits. And, certainly, only to Shanghai where they lived. While we were living in China during my time as ambassador, it gave them an opportunity to travel to other parts of

China — from Guilin to Xi'an to Chengdu to see the pandas — but really, to see the countryside and see how some 40 percent of the population live, which is in the villages with the barest of amenities.

For the kids, it also made them much more appreciative of the freedoms that we have in America and the quality of life that we have in America — safe food, freedom of movement, our education system, the environment, and our freedoms and liberties.

As for myself, I had been to China so many times before serving as ambassador, so it wasn't anything all that different or new for me. Certainly, I was focused on running the embassy and trying to instill a lot more collaboration and teamwork, having the different agencies working together on projects instead of working in silos, reducing the time it took to get an appointment for a visa interview, and, of course, publicizing the air quality readings[18] — from not just the embassy, since we expanded that to all of our consulates — helping raise attention to severe air pollution in China.

The air quality readings were definitely helpful when I lived in Beijing. Can you expand on that?

At first, the Chinese government was trying to stop us from publicizing the readings.[19] But, we pointed out that we have a duty. If we have information pertaining to the health and safety of American personnel, whether it's at the embassy or nearby, federal law requires us to disseminate that to all the American personnel within the community.

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[18] In 2008, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing installed an air quality monitor on its roof that automatically tweeted the readings on an hourly basis (@BeijingAir). The efforts were expanded during Ambassador Locke's tenure. By 2013, air quality monitors were also set up at American consulates in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang. Inspired by these efforts, similar monitors are now in place in many U.S. diplomatic posts around the globe.

[19] In 2012, senior Chinese officials demanded that foreign embassies (i.e. the U.S.) stop publishing air quality readings, calling them an illegal interference in China's internal affairs. (see *Reuters* article "China says only it has right to monitor air pollution," published June 5, 2012, https://reut.rs/37dtimY)

The Chinese people were then demanding that the Chinese government release information. The Chinese government was saying that, while they were collecting air quality readings, they had no plans to make it public for another year or so. At which point, the public demanded immediate publication and the Chinese government relented.

Then, when we had this one spell of absolutely horrific air pollution, where the PM 2.5[20] was oftentimes over 800, the Chinese government newspapers acknowledged that they could no longer call it "fog." They had to call it what it really was — dangerous, debilitating, severe air pollution — and the government needed to take more urgent, drastic measures to reduce air pollution and the use of coal.

We really felt good that our publication of the air quality readings on an hourly basis from the U.S. Embassy prompted the Chinese people themselves to demand more aggressive action by the government, and the government ultimately responding.

Could you highlight another major success during your tenure?

Reducing the wait time for an appointment to get a visa interview was a notable accomplishment because it created such goodwill among the Chinese people toward the United States and the United States Embassy and consulates.

When I arrived, the wait time in the summers was over 100 days, just to get a visa interview.

It was a challenge working with the staff to try to reduce it. At first, they said there was nothing they could do unless there was more money for overtime for the visa officers or money and authorization from DC to hire more people, to get more staff. And, also, money for more interview windows. And I said, no, those are completely

[20] PM 2.5 refers to the dangerous fine particulate matter measured by air quality monitors. As a reference, the U.S. Air Quality Index considers PM 2.5 levels of 101-150 unhealthy for sensitive groups, 151-200 unhealthy, 201-300 very unhealthy, and 301-500 hazardous.

unrealistic. We could be waiting years and years for that to happen.

So, we went round and around. And, thankfully, we had some mid-level managers and some top managers who embraced the idea. And line staff who were so supportive and wanting to provide better service as well as have pride in the service they provided. In a month and a half we were able to get it down to five days. A few months later, we were able to get it down to three days of wait time.

That created such great positive reviews all across China. I think that was important for U.S.-China government relations.

It was also good for the U.S. economy. Because, if a Chinese business person wants to go visit a factory in Ohio to possibly buy an American manufactured item, but is told they're going to have to wait 100 days for a visa interview, that business person is going to say forget it. I don't need to buy that product from America. I can buy from Germany or Australia or Canada. And, so, I said to our folks, this long wait time for visa interviews is costing Americans jobs and lost business.

And the same thing if a family wants to apply for a visa to visit the Grand Canyon. If they're told they have to wait 100 days for a visa interview, with no guarantee they'll even get the visa, those families will say forget it. Let's go visit Australia, New Zealand, or go to Disneyland in France. So, I said, hey, that's costing us a lot of money into the U.S. economy. Those tourists will shop in malls, eat in restaurants, stay in hotels, and provide income to so many small businesses throughout America.

What was one of the more difficult challenges you faced as Ambassador?

The Chen Guangcheng situation, in which he sought refuge in the U.S. Embassy.[21] We picked him up and provided him with medical care, safety, and refuge. At the same time, over the protests of the Chinese government. Trying to ensure safety for him and his family was a

[21] In 2012, Chen Guangcheng, a blind lawyer and activist, was in Shangdong Province under house arrest. He escaped his house arrest on April 22 and made his way, injured, to Beijing, where he contacted the U.S. Embassy for help.

really challenging issue.

What a lot of people don't know is that, originally, he was never seeking to come to the United States. He was not seeking asylum. All he really wanted was to be allowed to move out of his village and to live somewhere else in China and to be free of constant harassment by the Chinese authorities.

And, so, those were very, very difficult and tense times because all this happened just before the annual Strategic and Economic Dialogue. And that particular year, it was being hosted in Beijing. Every year, it alternates between the United States and China. And, that year, it was set to occur in China, in Beijing.[22]

It was absolutely critical to try to resolve this crisis and the dilemma of Chen Guangcheng before the dialogue started. Otherwise, it would have, perhaps, led to a completely unsuccessful, unfruitful set of meetings, which featured the top U.S. government officials — Ben Bernanke, head of the Federal Reserve, Secretary Timothy Geithner of Treasury, Secretary Hillary Clinton, and people from the military, Commerce Department, and so many other Cabinet agencies.

How do you approach an unexpected crisis like that?

There has to be a lot of communication with Washington, DC and lots of meetings within the embassy. Just making sure that we were all coordinated and all on the same page, with the same message — whether it was in DC or on the ground in Beijing.

Just before Secretary Clinton and the other Cabinet officials arrived, we were able to reach a resolution with the Chinese government where the Chinese government said that Chen Guangcheng and his family could take residence at a nearby university with free room and board and he'd be allowed to take some courses there, which is all he wanted. He wanted to further his education. He would also receive medical care. He had a broken foot and he also had some other

[22] The 2012 Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) was held in Beijing from May 3–4.

medical conditions.

The negotiations over the fate of Chen Guangcheng were very difficult and very tense, with some heated moments in some of the meetings. And it was not just myself. The lead negotiators included key personnel from the U.S. State Department who came out in advance of the S&ED. It was a large group effort involved in those negotiations and they were very, very tense at many times.

Throughout those negotiations, on both sides — while each side's positions were very firm and very clear — I think the good personal relations between the Chinese and the U.S. negotiators helped. Because, when things were most bleak and it looked like we were at a complete impasse and that we might have to prepare to have Chen Guagncheng live for quite some time on the grounds of the U.S. Embassy, those personal relations enabled negotiators to contact each other and re-open negotiations. When tensions cooled, people felt free and able to reach out informally to try to re-start the discussions.

What are some of your main takeaways from your time as ambassador that have stayed with you since you left the position?

One thing that stuck with me was something that former Prime Minister Tony Blair (UK) said at a conference I attended. He said that diplomacy first starts with people-to-people exchange and interaction. And I really feel that's so true.

While I was ambassador, oftentimes the Chinese government would limit the publicity that I and the government programs and staff could receive. Events were oftentimes canceled because they were "inconvenient" or they felt the site where an event was to occur was not "proper" enough for a person of my stature. They would cancel the event. And some of these events were just to publicize the results of U.S.-China partnerships, let's say, over medical care or medical research.

It was obvious that the Chinese government did not want us to publicize some of these partnerships or to give the United States credit or favorable publicity. So, we got our message out using social

media.

We still found a hunger and a fascination among the Chinese people for all things American. We took advantage of social media to try to publicize some of these U.S.-China partnerships.

What advice would you give to diplomats today on how to approach U.S.-China relations?

These are very difficult times right now given the directives from Washington, DC and the mood of Congress. And especially because it's an election year, in which China is always part of different campaigns.

I guess, what I would say to diplomats is that, while overall policy is made in Washington, DC and must be carried out, understand that the governments can have major differences between themselves, but we need to emphasize the people-to-people aspect of the U.S.-China relationship.

We need to encourage more Americans to visit China, to really understand the challenges that China faces, the magnitude of the problems that they face, as well as the enormous progress in raising the standard of living of hundreds of millions of people in a very short period of time. At the same time, we need to encourage and welcome more Chinese visitors to the United States so that they can actually see our democracy and our diversity in action.

We have a lot of major differences. We need to also focus on our areas of common interest and potential for mutually beneficial improvement to both of our societies — whether it's in medical research or it's focusing on clean energy.

But I also believe that the United States cannot approach some of the issues we have with China on our own. This trade war with China, with dueling tariffs, ultimately hurts American companies and American consumers, as well as Chinese companies and Chinese consumers. The issues we have with China's trade and industrial policies — the need for stronger enforcement of intellectual property, the need to advance the rule of law — cannot be done by just the United States. We really need to be working in concert, in alliance with

all the other countries in the world.

Otherwise, U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods result in retaliatory tariffs on American goods, which then make the American product much more expensive compared to similar products coming from Brazil, Germany, France, or Canada. That means that American companies suffer. American companies and American workers suffer from that lost business. American consumers suffer by paying more for everyday goods, whether shoes, or toys, or sporting goods. At the same time, our competitors from those other countries get the business. The consumers from those countries are not having to pay increased cost for the items that American consumers are paying for.

Any last thoughts or comments?

It was a great experience for our entire family and for me, both professionally and personally.

Even when I go back to China these days, I am so touched by the warm reception by the Chinese government officials and the Chinese people. I mean, people will come up to me — in far flung places of China, who don't really speak English — and say to me: *xie xie* PM 2.5.

My last trip to China was in the fall, but I am still in contact with friends back in China. Life is kind of on hold, in a state of suspension with the coronavirus. And there's obviously a lot of concern about the downturn in the economy throughout the world, including China. There's a lot of angst, there's a lot of trepidation, among all the people in China. Just as there is here in the United States and Europe.

Amb. Gary Locke speaking at the
U.S.-China Policy Foundation's 2018 gala dinner.

The 1981–1982 Sino-American Taiwan Arms Sales Negotiations

Ambassador Chas W. Freeman, Jr.

Adapted from remarks given to a "Master Class in Diplomacy" at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, Virginia on August 19, 2019.

Like everyone here, I feel honored to have had the opportunity to serve our country. I did so for three decades before entering the private sector a quarter century ago.[23] I now chair a globally engaged business development company and the Committee for the Republic. I also lecture at Brown University's Watson Institute, among other places.

I confess that I don't miss either the diplomatic trench warfare of the Cold War or the idiocies and penuries of government life. My service took quite a toll on my family and me. Still, we had the satisfaction of making a small difference or two to our country and the world. A bit of foresight and a lot of luck enabled me to play a role in some of the great events of the last third of the 20th century. I can't imagine a more fulfilling career.

Among other things, I helped to enlist China in the containment of the Soviet Union and then incorporate it into the American-led, capitalist world order. I was part of the imaginative U.S. diplomacy that ended colonialism and foreign interventions in Africa. I contributed to

[23] Chas Freeman, Jr. is a retired diplomat who served as the Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing (1981–1984). He served in numerous other diplomatic posts, including as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (1993–1994) and the U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1989–1992). He also acted as the main interpreter for Nixon's 1972 trip to China.

heading off a military coup against the end of apartheid in South Africa. I had the ambassadorship of the century during the war to contain Iraqi aggression and liberate Kuwait. And, at DOD (the Department of Defense), I was the principal architect of the expansion of the Atlantic alliance through the Partnership for Peace.

There are lots of things to be learned from the successes and failures of such endeavors. Our diplomatic service has lacked a mechanism to collect and apply these lessons to its professionalization. Academics analyze the past to anticipate the future. Diplomats aim to shape the times to come. The Center for the Study of the Conduct of Diplomacy seeks to empower future generations of diplomats with useful knowledge of their predecessors' successes and failures. I believe this is essential if diplomacy is to become the recognized profession that it needs to become.

So, I welcomed Center Director Doell's invitation to talk to you about the inner history of the 1981–82 effort to establish a *modus vivendi* with China on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. There are many lessons for diplomatic professionals to draw from the Reagan administration's handling of the Taiwan arms sales controversy. I know of no previous effort to harvest these lessons. Much of the diplomacy took place at my dining table as DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) in Beijing. The president personally directed every aspect of the process. I have not previously spoken about what worked and what didn't and why.

The U.S. approach epitomized what I call "deep diplomacy," that is, the rearrangement of circumstances to induce others to conclude that they should do things that serve our interests — not to please us, but to secure their own interests. The negotiations illustrated how a dangerous impasse born of very different perspectives rooted in domestic politics could — in the common interest — be set aside for future resolution. The talks showed the value of mutual trust between

individual negotiators as well as the importance of well-timed direct communication between leaders. The arms control agreement the talks produced yielded the results the U.S. negotiators had hoped it would for a solid decade before it fell victim to the exigencies of American politics. Ultimately, this showed the danger of bottling up problems with military deterrence rather than pursuing their resolution through patient diplomacy.

As George Kennan[24] observed, "History does not forgive us our national mistakes because they are explicable in terms of our domestic politics. […] A nation which excuses its own failures by the sacred untouchableness of its own habits can excuse itself into a complete disaster." The politically expedient abandonment of solemnly negotiated commitments to China devalued our word as Americans. It has left a legacy of Chinese distrust that continues to hobble Sino-American relations today. A reputation for reliability, once lost, is almost impossible to restore.

Some of you may not be completely familiar with the origins and evolution of the Taiwan question and the issue of U.S. arms sales to the island. Let me briefly set the scene before trying to extract some lessons for future diplomacy from it.

Simply put, the Taiwan question is what the political relationship between Taiwan and the rest of China is or should be. Until 1895, Taiwan was a province of China. In that year, the Japanese Empire forcibly annexed it. Five decades later, at the end of the Second World

[24] George Kennan (1904–2005) was an American diplomat who, in 1946, wrote the "long telegram," a telegram sent to the Department of State that concluded that, "the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." His telegram inspired the United States' containment policy from 1947 to 1950. See: "George Kennan and Containment," Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/kennan.

War, Japan surrendered Taiwan to the then-Chinese government. The simultaneous end of Japan's fourteen year-long rampage through China rekindled the struggle between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party (KMT) and Mao Zedong's Communist Party (CCP) over which would rule China.

In 1949, Mao's People's Liberation Army (PLA) defeated Chiang's army and replaced his KMT regime in most of China. Chiang and roughly two million of his troops withdrew to Taiwan. The PLA prepared to bring the Chinese civil war to an end by conquering Taiwan. As 1950 began, the United States, which continued to maintain diplomatic relations with Chiang's government, declared that we did not consider Taiwan strategically significant enough to intervene to save it.

But in mid-1950, North Korea stormed over the 38th parallel to unify all of Korea under its rule. Two days later, the United States placed the 7th Fleet between Chiang's forces and the PLA (in the Taiwan Strait). The stated purpose of this U.S. intervention was to preclude the expansion of the war in Korea to other parts of Asia. Washington demanded that each side in the Chinese civil war cease attacks on the other. U.S. intervention effectively suspended but did not end their war, which is in abeyance but unconcluded to this day.

By October 1950, as all of Korea was about to fall to U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, Chinese forces intervened to preserve North Korea as a buffer state. The Korean conflict became an undeclared war between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Mutual hostility escalated. In 1954, Washington concluded a defense treaty with Chiang Kai-shek's rump Chinese government, placing Taiwan under American protection as the United States sought to isolate, contain, and overthrow the Communist regime on the China mainland by both fair means and foul.

For the next twenty years, American diplomats worked hard to sustain the legal fictions that there was only one China; that its government was in Taipei, not Beijing; that this government could and should represent China internationally; and that it was not a government in exile because Taiwan was part of China. I took part in our defense of these propositions. It worked until 1971, when the international community rebelled and rejected Taipei's preposterous continuing representation of China in the UN.

Two decades of success at enforcing Beijing's ostracism is proof that, at our best, American diplomats can work miracles in the service of grand strategy, including nullifying unwelcome realities. This is worth remembering because, as has become obvious, we can also be utterly ineffective when there is no strategy to match resources to realistic objectives or to guide diplomatic tactics.

In 1969, clashes broke out along the Sino-Soviet frontier. President Nixon, who had already come to the conclusion that no world order excluding China could be stable, feared the geopolitical consequences of a Soviet military conquest or humiliation of China. He switched U.S. policy from using Taiwan to contain the PRC, to enlisting the PRC to contain the USSR. Doing so required addressing Chinese demands that the United States recognize Beijing rather than Taipei as the capital of an undivided China, that we withdraw our military presence from Taiwan, and that we terminate our defense treaty with it.

In 1972, Nixon dramatically visited Beijing, the capital of a then-hostile government America did not recognize. He finessed the Taiwan question by acknowledging that "all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China," adding that "the United States Government does not challenge that position." He announced a U.S. "interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves." With this prospect in mind, he affirmed "the ultimate objective of the

withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan." In the meantime, he pledged to "progressively reduce [U.S.] forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes."

This was artful language.[25] Uniquely for a diplomatic document, it was preceded by several pages of candid recitations by both sides of profound disagreements about Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Korea, Japan, and Kashmir. This was Zhou Enlai's diplomatically inventive proposal.[26] Reaffirming such Sino-American differences reassured our respective security partners that rapprochement between the PRC and the United States did not imply a sell-out of their interests. Candid statements of disagreements have a place in diplomacy.

Nixon privately assured Mao and Zhou that he would recognize the PRC in his second term. Watergate then struck him down. Gerald Ford's accidental presidency was too politically precarious for him to implement Nixon's pledge. The U.S. commitment to Taiwan's defense was beginning to change from a strategic expedient to a matter of national honor.

It was left to Jimmy Carter to "normalize" relations with the PRC. As 1978 faded into 1979, Carter did so with Deng Xiaoping.[27] Carter's purpose was to intensify pressure on the Soviet Union. For his part, Deng wanted an opening to the United States both to de-Sovietize China's domestic political economy and to put Moscow off balance as he used force to convince Hanoi not to ally with the USSR to encircle China because this would cost Vietnam vastly more than it could ever

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[25] The Shanghai Communiqué,was issued on February 28, 1972. The full text can be read here: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d203

[26] Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) was, at the time, serving as the Premier of the PRC and negotiated the Shanghai Communiqué with President Nixon and his security advisor, Henry Kissinger, when Nixon visited China in 1972.

[27] Deng Xiaoping (1904–1992) was China's foremost leader following the death of Mao Zedong.

hope to gain.

To "normalize" diplomatic relations with Beijing, Washington had to "abnormalize" them with the rival Chinese government in Taipei it had previously championed. While retaining substantive, nominally unofficial ties to Taiwan, the U.S. transferred formal recognition and relations from Taipei to Beijing and withdrew its forces and installations from Taiwan. The Chinese declared their determination to make best efforts to reunify their divided country by peaceful rather than violent means. President Carter gave the one-year notice needed to terminate the U.S. defense treaty with Taipei and suspended further weapons sales throughout 1979, while the treaty was expiring. But he informed the Chinese that "sales of carefully selected defensive weapons on a restrained basis" to Taiwan would resume in 1980. Not surprisingly, they registered strong objections to this and reserved the right to raise the issue for resolution later. Nevertheless, they went ahead with "normalization."

In Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign, he pledged to restore official relations with Taipei and to upgrade Taiwan's military capabilities against the PRC through unrestricted arms sales. But when he entered office, he became aware of the extent of clandestine Sino-American cooperation against the USSR. Since 1980, the U.S. and PRC had jointly operated major intelligence bases on Chinese soil. These more than replaced the capabilities of those lost to the Islamic revolution in Iran the year before. China had its own covert program in support of the Afghan resistance, but it was also supplying us with many hundreds of millions of dollars-worth of weapons each year for our much larger effort to dislodge the Soviets from Afghanistan. And China was providing us with tens of millions of dollars-worth of MiG-21s and other Soviet-designed, Chinese-manufactured equipment to enable our armed forces to train against the Soviet threat.

Reagan abandoned his proposed restoration of official relations with Taipei. But he held fast to the idea of selling Taiwan a new generation of aircraft — the so-called "FX." Beijing reacted by redoubling its conciliatory offers to Taiwan, expressing mounting fury at what it saw as a renewed American invasion of Chinese sovereignty and internal affairs, and audibly reducing its overt alignment with the U.S. against the USSR.

I took charge of our infant embassy in Beijing in early July 1981 as this controversy was just beginning. It rapidly intensified. By October, the Chinese were signaling with ever greater urgency that, if the United States did not agree to a schedule to end arms sales to Taiwan, they might downgrade or even break relations with us. China had earlier downgraded relations with the Netherlands over submarine sales to Taiwan, lending this threat a measure of credibility. (I was originally skeptical that the Chinese would do the same to us. But, years later, I heard from a reliable source that Deng Xiaoping had prepositioned an announcement of a similar move against the United States at Radio Beijing)[28]

In late 1981, as both sides began to formulate negotiating positions, the President asked the Joint Chiefs (JCS) whether there was, in fact, a compelling case for the sale of the FX to Taiwan. Around the same time, an effort to open bilateral negotiations produced only a thundering diatribe by a Chinese vice foreign minister, who spoke to newly arrived U.S. Ambassador Arthur Hummel and me from a raised dais in the former Austro-Hungarian embassy in Beijing's Legation Quarter. Indirectly, we let the Chinese know that the vice minister's haughty harangues would take us places neither side should want to go.

Meanwhile, the JCS's worst-case analysis determined that Taiwan did

[28] Radio Beijing, now known as China Radio International (CRI), was founded in 1941 and is the PRC's state-owned international radio broadcaster.

not really need the FX. In January 1982, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific Affairs, John Holdridge, arrived in Beijing to inform the Chinese that we no longer planned to sell an advanced aircraft to Taiwan. His visit enabled China to switch to a new and more congenial, though equally tendentious, chief negotiator. Initial meetings with him also gained no traction. After a few unproductive encounters, we proposed that the chief negotiators each delegate the task of drafting a text to a select group of subordinates.

These talks, four to a side, took place over lunches at my apartment. My chef — now my foster son — served up superb Chinese cuisine for my guests, creating an atmosphere conducive to informality and candor. As the great British statesman, Lord Palmerston remarked: "dining is the soul of diplomacy."[29]

My Chinese counterparts and my team knew each other well from numerous previous diplomatic interactions. They were tough professionals whose word could be relied upon. Like me and my American colleagues, they operated under very tight instructions and floated no proposal without assurances from the very highest level of their government that trade-offs based on it might prove acceptable.

The Chinese had the advantage of being on their home ground, with direct access to their superiors. We in the American embassy were 7,000 miles from Washington and President Reagan. There were no secure phones or email in those days. We were dealing with issues that were politically explosive and tightly compartmented back home. To protect the privacy of our communications with the very able team supporting us in Washington, we wrote them in romanized Chinese, not English. There were no leaks.

Slowly, the two sides began to build a text based on "I think I could

[29] Chas W. Freeman, Jr., *The Diplomat's Dictionary* (DIANE Publishing, 1994), 135.

persuade my government to say this if your government would say that." All agreements over the dining table were tentative and *ad referendum* to internal policy processes personally overseen by President Reagan and Deng Xiaoping. Occasional formal meetings at the ambassadorial level were convened to nail down trade-offs that had been found to be mutually agreeable. Both sides understood that nothing was final until everything was final.

On the U.S. side, we understood our objectives to be:

- the restoration of an overt entente (limited partnership) with the PRC against the Soviet Union
- the enhancement of prospects for a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue between the Chinese parties
- a linkage between peace in the Taiwan Strait and any reduction in arms sales to Taiwan
- the avoidance of any schedule to end such arms sales
- the preservation of a credible bargaining position for Taipei vis-à-vis Beijing
- setting aside the Taiwan arms sales issue as an obstacle to expanded cooperation with the PRC

For their part, the Chinese negotiators sought an outcome that:

- fixed an early date for the complete end of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, thereby putting pressure on the island to seek terms for its reunification with the rest of China
- avoided any commitment to use only peaceful means to end the Chinese civil war and reunify China
- removed the Taiwan arms sales issue as a domestically insuperable political obstacle to expanded cooperation with the United States
- affirmed "respect for…sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs" as the guiding

principles of Sino-American relations
- left open the possibility, *mutatis mutandis*, of eventual rapprochement with the neighboring USSR

Both sides shared an interest in putting the Taiwan arms sales issue behind us. The question was how to do this in a way that could withstand the inevitable political backlash from opponents of compromise in both countries. Each side had to make its own judgments about what might do that for it.

The talks made progress, but tediously. In May 1982, President Reagan sent his vice president, George H.W. Bush, to Beijing to convey letters from him to Deng Xiaoping as well as China's premier and party chairman in the hope that this might jumpstart progress. In his letters, Reagan stressed the importance of bilateral cooperation, recognized the significance of China's willingness to attempt a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue, and declared his willingness to reduce arms sales to Taiwan if China maintained a peaceful approach to the island. The leadership of both countries had now clearly communicated a desire to put the Taiwan arms sales issue behind them and get on with practical business.

This accelerated progress in the negotiations. So did personnel changes in Washington, which removed the pro-deal Alexander Haig as Secretary of State and replaced him with the more skeptical George Shultz.[30] This convinced the Chinese that delay risked a relapse into rancor. By the end of July, after intense deliberations in both capitals, the two sides agreed to a compromise.

In a Joint Communiqué issued August 17, 1982, China unilaterally strengthened its commitment to a "fundamental policy to strive for a peaceful solution to the Taiwan question." The U.S. unilaterally stated

[30] Alexander Haig resigned on July 5, 1982. George Shultz replaced him as Secretary of State on July 16, 1982.

that in light of this Chinese policy, the United States did "not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan [would] not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, and that it [intended] gradually to reduce its sale of arms to Taiwan, leading, over a period of time, to a final resolution."

The negotiations thus concluded with the Chinese having had to accept that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan would continue indefinitely, though at steadily declining levels. The contradiction between normal relations with Beijing and continuing assistance to its adversary in the unconcluded Chinese civil war was left unresolved. The U.S. was compelled to add awkward specifics to its earlier undertaking to sell only "carefully selected defensive weapons on a restrained basis." Neither side had been able to obtain more than an implied linkage between its own commitments and those of the other. As we issued the Communiqué, the negotiators on both sides figuratively held our noses.

But the compromise the two sides had reached had positive strategic consequences. Without Americans prescribing any particular course of action to either party to the Taiwan dispute, we had created circumstances that induced them both to set aside military confrontation in favor of some sort of "peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question" between themselves. Beijing knew that the progressive reduction in U.S. arms sales to Taiwan depended on it visibly reducing its military threat to Taiwan. China thus acquired an interest in proving its peaceful intent, which it proceeded to do in both word and deed. Meanwhile, the prospect of steadily diminishing American military assistance left the Chinese on Taiwan with no choice but to consider realistic alternatives to military confrontation to manage relations with Chinese on the mainland. Within a decade,

Taipei responded to Beijing's repeated offers of political dialogue.

The realization by both Beijing and Taipei that rapprochement offered a more promising approach than military posturing to the management of cross-Strait relations took time to take root. But it did take root. For a time, it even survived the abrupt U.S. abandonment of limits on American arms sales to Taiwan a decade after we had agreed to them.

In September 1992, the collapse of the common Soviet enemy, the deterioration in U.S.-China relations after the 1989 Tiananmen incident, and a long-running campaign by proponents of military versus diplomatic approaches to securing Taiwan came together. The expediencies of U.S. election-year politics produced a massive sale of advanced fighter aircraft to Taiwan — the largest arms sale package to any single foreign purchaser to that date. So much for the progressive reduction of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan as an incentive for a sustained peaceful approach to reunification by Beijing! Military deterrence had shoved diplomacy aside in America's handling of Chinese nationalism. This turnabout froze cross-Strait rapprochement and encouraged Taiwan independence advocates to step up their defiance of Beijing, while provoking the remilitarization of cross-Strait relations.

And that's how the stage got set for us to arrive where we are. The military balance in the Taiwan Strait now clearly favors Beijing. We're back in the business of transferring advanced weapons systems to Taiwan. This creates an increasing danger that the Chinese civil war could reignite, leading to our first war with a nuclear power over where its borders lie.

Amb. Chas Freeman, Adm. William Fallon (former PACOM Commander), and Adm. Yang Junfei talk on board the *Shenyang* destroyer in Qingdao during the U.S.-China Policy Foundation's 2013 track II military delegation.

Looking Back on U.S.-China Normalization

Ambassador John H. Holdridge[31]

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Adapted from ***Crossing the Divide: An Insider's Account of the Normalization of U.S.-China Relations*** *(1997, Rowman & Littlefield).*

The Slow Road to Normalization

On February 28, 1972, the United States and China signed the Shanghai Communiqué, which noted that "progress toward the normalization of relations between China and the United States is in the interest of all countries." Yet nearly seven years were to pass before formal diplomatic relations were established, and the "liaison offices" each country had established in the other's capital were replaced by embassies. Why did this take so long?

My own interpretation is that the leaders of both countries first had to face pressing issues and political struggles that demanded their immediate attention. In the United States, crucial domestic issues included the Watergate scandal, the resignation of President Nixon, and his replacement by Vice President Ford. The short-lived Ford administration did not succeed in moving normalization forward despite President Ford's visit to Beijing in November 1975. When President Carter took office after the election of 1976, he was confronted by a plateful of problems almost everywhere in the world,

[31] John H. Holdridge (1924–2001) served as a foreign service officer and Ambassador to Singapore (1975–1978). He also accompanied Henry Kissinger on his secret diplomatic mission to China in 1971 and helped draft the Shanghai Communiqué. He, along with Professor Chi Wang and Ambassador Arthur Hummel, Jr.. founded the U.S.-China Policy Foundation in 1995.

including the tense U.S.-Soviet Cold War confrontation, continued hostilities between Arabs and Israelis, and the U.S.-Iran hostage crisis.

In China, although Mao's hyper-revolutionary influence was diminishing due to his age and infirmities, factional struggle in the leadership continued. A relatively pragmatic and moderate group, led by Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, hoped to return China to a less ideological political and economic environment, while a more radical group led by the "Gang of Four" sought to perpetuate Mao's revolutionary philosophy. (The Gang of Four consisted of Mao's wife Jiang Qing, Shanghai Mayor Zhang Chunqiao, Mao Zedong's putative successor Wang Hongwen, and Cultural Minister Yao Wenyuan.) Following the death of Zhou Enlai in January 1976, the Gang of Four drove Deng Xiaoping out of office — although Deng recovered from this temporary setback and reappeared after Mao's own demise in September 1976.

Some staking out of the parameters of U.S.-China normalization did occur, however, in 1975. China presented the United States with three principles for normalization: The U.S. had to 1) abrogate its Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan; 2) end all official relations with Taiwan; and 3) withdraw all of its remaining military forces from Taiwan. For its part, the United States reiterated five major points to assure China of American sincerity in pursuing normalization: 1) The United States would acknowledge China's position (first stated in the Shanghai Communiqué) that there was but one China and that Taiwan was part of it; 2) the U.S. would not support a Taiwan independence movement; 3) as the U.S. withdrew its military and diplomatic presence from Taiwan, it would ensure that the Japanese would not come in as a replacement; 4) the U.S. would support any peaceful solution to the Taiwan situation and would not support Taiwan in any military action against China; and 5) the U.S. would seek to achieve normalization. President Ford made one contribution during his brief White House

tenure: assuring China that the U.S. would maintain only unofficial ties with Taiwan after normalization.

By 1977, political pressures in both countries had eased enough to allow U.S.-China relations to again move forward. The impetus came largely from the American side. In February 1977, just a month after his inauguration, President Carter asked Leonard Woodcock, former president of the United Auto Workers Union, to be Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing. Carter told Woodcock at the time that he attached the highest priority to improving U.S.-China relations. At about the same time, Carter asked Michel Oksenberg of the National Security Council to lead an internal White House review of U.S. policy toward China and the prospects for establishing diplomatic relations with Beijing. In April, the review was broadened into a more formal bureaucratic study known as the Presidential Review Memorandum No. 24, or PRM-24.

In August 1977, President Carter sent Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Beijing to work out a formula for normalization. In meetings with Foreign Minister Huang Hua and Deng Xiaoping, however, Vance took what he termed the "maximum position," insisting that U.S. government personnel be allowed to remain on Taiwan in an official capacity, even though the mutual defense treaty would be allowed to "lapse" and the withdrawal of U.S. military forces would be completed.

The formula Vance offered amounted to setting terms that Deng Xiaoping (who had by then reemerged from his political setback to become China's paramount leader) was bound to reject. Deng reportedly said nothing derogatory at the time, but in a meeting with a private delegation several weeks later, (including, among others, Kay Graham of the *Washington Post* and Arthur Sulzberger of the *New York Times*), he characterized his meeting with Vance as a setback in Sino-American relations. I personally find it difficult to understand how it was that Vance, either on his own or under construction, took

such a sterile course.

Having burned their fingers over the Vance trip to China, the Carter administration and the State Department put the whole question of normalization on hold for several months. Then, in November 1977, Huang Zhen, the outgoing Chinese Liaison Office chief in Washington, invited National Security Advisor Brzezinski to Beijing for further discussions. President Carter, over the State Department's objections, eventually authorized Brzezinski to make the visit, although the trip was delayed until May 1978.

Breaking the Logjam

When Brzezinski overrode the objections of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on proceeding rapidly toward normalization of U.S.-China relations, it became evident that the foreign policy initiative again rested with the White House, with Brzezinski the person the president turned to first for advice and operational management. On his May trip, Brzezinski was authorized to inform the Chinese that the Carter administration wanted to accelerate the normalization process, and to this end was willing to accept all three of China's basic positions. While prepared to go this far, Brzezinski's instructions retained a proviso that the U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan would remain in force for a year after normalization — the wording of the treaty stated that it could be invalidated by either party after a year's notice — and that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan would continue. Brzezinski was also told to inform the Chinese that despite the firm U.S. stance against the Soviets, the United States would seek to pursue START[32] talks with the Soviet Union simultaneously with the U.S.-China normalization

[32] START stands for Strategic Arms Reduction Talks. These talks were a series of negotiations between the Soviet Union and the U.S., intended to reduce each country's arsenal of nuclear weapons. These talks began in 1982, survived the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, and have continued in various new forms with modern-day Russia.

talks. The relationship with the Soviet Union was very much on the minds of the foreign policy leaders in Washington.

In September 1978, talks resumed in Beijing between Leonard Woodcock and Huang Hua (and occasionally Deng Xiaoping himself) and in Washington between Brzezinski and Chinese Liaison Office Chief Chai Zemin or, in his absence, Chargé Han Xu. By late 1978, Deng appeared anxious to see normalization move ahead. It is quite probable that during 1977 and most of 1978, Deng Xiaoping had not been able to address the normalization question fully, and had to wait until his own domestic house was in order. After the Third Plenum of the 11th Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, however, in October-November 1978, Deng was able to strengthen his hand and solidify his leadership role, as well as to gain support for his definition of the future direction of the party and the country. Deng, for instance, succeeded at the Plenum in divorcing party bureaucrats from direct management of economic enterprises. It thus appears that, at the end of 1978, Deng entered into the final normalization negotiations with the United States fresh from winning a victory over the long-established party leadership, and in a strong position to take initiatives in the foreign policy arena.

Given the strong Chinese feelings against America's insistence on continuing arms sales to Taiwan, however, Deng needed some overriding factor to use to justify closer U.S.-China relations. This factor could only have been the growing tension between China and Vietnam over Cambodia. My own surmise is that China resented the increasingly warm relations between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, which China regarded as a hostile entity. These growing ties included Vietnam's joining the Soviet-dominated and organized Council for Economic Mutual Assistance, and signing a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance with the USSR. The Chinese were also deeply concerned that Vietnam could turn into a channel to extend Soviet

power into areas adjoining China's southern borders, *e.g.* by a Soviet takeover of the facilities left by the United States at Cam Ranh Bay.[33] Of the three former French Indochinese states,[34] only Cambodia remained outside the Soviet Orbit following the U.S. withdrawal in 1975 and China would have felt a serious strategic threat if Cambodia came under Vietnamese influence. Between July and December 1978, Vietnam began a serious military buildup along the Cambodian border, and China responded by making its own military preparations on the border with Vietnam.

In addition to military preparations, however, China needed to take political action to offset the presumed backing that Vietnam enjoyed from the Soviet Union. Only one power was capable of balancing the Soviets: the United States. With the Plenum completed and Deng free to focus on foreign relations, and with unfolding events in Indochina as a backdrop, an agreement on U.S.-China normalization was worked out in the short span of two weeks or so in the final two months of 1978.

On December 15, 1978, the agreement on normalization of U.S.-China relations was announced to a startled world. As part of the agreement, the United States said it would terminate the Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan following a year's grace; it withdrew diplomatic recognition from the "Republic of China on Taiwan" and declared that an unofficial relationship would be set up in its place. The U.S. further declared that all of its military personnel were to be withdrawn from Taiwan within four months. China did not challenge the U.S. premise that reunification of Taiwan with the mainland would be by peaceful means, although this issue was declared to be entirely China's internal

[33] During the war in Vietnam, the U.S. built a large logistics facility in Cam Ranh Bay, which included the Cam Ranh Air Force Base. It was strategically useful as a seaport via which supplies could be offloaded for the U.S. military.
[34] Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

affair.

Nothing was said in any of the normalization documents about terminating U.S. arms sales to Taiwan — in light of subsequent events, a very significant omission. In fact, the Chinese leadership hesitated in accepting normalization without cessation of arms sales, but went along for "strategic reasons," as I learned later in Beijing.

The First Years of "Normal" Relations

While the joint announcements by Beijing and Washington of normalization came as a stunning surprise to some, overall public and press reaction in the United States was surprisingly mild and generally favorable. Americans were to hear a great deal more about China in the early months of 1979.

The normalization agreement had included an invitation from President Carter to Deng Xiaoping to visit the United States, and Deng quickly agreed; his trip began on 29 January 1979. Deng's successful and high-profile visit, in which he generally seemed friendly and open, included stops in Washington DC, Atlanta, and Houston. In Houston, while attending a rodeo, he even put on a cowboy hat and rode in a stagecoach.

Meanwhile, Vietnam had invaded Cambodia on December 24, 1978, and Deng did not miss the opportunity provided by his U.S. visit to introduce the United States into the Cambodian equation. He seemed to be trying to place the United States in China's corner in much the same way that the Soviet Union appeared to be in Vietnam's corner. A constant theme of Deng's public remarks was, "It may be necessary for China to teach Vietnam a lesson." (Immediately after leaving the United States, he declared that "It *will* be necessary to teach Vietnam a lesson.") At the same time, Deng showed his understanding of U.S. concerns about Taiwan by saying, "We wish from the bottom of our hearts to resolve [the reunification] question in a peaceful way, for

that will be advantageous to our country and to our nation." While not a reunification of force, Deng's statement gave the United States and Taiwan grounds to assume that China would adopt a peaceful approach to the reunification issue.

With Deng's visit having presumably achieved its purpose, China attacked Vietnam. On 19 February 1979, Chinese forces crossed the Vietnamese border in the vicinity of Lang Son and several other widely separated places. Vietnamese resistance was reportedly intense, and some reports place Chinese losses as high as 30,000 men. Nevertheless, by early March, the Chinese had taken the important border town of Lang Son, and advanced across the range of hills dividing Vietnam and China to reach the lowlands of the Red River Delta. At this point, the Chinese did what they had done against the Indians in Assam in 1962: they simply stopped fighting, turned around, and marched back into China. From their standpoint, the Vietnamese had been taught a "lesson," and the Chinese saw to it that the war was kept a limited one. The U.S. government, embroiled in the conflict in South Vietnam, reacted with some approval, while public opinion in the United States remained passive. Meanwhile, the USSR had not reacted except in propaganda statements supporting Hanoi.

During the rest of 1979 and 1980, President Carter's last two years in the White House, two contradictory lines emerged in U.S.-China relations. On the one hand, the Carter administration rapidly broadened U.S.-China contacts and exchanges in a variety of fields: diplomatic, military, economic, cultural, academic, and other fronts. On the other, Carter continued and actually expanded U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, once the one-year moratorium informally agreed to by the United States had passed. In fact, U.S. arms sales to Taiwan reached a high of more than $835 million (in 1982 dollars) during Carter's last year in office. Given the PRC's strong antipathy to America's maintenance of a military relationship with Taiwan, this contradictory

policy toward China was a growing source of tension in U.S.-China relations.

And the Problems of Today

And so it remains to this day,[35] some twenty years later. The recent exchange of presidential visits — Jiang Zemin's trip to the United States in October 1997 and Bill Clinton's trip to China in June 1998 — allowed many of the tendentious issues between the two nations to be addressed, but little to be resolved.

U.S. relations with Taiwan still constitute a major impediment to smooth U.S.-China relations. The tension reached particularly dangerous levels in 1995–96, following Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui's "unofficial" visit to his alma mater in the United States. In response, China conducted missile tests in the waters adjacent to Taiwan and the United States dispatched two battleships to the northern and southern approaches to the Taiwan Strait. Later, in an intimidation effort aimed toward elections on Taiwan, the Chinese conducted amphibious maneuvers on their side of the Taiwan Strait.

U.S. arms sales to Taiwan remain a constant thorn in China's side, and China has also protested recent U.S. plans to develop and ultimately deploy an anti-ballistic missile system in the region. The Taiwan question was not addressed in depth during the Clinton-Jiang talks of 1997 and 1998, with the Chinese simply taking the position that all the United States needs to do is to "implement fully" the provisions of the three previous joint communiqués. But Clinton's espousal of the so-called "Three Nos" policy while in China in 1998 — no support for "two Chinas," no support for an independent Taiwan, and no backing of Taiwan's entry into international organizations requiring an applicant to be a fully sovereign state — was bitterly criticized by Taiwan and its American supporters. The fact that the "Three Nos"

[35] "This day" refers to the late 90s when this article was originally published.

date back to the first Kissinger visit to China in 1971, (with the U.S. not supporting Taiwan's entry into international organizations requiring national status simply a logical extension), has been dismissed in these quarters.

While the Taiwan issue remains perhaps the most divisive in U.S.-China relations, the issue of human rights has been an even more constant and visible source of friction since the PLA's repression of China's Tiananmen demonstrations on 4 June 1989. On human rights, much of the stiffened Chinese attitude in recent months may, I believe, be due to China's efforts to effect badly needed economic reforms. These measures include overhauling the banking system, closing down unprofitable state-owned enterprises, and vigorously attacking corruption, all of which cost the state billions of dollars each year. The byproduct of such measures is to throw many people out of work and to generate widespread discontent. In the countryside, peasants have rioted against what they see as excessive and unfair local taxes and corrupt local officials, while there is also considerable unrest among China's national minority populations, particularly in Xinjiang and Tibet. All of these developments are taking place at a time of major economic dislocation in East and Southeast Asia, which has put pressure on China to devalue its currency — something that the top leaders say they will not do. To the Chinese leaders, it may seem they are sitting on a powder keg. Given the historic Chinese antipathy to *luan*, or chaos, they may consider that they are compelled by circumstances to take firm measures against the manifestations of unrest, which could potentially spread and undermine China's basic stability.

Looking at the totality of U.S.-China relations, enormous obstacles have had to be overcome by both countries to achieve a reasonably balanced, give-and-take way of dealing with one another. From the beginning, the central issue has been the question of Taiwan, and how

to find a way for both China and the United States to maintain "normal" political, economic, and military relationships of benefit to both while the United States maintains friendly (but unofficial) links with Taiwan. China's transfer of sensitive military technology to third parties, its large trade imbalance with the United States and its "closed shop" approach to some areas of foreign investment, allegations of unauthorized acquisition of sensitive technology from the United States, and alleged donations to the 1996 U.S. elections, have all exacerbated U.S.-China tensions. The positive side of the ledger includes thriving economic relations, productive exchanges in many fields, China's moves toward fuller participation in many multilateral agreements, and instances in which the United States and China have worked together to help resolve international disputes. The exchange of presidential visits in 1997 and 1998 also led to apparent progress on several fronts: President Jiang Zemin seemed to better understand the depth of American feeling on human rights, and (for a while, at least) took a constructive approach to the questions of Tibet, Chinese arms transfers to third parties, and to strengthening the rule of law of China, although in some areas there has been subsequent backtracking.

In conclusion, I believe the United States needs to take less of an "instant gratification" approach to relations with China. A certain amount of patience is needed as China faces up to its problems and overcomes them, while at the same time working through diplomatic channels to ease areas of friction. Even in the absence of a mutual threat from the former Soviet Union, a strong U.S.-China relationship is still very much in the best interests of both countries. To cite only a few reasons: the United States remains the world's strongest military power and the world's (and China's) largest market, while China is becoming an economic giant, an important market, a regional power, and remains a strong voice in the Third World and possessor of the

veto power in the UN Security Council.

Having lived through the entire period of the ups and downs in the relations of the United States with the People's Republic of China, I would hate to see another generation of diplomats and Sinologists compelled to go through the same sort of trying experiences that many of us in the foreign policy community endured over twenty-five years or more to put U.S.-China relations back on course. Neither does China need another period of strained relations with the United States. In political, social, economic, and military terms, the stakes are too high.

Amb. Holdridge (left) shakes hands with President Jiang Zemin at a welcome luncheon co-hosted by the U.S.-China Policy Foundation in 1997.

A Conversation with Arthur Hummel, Jr.

Adapted from an episode of The China Forum *recorded in 1990 with Kerry Dumbaugh*

Arthur Hummel, Jr. (1920–2001) served as the second U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China under President Ronald Reagan. Hummel was a career diplomat who also served as ambassador to Ethiopia, Burma, and Pakistan. In 1995, he co-founded the U.S.-China Policy Foundation. Hummel was born in Shanxi, China to missionary parents.

Kerry Dumbaugh: What were some of the things that you remember being high-points of your tenure as Ambassador to China?

Ambassador Arthur Hummel: Well, getting to be ambassador to China, where I spoke the language fluently and where I was born,[36] was a great surprise and a nice way to wind-up a career. After that I reached the mandatory retirement age and retired in 1985.

Before that, as Assistant Secretary and as Deputy Assistant Secretary, I've been closely involved with China policy from the Washington end before 1981. I arrived in Beijing in the summer of 1981 and we immediately had a confrontation that illustrated a complete cycle from quite good relations to strong tensions — a downturn and everything — and then back to normality. The cycle consisted of grave suspicion on the part of the Chinese Communist government that the new Reagan administration in 1981 was drifting off in a pro-Taiwan direction which, actually, candidate Reagan had announced he was

[36] Ambassador Hummel was born to Christian missionaries in China in Fenzhou, Shanxi, where he lived until he was four. The family then moved to Beijing where they remained until they were forced to relocate when he was seven years old, due to the dangers posed by the Northern Expedition, a military campaign launched by the army of the Kuomintang intended to reunify China.

going to do in the campaign of 1980.[37]

The Reagan administration made the right noises, and Assistant Secretary Al Haig[38] was quite instrumental in keeping our policy on track so that we didn't have a real confrontation. But the Chinese Communists got word of plans by some people in the White House to sell very advanced weapons to Taiwan. One thing led to another and they decided they had to test out the Reagan administration, so they tested us out by demanding that we should set a date for terminating all arm sales to Taiwan. Otherwise, they would have to lower the level of diplomatic representation. And that is diplomatic double-talk for firing the ambassadors. So, you can imagine that I gave this a great deal of attention.

Anyway, it took ten months, we negotiated an agreement where we did NOT set a date.

Dumbaugh: This is the Communiqué on Arms Sales to Taiwan?[39]

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[37] In August 1980, presidential candidate Reagan said he would pursue "official" or "government-to-government" relations with Taiwan. He quickly walked back his position, stating he still intended to abide by the Taiwan Relations Act and maintain official relations with Beijing. However, his remarks angered Beijing, an attitude which carried over into the following year. See: Katharine Macdonald and Robert G. Kaiser, "Reagan Declares He Seeks Only to Hold to Taiwan Relations Act," *Washington Post,* August 26, 1980, https://wapo.st/3hzniIF.

[38] Alexander Haig was a retired U.S. army general who served as Secretary of State under President Reagan from 1981 to 1982.

[39] The United States-China Joint Communiqué on United States Arms Sales to Taiwan, also known as the August 17 Communiqué, attempted to preserve Sino-U.S. relations despite disagreements over Taiwan. While the agreement did not contain a set date for terminating arms sales to Taiwan, nor did it represent a consensus between the U.S. and China regarding the Taiwan arms sales issue, it did use language that allowed the U.S. and China to both interpret the agreement differently in ways beneficial to their own policies. In essence, the flexibility of the Communiqué was what made it successful. See: "The August 17, 1982 U.S.-China Communiqué on Arms Sales to Taiwan," Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1981-1988/china-communique.

Hummel: That's right, the Communiqué of August 1982.[40]

Relations remained strained by a whole series of things: a defection of a young lady tennis player, a confrontation over trade problems, a constitutional problem involving a suit in our American courts where we had to explain *ad nauseam* to the Chinese that the executive branch cannot interfere in our courts, and so on.

But by May of 1983, when our Secretary of Commerce[41] visited China, things smoothed out and we had a good period. This coincided with an extremely successful period of China's economic development. Personal income shot up enormously — China, by the way, in spite of the aftermath of Tiananmen,[42] is still the only Communist country that has given a very substantially better economic life to its people in the last 11 years among the reformers.

Dumbaugh: And you noticed it during these first few years?

Hummel: Oh, yes, you could see it coming even in my time before 1985. After 1985, things began to level off. They've done the easy reforms and the hard ones are still to come. But there are TV sets everywhere in rural villages, shops full of consumer goods, things that you simply cannot see in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union.[43]

Dumbaugh: Let's move on. Now, you were in China and ambassador during what I would call the formative years of U.S.-China relations, and you got to see everything put into place, and you got to see the economic reforms begin. It must have been an exciting time.

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[40] For more information on this topic, see "The 1981–1982 Sino-American Taiwan Arms Sales Negotiations" by Ambassador Chas W. Freeman, Jr. in this publication.

[41] The Secretary of Commerce at the time was Malcolm Baldrige Jr. (1922–1987), who remained in the role from 1981 until his death.

[42] He is referring here to the Tiananmen Square Incident in June of 1989.

[43] It should be noted that, at the time this episode of *The China Forum* was recorded, the Soviet Union still existed. It was not officially dissolved until the following year on December 26, 1991.

Hummel: It really was.

Dumbaugh: Deng Xiaoping and China were going down the capitalist road, there were all kinds of excitements and misunderstandings going on. Now, you just went again and were there for about a month, I understand. And just returned three or four weeks ago. What is your assessment of the situation there now? This is after Tiananmen Square, almost ten years after you were ambassador.

Hummel: Well, since 1985, I've been going back two or three times a year. As you say, I was there in early May. I'd also been there last October/November, both times after Tiananmen, both times had intensive discussions with high-level Chinese officials as well as with Chinese friends.

I think my main overall impression is one of great sorrow that the government — the top leadership — has lost the confidence of the Chinese people. And, in fact, among large segments of the intellectuals and bureaucrats, quite often government officials talk extraordinarily freely about their criticisms of the premier and of other people. This is unpleasant and it makes you wonder why the government, which must know that it is unpopular, is not doing more to bridge this gap.

Dumbaugh: Well, that's what I was going to ask. If they talk freely to you, does that necessarily mean they talk freely to the leaders who should be hearing this?

Hummel: No, no, no, no. It's very dangerous.

Dumbaugh: I would think so.

Hummel: And by talking freely, I mean, of course, in private. But the number of Chinese who are similarly disaffected with their government is so enormous that everybody knows who they are and they trust each other to a remarkable degree and talk to each other, even more candidly than they do to me. I had time only for a small sample, but when I talk about generalizations like this, about Chinese intellectuals, I am relying on other Chinese who talk about intellectuals, on American newsmen, on embassy contacts. We've all

had the same experience of a government that's lost the confidence of its own people.

Dumbaugh: And it's so sad because things looked so bright at the beginning of the last decade and we've almost completely reversed, where the brightness is in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe,[44] and China looks like it's bringing up the rear. In your talks, did you speak with Chinese leaders, such as the premier?

Hummel: No, I didn't ask to speak with the premier.[45] I spoke to other high government officials. Last fall, I spoke to one of the six-man Politburo Standing Committee, Li Ruihuan, who is rumored and hoped to be the replacement for Li Peng when Li Peng is moved out.

Dumbaugh: And is there speculation on when that would be?

Hummel: Many people thought it would be done last fall. One can speculate that maybe the example of Romanian Ceaușescu, where the leaders were murdered or were executed,[46] brought things up short and caused that not to take place.

I am confident that before long — and I am reflecting the same kind of confidence that many Chinese express — that the government is going to have to take steps for the good of China, for the good of everybody, to bridge this gap. This means modest steps in the direction of

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[44] In the mid-1980s, massive changes were taking place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Mikhail Gorbachev was attempting to reform and restructure the political and economic systems of the Soviet Union (*perestroika*) while also opening up the Soviet government (*glasnost*). He was moving away from Soviet ideology and travelling abroad, adjusting the Soviet Union's foreign policy to make it appear less threatening, which would eventually lead to democratization in eastern Europe and, ultimately, the end of the Cold War.

[45] The premier at this time was Li Peng (1928–2019), who served as 4th Premier of the PRC from 1988 to 1998.

[46] Romanian communist President, Nicolae Ceaușescu, was ousted in late December of 1989 during a rebellion that overthrew the communist government. He and his wife were tried before the court of the National Salvation Front, which was Romania's provisional government. They were executed on December 25, 1989.

democracy. The economic issues that galvanized so many people before have, if not disappeared…well, the inflation is no longer an issue. Inflation was very serious for two years before Tiananmen, and that's one of the factors that brought everybody out on the streets to be sympathetic with the students. Corruption is another one, and they're making efforts to attack corruption, too. So, the subsidiary issues don't exist, and the economy has started to grow again, it's doing well enough, so there's not going to be an economic collapse that will bring people out again the same way.

Dumbaugh: Right. And many people thought there might be, with the retrenchment.

Hummel: Well, the Western press, I'm afraid, has concentrated on…

Dumbaugh: And people who read the Western press.

Hummel: Well, I guess I'm speaking about the American readers who were told factual things, like the amount of American investment, foreign investment, in China is very, very small after June of last year and Tiananmen.

Dumbaugh: You mean additional investment?

Hummel: Additional investment. I know of no American operation that's actually been closed down after Tiananmen. And we have substantial investments in joint ventures. It's not easy to have a joint venture in China, it's not easy in India or Indonesia either, but we have them.

But to concentrate on the amount of investment is one thing. It's trade that really drives the relationship and our bilateral trade with China went up 25 percent last year in 1989.

Dumbaugh: I have heard that you are not the first person to say that and to point that out. But it seems so surprising.

Hummel: China's overall exports to the world rose something like 25 percent last year — in spite of Tiananmen — to 58 billion. So, you may earn 58 billion in the equivalent of the U.S. dollar in foreign exchange.

They lose two to three billion in tourism (tourism's way down), they lose three or four billion maybe in investments that don't occur. But this is not a crippling thing. And the World Bank — which knows more than anyone else about the economy — points out that there is still a good credit risk and their debt-service ratio is very low and their foreign exchange position is good.

Dumbaugh: Very quickly now, we have one minute left and this is a terrible position to put you in, but the succession question. When Deng Xiaoping and some of the elder leaders die, what do you see as the immediate term for China? In the year after that happens?

Hummel: I don't know, it's almost impossible to guess. Surely, there will be a reshuffle of people. There will be a re-evaluation of policy, which will drive personnel changes, and the scenario that many Chinese have, who are thinking not of a revolution but an evolution… In this scenario, Deng Xiaoping is a good guy because he may accomplish the removal of Li Peng, the hardliner, and putting in someone who will begin to bridge this gap.

Dumbaugh: But nobody really knows.

Hummel: The older people, when they go — and they might go close together — will set off an unpredictable situation at the top. I do not think China's going to fall into fragments. I think everyone's afraid of chaos in China, but we'll have to see.

Amb. Hummel speaking with Kerry Dumbaugh as they record the1990 episode of *The China Forum.*

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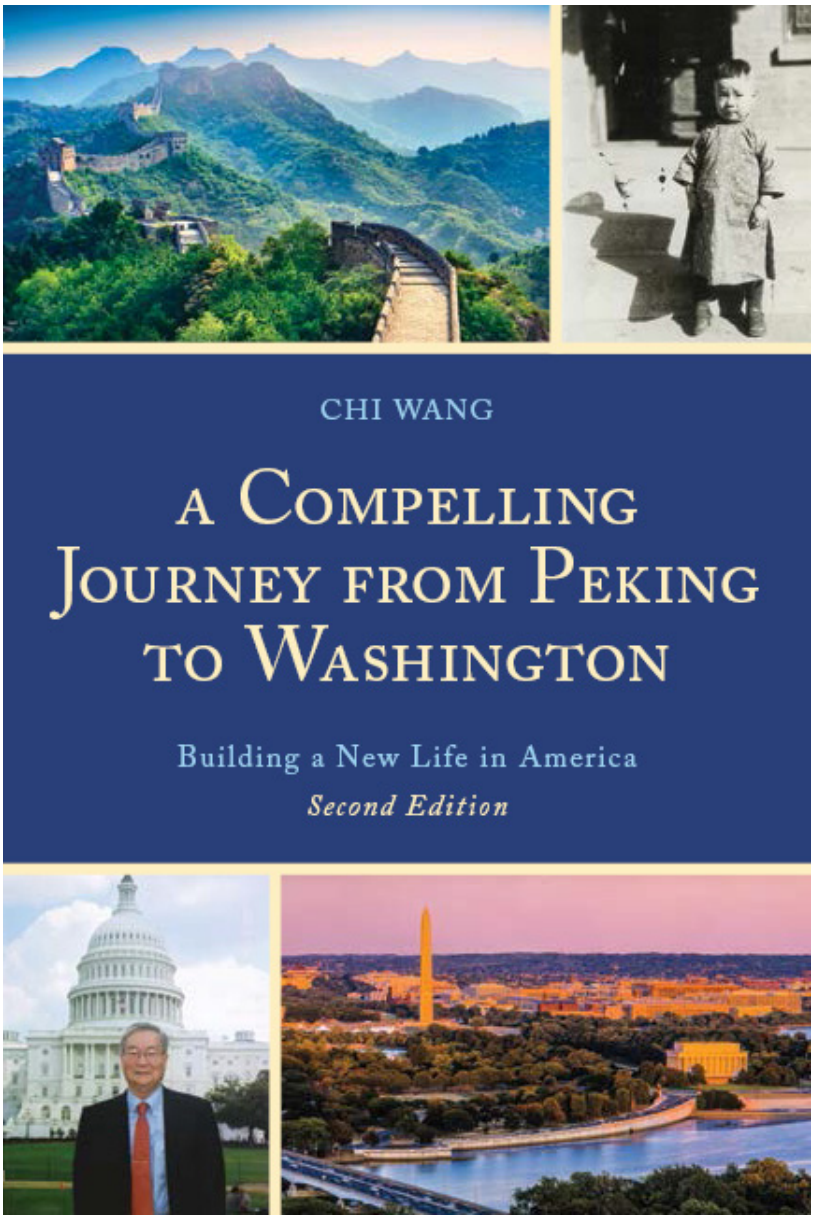

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Newt Gingrich with Claire Christensen. **Trump Vs. China: Facing America's Greatest Threat.** New York: Center Gate, 2019. 416 pages. $28 Hardcover.

Reviewed by Allison Golden

The biggest problem with New Gingrich's *Trump vs. China*: *Facing America's Great Threat* is that its title is a misnomer. Despite featuring frequent dueling quotes from President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, the book is not really about how Trump individually is shaping China policy. The second part of the title is also inaccurate. Gingrich goes to great lengths and often deploys inflammatory rhetoric to describe China as "America's greatest threat," but does not present a convincing enough argument to measure up to such a claim.

When labeling China as "America's greatest threat," the former Speaker of the House warns "the very survival of our free and sovereign nation" is at stake. (3–4) Gingrich insists his rhetoric, while inflammatory, is no hyperbole: "This may sound extreme to some. However, after a lifetime of studying world conflicts — and recently more than a year focused on studying the current situation in China — I'm confident in saying that China is the greatest competitor the United States has had to deal with in its 243 yearlong history." (8)

Notable in this quotation is that Gingrich switches from referring to China as a "threat" to a "competitor." These two terms are not interchangeable and imply entirely different assumptions of the relationship between the United States and China. A threat is something that by definition poses a potential danger to the survival and security of the United States. A competitor is much more benign. The American capitalist system is centered on competition. The

United States and China can compete politically, economically, and technologically, without threatening the survival of the United States or its freedoms.

The first section of this book is called "Trump vs. China," but nowhere does Gingrich give any explanation for how Trump is personally involved in China policy or how the president's worldview and business experience have shaped how he engages with Beijing. When Gingrich does talk about Trump in comparison to Xi and China, his comparisons do not match. He analyzes Trump's "Make America Great Again" as an alternative to Xi's "China Dream," arguing "one or the other will ultimately define the future of the human race."(9) This rhetoric is once again over-dramatic. There may well be serious implications of both "Make American Again" and the "China Dream" down the road, but determining the fate of humanity seems like a stretch.

Rhetoric aside, the comparison is inaccurate. Xi's "China Dream" was thoroughly embraced by the Party leadership and Chinese society, and was, along with "Xi Jinping Thought," incorporated into the constitution. The intention and reception of "Make American Great Again" in the U.S. is entirely different. It is a campaign slogan, not a policy. Gingrich's political bias shows in his aggrandizing of its reception in the United States: "After enduring years of failed policies, corrupt politicians, and economic hardship under the Obama administration, Americans voted for candidate Trump to bring back American values and restore the country to its former greatness. The Make America Great Again movement has reinvigorated the values Americans have learned from history and passed down through generations." (28) This may be true of the president's supporters, but the other half of the country is inherently opposed to this "movement." This is a far cry from the "China Dream," which is now ingrained in the Chinese constitution.

Therein lies the true difference between the two; in the United States, the people have a choice of whether or not to join in the "Make American Great Again" cry, while in China there is no alternative to the "Dream." It may be correct to compare the two in that they both espouse similarly vague, grand goals for national rejuvenation — but beyond that they are far too different in their intentions for them to be assessed as a window into the broader U.S.-China relationship and the differences in leadership between Trump and Xi.

Gingrich's rosy interpretation of Trump's China policy is based in his criticism of Trump's predecessors and Democratic contemporaries. In this respect, his clear political bias taints his argument. Take Gingrich's examination of a case involving the alleged connections between a driver for Democratic Senator Diane Feinstein and Chinese intelligence agencies. By Gingrich's telling, Feinstein employed a driver who for twenty years was an informant to Chinese intelligence services, and likely compromised sensitive material including that involving Feinstein's work as chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee. A simple Google search shows that while the FBI has not publicly released all the details of the case, the truth is likely far tamer than Gingrich paints.[47]

The FBI did contact Feinstein about her driver, but all information available suggests the driver had only indirectly been in contact with Chinese intelligence for a matter of months, not decades, and never had any access to classified information. He was removed from his position as soon as Feinstein was informed about the FBI's investigation. If Gingrich cannot present a comprehensive,

[47] See Alex Kasprak, "Did Senator Dianne Feinstein Employ a Chinese Spy?," Snopes, Sep. 20, 2018. https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/feinstein-chinese-spy/; Claire Foran and Steve Brusk, "Trump and Feinstein Spar over reports of alleged Chinese spying," CNN, Aug. 5, 2018. https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/05/politics/trump-dianne-feinstein-chinese-spying-reports/index.html

non-partisan analysis about American politics, why should the reader expect him to offer any more nuance regarding China?

In discussing China, Gingrich makes a few key word-choice decisions that he sticks to for the duration of his book. Some, like choosing not to refer to Xi Jinping as "president," he defends, arguing "Referring to Xi as president distorts the truth and leaves the impression that China's system is structured like ours. It is not."(23, 24) Gingrich is not the first to make such an argument,[48] but this is not the only time he fixates on rhetoric.

Gingrich nearly always identifies China as "totalitarian Communist China" and to Xi as a dictator. He offers these terms without definitions or defense. Is China totalitarian? Is Xi Jinping a dictator? These questions are far more complex than Gingrich presents them as, and by not taking the time to explain why he attributes these terms, his argument is weakened.

Scholars and China analysts have debated these labels, and largely hold that while Xi Jinping is more authoritarian than his most recent predecessors, his regime is not totalitarian — at least not yet. Minxin Pei argues that the "foundations of totalitarian social control and political repression" have remained intact in China since the Mao days, but that in the post-Mao era, "the party-state's repressive totalitarian apparatus has mostly been switched off."[49] The same could be said about dictatorship.[50]

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[48] See: Nikhil Sonnad, "Xi Jinping is not the "president" of China," Quartz, Nov. 2, 2017. https://qz.com/1112638/xi-jinping-title-xi-jinping-is-not-the-president-of-china/; Isaac Stone Fish, "Stop Calling Xi Jinping "President"," Slate, Aug, 8, 2019. https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/08/xi-jinping-president-chairman-title.html

[49] Minxin Pei, "From Tiananmen to Neo-Stalinism," *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 1 (January 2020): 153-154.

[50] Jamil Anderlini, "Under Xi Jinping, China is Turning Back to Dictatorship," *Financial Times,* Oct. 10, 2017; Susan L. Shirk, "China in Xi's "New Era": The Return to Personalistic Rule," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 2 (April 2018), 33.

This is not to say definitively that Gingrich is wrong to label China totalitarian or Xi a dictator, but that by failing to detail *why* he chooses such labels, he undermines his argument. You cannot argue that China is a threat to American because it is a totalitarian Communist dictatorship, and then fail to explain why China merits such labels.

Gingrich claimed early in his book that U.S.-China "competition" [again, his word], was "not...between Americans and Chinese people at an ethnic level."(8) However, the second section of his book, "Understanding China," begins with this line:

> "For most of China's history there has been a deep assumption among its people that China is the "Middle Kingdom." The actual translation of the Chinese word for "China" is more accurately translated as "Central States," but while dynasties rose and fell there was a general sense of continuity." (157)

There is a lot to unpack in these lines, and it highlights how Gingrich's view of China seems to invalidate the perspective of the Chinese people themselves. Yes, *zhongguo* can be translated as either "Middle Kingdom" or "Central States," but the concept of the Middle Kingdom — that the Chinese nation stood between earth and the heavens — was integral to thousands of years of Chinese civilization. Gingrich's dismissal of this indicates cultural bias and a poor understanding of China. Gingrich elaborates on this point, and further reveals his bias, by arguing "in ancient China, the sophistication of Western civilizations was virtually unknown."(164) If the real threat to the United States is, as Gingrich asserts, the Chinese Communist Party and not the Chinese people, then why does he feel the need to argue against the idea of the Middle Kingdom and to caveat the grandeur of ancient China with the "sophistication" of the West?

The third and final part of the book is called "Global Challenges." He details China's increasingly assertive foreign policy through new initiatives like the South China Sea island construction, military modernization, and the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as ongoing flashpoints like Taiwan and Hong Kong. Before the conclusion, he includes a chapter titled "Not China's fault," which is less of a chapter than a list of things the U.S. has done (or failed to do) — some of which have a direct correlation to the U.S.-China competition ("It is not China's fault that the United States produces too many lawyers and not enough scientists and engineers"(298)) while others are less direct and need more fleshing out than Gingrich allots ("It is not China's fault that the United States has the most expensive health care system in the world by an enormous margin"(299) — this is true, but Gingrich does not explain how this relates to China).

While his claims are unsubstantiated and his argument uneven, Gingrich's recommendations, focused on educating Americans and further empowering Congress, are mostly sound. (15–16) There are some glaring exceptions. His suggestion that the United States build its own islands in the South China Sea (232) shows he does not fully understand the U.S. position on China's island build up. The U.S. opposes any country's unilateral claims on the South China Sea and argues it is international waters. The U.S. claims no territory and thus has no justification to build islands there. Gingrich also recommends "a new synthesis of our society's assets to maximize our ability to cultivate friends, serve markets, and build alliances and relationships across the planet using the strengths of our American system and values."(251) While he argues Trump is doing just this, he fails to recognize that the Obama administration put forward a key path to achieving this goal: the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, which Trump killed in one of his very first acts in office. While the TPP became a political nuisance during the 2016 election and was

disavowed by both Trump and Hillary Clinton (ironically, a key initial supporter of the deal), its goal was to establish exactly the type of relationship across the Asia-Pacific and beyond that Gingrich describes.

Gingrich is not a China expert. By virtue of his career, his writing cannot be separated from clear political bias. This is not to suggest, however, that reading *Trump vs. China* is entirely without merit. Reading this book offers insight into the minds of the extreme China hawks in the United States. Understanding this viewpoint is critical to understanding how Trump and his administration approach China policy. In the acknowledgements, Gingrich notes that Michael Pillsbury's *Hundred Year Marathon* "greatly influenced my thinking," and subsequently thanked Peter Navarro, author of *Death by China*. Pillsbury and Navarro are both influential in the Trump administration's China policy, so it is not surprising that Gingrich would find things to laud about Trump's China policy after speaking to them.

Trump vs. China should not be taken as an authoritative or scholarly examination of U.S.-China relations or of Trump's China policy. Readers without familiarity with these subjects should not approach *Trump Vs. China* with the expectation that they will become experts on either after reading. But the book does offer scholarly potential as a primary source account of the hawkish perspective of the "China threat." Therefore, this book is not recommended to students or casual readers without prior China study.

Juan Du. **The Shenzhen Experiment: The Story of China's Instant City.** Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2020. 384 pages. $35 hardcover.

Reviewed by Rona Vaselaar

Shenzhen, a city often referred to as China's Silicon Valley, presents an almost science fiction image of a glittering urban city, divorced from the past, looking only to the future. It has been lauded as the "poster child" for Special Economic Zones (SEZs) by both China and the world. (310) It presents a compelling narrative of what effective city planning can create at any time, in any place in the world.

But how much of that narrative is based in reality?

Juan Du, an Associate Professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Hong Kong, visited the city of Shenzhen in 2005. Now fifteen years later, she has published a book dedicated to debunking the Shenzhen myth. In describing the myth of Shenzhen, she states: "Shenzhen's achievements are often attributed to the power of the centralized state and its modern planning, while the city's reputed lack of history or local characteristics is optimistically theorized as a secret to success, enabling possibilities and the pursuit of the new without an obligation to consider the past." (2) Through her research, she rejects this narrative, substituting instead her own, which focuses on the importance of local negotiations and practices, local geography, history, and culture.

Juan Du states in her introduction that she intends to reflect critically on four major misconceptions that are built into the Shenzhen myth.

The first misconception is that of purpose. The myth holds that Deng

Xiaoping and the central government intended to create SEZs in order to make China a "globally wealthy and powerful state." (11) This perception has, in turn, made SEZs "synonymous with China's successful centralized economic policies." (11) Du sets out to prove that Deng Xiaoping's true goal was not to generate an economic miracle, but instead to bring China out of abject poverty. She demonstrates this by tracing the history of Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Opening Up policies, which were driven by the need to stem the mass exodus of Chinese people from the Mainland into British Hong Kong. Accomplishing this goal meant creating a China where people were actually able to eke out a living, but it required significant economic reform. Shenzhen was identified as a sufficiently visible candidate for experimenting with these reforms. Du's thorough examination of Deng Xiaoping's policies and proposals, followed by the history of Shenzhen's first struggling years rife with political opposition, supports the book's claims.

The second misconception has to do with time. Shenzhen's story begins in 1979. Or, at least, that's what writers, government officials, and reporters seem to think. In reality, the story of Shenzhen is incomplete if we fail to consider what came before the official establishment of the SEZ. Juan Du confronts the issue of time by devoting Part Two of the book to analyzing Shenzhen's regional history and, to some extent, China's history.

The first chapter of Part Two focuses on the overarching historical narrative of the region, with a special emphasis on economic development. This economic development is further considered in the second chapter, which focuses on one of the region's most famous products: oysters. The emphasis Du places on economic history in the region is not accidental. The Shenzhen myth holds the SEZ sprung from a "sleepy fishing village," but the history that Du paints is anything but sleepy. (125) It is energetic, fast-changing, and bursting

with innovation. Shenzhen did not spring from still waters; rather, it fed on decades of development and progress driven by the villagers living in the region. These villagers are suspiciously absent from the Shenzhen myth, which brings us to our next point.

The third misconception: people. So many articles about Shenzhen begin by talking about its rapid population growth, especially when considering that prior to 1979, only 30,000 people were living in Shenzhen. Except, as Du notes, in the area encompassed by Shenzhen the population was closer to 100,000 people prior to the establishment of the SEZ. While the elimination of 70,000 people from the official narrative is statistically significant, it seems largely *insignificant* with regard to the Shenzhen myth. What does the pre-SEZ population really have to do with anything? The problem lies within that exact question. The minimization of the village populations, Du notes, is connected with the idea that these populations had little-to-nothing to do with Shenzhen's development.

Part Four of the book dispels this notion. Du traces the history of two urban villages in Shenzhen: Huanggang, known as a model urban village, and Baishizhou, criticized as a slum. She analyzes the cooperation and tension between the government's top-down policies and the villages' responses to those policies. Du focuses especially on specific key figures of the urban villages that helped guide the direction of village responses in order to emphasize the importance of these populations. The story of Zhuang Shunfu, for example, reveals how a village leader helped forge Huanggang into one of Shenzhen's most lauded communities.

The fourth and final misconception is the "fishing village into metropolis" narrative. (15) As mentioned previously, the idea of the "sleepy fishing village" is a misconception that, as Du notes, is intended to erase the rural and replace it with the urban. It implies an

ahistorical Shenzhen that exists only in fantasy. Part Three of the book delves into the rural-to-urban process, looking more deeply at the minutiae of land acquisition and building construction. Of particular interest is the discussion of nail houses in the second chapter. The term "refers to the houses of individuals who have refused to move when facing eviction notices from developers or the government." (195) They successfully show the clash between the urban and the rural. Many of the villagers who had lived on one piece of land for their entire lives resisted displacement, thus slowing and complicating the rural-to-urban process. It's a perfect illustration for how messy, complicated, and controversial this process can be. It also shows that history is impossible to leave behind. Although these nail houses were eventually torn down, the people still remain and so do their stories. They have permanently shaped the development of Shenzhen and are now part of the fabric of the city, whether the myth acknowledges them or not.

Juan Du's analysis of these misconceptions is more than adequate, it is phenomenal. She is thorough, but not long-winded; critical but not judgmental; focused on the human element without ignoring the role of institutions.

There is, however, another question we must consider: why write this book at all? Yes, the Shenzhen myth is an attractive but untrue narrative. So what? Why does it matter?

As Du explains in her conclusion, Shenzhen is upheld as a blueprint for successful city planning, not just in China but throughout the world, which has led to an exportation of the Shenzhen formula. Other urban development projects have cropped up worldwide following Shenzhen's lead. Unfortunately, these projects have largely been less successful due to the myth upon which the formula is built.

For example, China's most recent SEZ, the Kashgar SEZ located in the

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, has generated underwhelming results. Du elaborates: "However, the Kashgar SEZ has not come close to meeting anticipated growth expectations based on the growth of Shenzhen. It is not alone. Neither the other special economic zones nor the variety of other 'zone' developments in the country has reached Shenzhen's level of success. These results should cast some doubt on the idea that other zone developments could replicate the 'Story of the Spring.'" (309-310)

Du then suggests that, rather than trying to replicate Shenzhen's story, urban planners worldwide should ask what "previously overlooked lessons we can draw from its [Shenzhen's] complex evolution." (311) While I agree with Du's assessment, I can't help but feel that this part of the book is underdeveloped. The research built into the rest of the book is so exhaustive, that it makes this chapter look skeletal by comparison. A further analysis of the effects of exporting the Shenzhen myth worldwide, its implications for the One Belt One Road Initiative, the failures of Shenzhen-model SEZs outside of China, etc., would have rounded out this final chapter nicely. Perhaps, however, that should be the subject of another book. One could certainly write an entire book on the struggles of contemporary SEZs, and, based on the quality of this book, Du is the perfect person to write it.

Juan Du successfully peeled back the layers of the Shenzhen myth, looking past the misdirection, rewritten histories, and convenient omissions, to reveal the complex, raw, beautiful, and sometimes tragic true story of Shenzhen. Her ability to weave factual analysis and human experience into one compelling narrative is so impressive that I find myself looking forward to her next publication, regardless of the topic. Anyone interested in city planning, Shenzhen, China's history, or even art and literature would find themselves lucky to be in possession of this volume.

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