The Third Plenum Is All About “One Child Policy”
How The U.S. Media Sees China’s Third Plenum

President Carter: China and the United States Should Work Together on Global Warming
Highlights From The Carter Center Forum
On U.S.–China Relations

“Silent Contest” Provokes Loud Response
China’s President Xi Jinping attends a meeting with former U.S. President Bill Clinton at the Great Hall of the People on Nov.18, 2013, in Beijing, China. | Jason Lee-Pool/Getty Images

## FEATURES

### 15 35 Years of Change

President Carter: The thing that has impressed me a great deal is the fact that on Dec. 15, 1978, Deng Xiaoping and I announced simultaneously in Beijing and in Washington that we were going to normalize diplomatic relations the first of the year. Just three days later, on Dec. 18, Deng Xiaoping announced reform and opening up for the people in his own country.

### 18 An Unprecedented Relationship

Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski: Both the American and Chinese leadership are trying to formulate concepts for political cooperation, which makes this relationship increasingly distinctive historically.

### 20 Translate Great Vision Into Reality

Ambassador Tiankai Cui: President Xi and President Obama have set the goal for the future development of the U.S.–China relationship, which is to work together and build a new model of relationship between our two great countries. The task before us is to translate this great vision into reality. In doing so, we need a historical perspective, an open mind, and a win-win mentality.

### 22 It’s Time for a New Chapter

Dr. Orville Schell: That night, we went off to a little place called Simontown, Texas, where there was going to be a rodeo. I remember arriving and seeing all these guys with huge stomachs and belt buckles standing around with giant plates loaded with ribs and beans and all of these things. Then out of a limousine pops Deng Xiaoping, and he heads right into the crowd like he was some Texas politician.

### 24 Internet Opens Up Perceptions

Kaiser Kuo: Mutual perceptions have changed due to the internet. Suddenly, the Chinese and their American counterparts can encounter each other in a disintermediated setting, one that we haven’t seen before. Encounters used to be polite—they were sister city exchanges or trade delegations from this state visiting that province. Everything was formulaic and nicely run, and everyone was on their best behavior, but best behavior does not apply when it comes to Internet comments sections.

## COMMENTARY

### 5 Policy Research Cannot Be Carried Away by Radical Government Propaganda

First, policy changes with strategic implications are taking place in China: What do these changes mean? Second, many interest groups have already been formed in China, and central authority is gradually waning: What does this mean for Chinese diplomacy? China’s policy research should consciously avoid being carried away by the clamor of traditional media’s nationalist mentality.

*By Jun Niu*

### 7 What are U.S.–China Relations? Concerning the Many Metaphors for China and the United States

At this year’s opening ceremony of the U.S.–China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, China’s new delegation leader, Vice Premier Wang Yang, suggested that the relationship between the United States and China is like a husband and wife: Although they quarrel, they want to enhance mutual trust. Wang
Yang’s metaphor compels us to reconsider, exactly what U.S.–China relations are. 
By Mu Qiao

9 An American Containment of China: Not a Viable Choice
An excerpt from Zhao’s paper “China and the U.S. Should Work Together to Seek New Balance of World Power”
By Suisheng Zhao

IN THE MEDIA

11 Chinese Media Outlets Comment on the U.S. Government Shutdown

13 American Media Outlets Comment on China’s Third Plenum

VOICES

26 “Silent Contest” Provokes Loud Response

COLUMN

29 America and China: Harmony of Differences?
By Bin Yu

PROGRAM UPDATES

33 General Qiao Discusses Mutual Perceptions Between China and the United States.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jun Niu is a professor and deputy dean of the Department of Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs Management at Peking University. He is the author of over 80 books.

Bin Yu is a senior fellow at the Shanghai Association of America Studies.

Kaiser Kuo is the director of international communications for Baidu, China’s leading search engine, where he is the chief spokesman for the company internationally.

General Liang Qiao is major general in the People’s Liberation Army Air Force and a professor at the National Defense University of China.

Mu Qiao is an associate professor of communication at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

Orville Schell is the director of the Center on U.S.–China Relations at the Asia Society in New York. Schell is the author of 14 books—nine of them about China—and a contributor to numerous edited volumes.

Suisheng Zhao is a professor at the Center for China–U.S. Cooperation at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver. He is also the founder and editor of the *Journal of Contemporary China*.

U.S. President Barack Obama leaves the podium after speaking in the Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House after the U.S. Senate voted to end the government shutdown and raise the debt limit on Oct. 16, 2013, in Washington, D.C. | Mark Wilson/Getty Images

On the cover: Babies participate in a baby crawling race on July 5, 2005, in Shanghai, China. A recent survey carried out by Chinese media shows that more than 60 percent of Chinese young people growing up without siblings say they felt lonely in their childhood. About 46 percent of them, who were born in the 1980s, said that they would prefer to have two children themselves. China implemented its one-child family-planning policy in the late 1970s. Officials say that without it, the country would have 300 million more people than it has today. | China Photos/Getty Images
Contest “The Silent Contest” Loudly!

In late October 2013, a documentary titled “Silent Contest” was posted to some Chinese video websites and became one of the most-watched videos in just a few days. The film declares at the beginning, “The process of China to realize rejuvenation is inevitably accompanied by struggles with the U.S.’s hegemonic system. It is a century-long contest independent of man’s will.” It then uses flimsy evidence to demonstrate that the United States has never stopped its strategies to westernize and divide China. The film warns Chinese nationals, especially political and military officials, “to keep on high alert against alleged U.S. ideological infiltration and political subversion.” The film survived only a few days online before it was pulled by the Chinese censors.

The Global Times, a popular tabloid under the People’s Daily umbrella, ran an article titled “Silence Contest Silenced.” Zhang Diancheng, a military commentator who watched the film, told The Global Times, “The film shows that high-level officials are thinking clearly about American plots. It also warns the leadership not to treat the U.S.’s attempts at non-violent revolution lightly.”

On the other end of the spectrum, He Weifang, a law professor at Peking University and an example of Chinese scholars who have been ‘brainwashed by the evil-spirited Americans’ wrote in his weibo, “The film is filled with a Cold War mentality and provocative words. It demonizes all the words and deeds by some nations’ people in pursuing freedom and democracy. The corruption that results from a lack of democracy and rule of law is even claimed to be an American conspiracy. It’s extremely ridiculous.”

While people on both sides are trying to find out more information about the film, much clamor was heard when the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the China Strategic Culture Promotion Association jointly released the “U.S.–China Security Perceptions Survey: Findings & Implications” in early December. The overall finding of this two-year survey is “While China’s anti-U.S. rhetoric gets a lot of attention, the country’s elite and public are in reality less antagonistic toward the United States.” Most Chinese see America as a competitor than an outright enemy.

Major General Luo Yuan is the survey’s principal investigator from the Chinese side. Although his hawkish, anti-American vitriol is well-known, he comes across as middle-of-the-road mild when interviewed by The Washington Post about the survey. He said, “The two countries are now building a new model of great power relations. We need to know how exactly the Chinese public sees the United States and other way round.”

To identify and outline the perceptions of each other, examine their roots, and investigate their possible impact on policy making in the realm of bilateral relations are tasks we are trying to accomplish in this issue and at www.uscnpm.org. It is our mission to contest “The Silent Contest” mentality loudly.

Yawei Liu
Editor-in-Chief
Director of China Program
The Carter Center
“U.S.–China strategic distrust” is the basic generalization of the structural features of current U.S.–China relations. This structure is more appropriately described as the “greatest common denominator” paradigm. There is still much room for discussion as to whether this paradigm is able to comprehensively summarize the depth of the structural issues in U.S.–China relations. Specifically, we can further explore whether using the term “mutual distrust” can accurately decipher how Chinese people, especially policy-making groups, understand U.S.–China relations; this sort of discussion would certainly be more helpful for understanding this relationship. For example, how would we analyze and define the degree of hostility towards the United States can be found in Chinese decision-making circles; this avenue. There are so many aspects to U.S.–China relations [that forming a complete understanding of the relationship is very difficult], especially considering the knowledge gap among different levels of Chinese society. For instance, one only needs to look at the characterizations expressed by Chinese officials and leaders—from “U.S.–China Strategic Partnership” to “the United States Wants to Destroy Us,”—and form them into a spectrum. It is difficult to know how many differing viewpoints and opinions lie between these extremes, and moreover, it is difficult to find the logic in its self-contradiction. This sort of phenomenon is incomprehensible to both the general public and foreign audiences.

Strategic suspicion in the United States has been on the rise in recent years—this much is indisputable. The content of these suspicions is largely based on doubt over whether China can sustain long-term peaceful development. Also, will China wage a local war in the Asia-Pacific region? Additionally, the United States is increasingly worried that the uncertainty of China’s domestic political situation will lead to unpredictable consequences. I believe that the subject of whether China’s national strategy has, objectively speaking, been influenced by domestic forces has already reached a degree requiring serious review, though for me this is only an academic question. Here it is of no harm to raise this question: If we consider the sharp changes to Chinese foreign policy in 2012, do we really believe beyond a doubt that China is pursuing the path toward peaceful development? If many Chinese people do not dare to believe this, then will foreigners still be convinced?

Chinese national strategic trends are changing. In the 2012 issue of “International Review,” a well-known Shanghai scholar’s article suggested that China should strive for “hegemony,” though it cannot achieve this through a confrontation with the United States. Some Tsinghua University scholars also assert that China can adjust its foreign policy to make “attaining equal footing with the United States” its goal. There are also officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who have expressed an optimistic evaluation of
China's world status, saying that the world needs China to resolve world issues; when problems arise the world must listen to the opinions of China. Whether publishing this sort of opinion is based on serious reflection or is intended to pander to the fervor of the audience, it reveals a trend, an ideological trend that has been forming. That trend is that many people hope to fundamentally change China's national strategy as a result of its rise in strength. The slogan “the great revival of China” reflects changes in China's national strategy since the Twelfth National People's Congress. Its connotations deserve attention and discussion, and its meaning needs to be understood clearly as quickly as possible.

Several years ago, I suggested that 21st century U.S.–China relations were based on “interdependence, but ever-increasing competition.” Competition between the United States and China will primarily occur in the Asia–Pacific region, meaning “both sides need to continuously adjust their relative positions in the Asia–Pacific region.” There are many latent conflicts in this area. With every relationship interlocking with the next, [the situation] is exceedingly complex. U.S.–China relations will be impacted and influenced by all sorts of regional issues outside of their own relationship. The developments in recent years prove this is a reason for a reasonable position; the mutual competition between the United States and China in the Asia–Pacific region is very clearly becoming normal.

Objectively speaking, since 2009, “competition” in the Asia–Pacific region has become an increasingly prominent subject in U.S.–China relations. The primary reason for this is that major changes have occurred within China; not that corresponding policies in the United States have been altered. While observing and evaluating the increasingly prominent trend of competition between the United States and China, we should not only look at America's strategy but must also pay attention to (if not pay closer attention to) to China’s developments. These include China's national strategy, the mindset of China's ruling party, and the operational direction of interest groups. There appears to be a clear shift in China's strategic trend from “a peaceful rise” to the pursuit of regional or even global hegemony, although we still cannot say whether it is undoubtedly clear or irreversible. We need to seriously consider: Are major changes occurring in China's national objectives? Exactly how do China's leaders define U.S.–China relations? With today's substantial rise in awareness, we can no longer jump to the conclusion that China is a solidified and immutable, that only the outside world is changing, and that China is just responding with good intentions. Such assumptions do not correspond with the facts. For instance, we need to specifically analyze and define exactly how Chinese people perceive the outside world. Is this position changing? When we believe that Japan is “shifting right” and “deviating right,” is it possible that the ideological trends in Chinese society and public sentiment are also “shifting left” and “deviating left”?

One fact needs clarification: Has a partnership with the United States been China’s primary goal, or has it just been part of a larger plan? In the early 1980s, Deng Xiaoping once clearly said that the policy of China's pursuit of cooperation with the United States was strategic; this was in response to those who suggested that the policy was tactical and temporary. Since the Jiang Zemin administration, the nature of the policy of U.S. cooperation seems to have been quietly changing. In 1999, following the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia, Chinese leaders used the phrase “patiently suffer, seek vindication later.” Logically speaking, the policy of seeking U.S. cooperation was thus explained as tactical and a sort of stopgap, even if official documents continued to say that we should build a completely cooperative partnership, in addition to the recent proposal to build a new type of major-power relationship. Therefore, exactly how our leaders define U.S.–China relations in the depths of their hearts is a matter worthy of deeper investigation.

China's traditional media, especially its most emblematic publication, Global Times, is always explaining the contradictions and clashes of U.S.–Chinese relations to its readers in this fashion. They like to say that many of the words and actions of developing nations used to create a hostile sentiment toward China are a result of not adapting to China's rise or that it is a case of them “being jealous of us,” similar to the phrasing of American neoconservatives when they say that the world is “jealous of the United States.” This phenomenon–anti-American Chinese always borrowing the wording and logic of right-wing Americans–is very interesting. They don't very much like the words of left-wing Americans, such as “human rights are greater than sovereign rights.”

While we have been either unwilling or unable to deeply self-examine in the face of the rapidly rising security pressures that China has faced in the Southeast since 2009, not only has traditional media been propagating anti-Americanism in lofty tones, but U.S. “conspiracy theories” have also become rampant in popular research circles, namely that everything the United States does is based on a “conspiracy” to “make China collapse” or is a result of “wanting to destroy us.” Some of China's neighboring countries' dissatisfaction with China has been explained as the result of America's interference, a conspiracy in which the United States is checking China's rise. For 10 years, traditional media has implanted an image of America as “the enemy” in the hearts of the Chinese public. Domestically, many elites believe that it was only the hard efforts of the common people that forced the Chinese government to change from its previously weak stance on the Senkaku islands to adopting uncompromising measures toward Japan; this was considered a victory. The question is: To arrive at such “victories,” must we stage a war? Even if some people propose we should relax ten-
sions with Japan, it is because they believe “struggling with Japan should stop before it goes too far, because our primary enemy is the United States.”

In conclusion, the concept of “U.S.–China mutual distrust” has great significance in China. When we are investigating U.S.–China relations, we must pay attention to China’s policy changes. We cannot naturally assume that China’s strategy is immutable, nor can we assume that by researching U.S. policies or exposing U.S. conspiracies we can find an excuse for our domestic and foreign messes. Therefore, two issues need to be discussed: First, China’s policies are undergoing potentially strategic changes; what exactly is the meaning of these changes to China’s current policies? Second, many interest groups have already been formed in China, and central authority is gradually waning; what does this mean for Chinese diplomacy? China’s policy research should consciously avoid being carried away by the clamor of traditional media’s nationalist mentality.

(Source: the author's blog. The author's journal note on Renren: After giving a speech at a seminar, this was incorporated into a book. The title has been slightly altered.)

WHAT ARE U.S.–CHINA RELATIONS?

Concerning the many metaphors for China and the United States

BY MU QIAO

At this year’s opening ceremony of the U.S.–China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, China’s new delegation leader, Vice Premier Wang Yang, suggested that the relationship between the United States and China is like a husband and wife: Although they quarrel, they want to enhance mutual trust. They do not want to divorce; like Wendi Deng and Rupert Murdoch, the cost [to separate] would be too high. He also cited President Xi Jinping’s comments from a previous U.S.–China leadership meeting, that quarreling is always better than all-out fighting and that even a peaceful nation will defend itself if provoked by an aggressor.

Wang Yang’s metaphor compels us to reconsider, just what exactly are U.S.–China relations? Over the years, there have been both concrete metaphors and abstract generalizations [used to describe them].

When the U.S. merchant ship Empress of China arrived in Guangzhou in 1784 and raised the curtain on U.S.–China relations, the United States was filled with reverence for the China that was captured in “The Travels of Marco Polo”: China was ancient, prosperous, and mysterious. In his book “Scratches on Our Minds: American Views of China and India”, Harold Isaacs described it: “The Chinese equal and exceed Americans in culture and education; their civilization is more humanistic than ours; they are ahead of us in many ways.” Young America takes on the role of student, wanting to learn from the ancient Mr. China.

After the Opium Wars, China went into decline. Meanwhile, the United States was advancing triumphantly, its national strength booming. In 1843, the first commissioner to China, Caleb Cushing, said before assuming his post: “Of old, it was from the east that civilization and learning dawned upon the civilized world, yet now by the refluent tide of letters, knowledge was rolled back from the west to the east, and we have become the teachers of our teachers. I go to China . . . on behalf of civilization.”

The Eastern Empire seemed less enthusiastic to become the pupil of its student. Although the United States, in the spirit of good will, used funds from the Boxer Indemnity to establish schools in China, fought beside China in World War II, and graciously supported China’s major power status, China ultimately chose to become a student of the Soviet Union, causing the United States to launch a discussion on “who lost China.” After enduring revolution, hostility, and internal strife, China began its economic reform and once again began learning from the United States. Upon his visit to China in 1984, President Reagan warmly declared that “the United States has opened its doors. China is a neighbor and a friend.” In the face of the common threat of the Soviet Union and China’s positive changes, America believed that China’s reform was the process of “Americanization.”

Yet following the events of 1989, the abrupt change in the two countries’ relations caused the United States to recognize that it had “misread China.” Michel Okansenberg, once a strong advocate for establishing diplomatic relations between China and the United States, published “Confessions of a China Analyst.” He wrote that the United States had been deceived by the superficial appearance of China’s reform,
when in reality it was still only individuals and the military that played any decisive role. The economic reform would continue, but “authoritarianism and corruption will persevere.”

Isaacs once suggested that the love–hate relationship between the United States and China was like a pendulum, while Harry Harding believed the relationship between China and the United States was fragile, influenced by too many factors. In his new book, “China Goes Global: the Partial Power,” David Shambaugh suggests that in the areas of gross domestic product and military spending increases, China is on the rise. Yet in the five influential areas of diplomacy, global governance, sustainability, culture, and security, China is not advancing and is still only a “partial power.”

Aside from the abstract generalizations of scholars, there are still several concrete analogies to describe U.S.–China relations. The most well-known are the eagle and the dragon. In 1978, Oksenberg co-authored the classic work “Dragon and Eagle—United States–China Relations—Past and Future.” America’s national emblem is a male eagle clutching arrows in one claw and an olive branch in the other. The arrows symbolize security and strength; the olive branch symbolizes peace and values. This shows America as a newly independent country formed through opposing colonial tyranny, holding a distinct political value of “life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness” that cannot be overshadowed by developing economics and trade.

The dragon—whether it is the evil, fire-breathing dragon of the west or the ambivalent water dragon of the east—reflects the uncertainty of China’s development. China’s rise is both an opportunity and a threat for the outside world. Chinese people believe that there can be a peaceful rise and that there is value in harmony. They hope that foreign citizens can also enjoy the benefits of China’s national rise, and they should also be able understand the misgivings the outside world holds toward China’s rise.

The size and influence of China and the United States are all encompassing, like two elephants in the same field. When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers, and other animals will suffer along with it; yet when the two elephants are affectionate and loving, not only is the grass left to rot, but the other animals also will feel neglected. Different countries have their own interests and judgments. Some approve of U.S.–China relations, while others do not. They must find their own standpoint and room to maneuver between these two poles.

No matter what metaphorical animal you use to describe China, the United States, or any other country, human beings have long been living under the jungle law of the natural world where the weak are the prey of the strong. We should, however, adhere to the social laws of mutual peace. In recent years, the academic world has calculated that all of the wars since World War II have occurred between two authoritarian states or between an authoritarian state and a democratic one; there have been no wars between two democratic nations. This is the theory of democratic peace.

Because democratic nations have consistent systems and values, they are always able to resolve conflicts through the many mechanisms of visits, negotiations, and compromises. Since they are not worried about who is subverting whom, interdependence also causes nationalistic sentiments to decline. So when U.S. troops rape Korean and Japanese women, when U.S. planes mistakenly bomb British tanks, or when a U.S. pilot intentionally cuts through the cable car line of an Italian ski slope and causes deaths and casualties, they can find a negotiated settlement or a judicial approach. However, for China and the United States, the mistaken bombing of embassies, aircraft collisions, human rights groups, and even issues with the Olympics will all lead to political and nationalistic disputes, not to mention larger conflicts between national interests.

Returning to Vice Premier Wang Yang’s metaphor, a husband–wife relationship does not simply mean eating together, earning money, and exchanging affection, nor does it mean making accusations about each other’s “evil ways.” Only when we have common goals can we grow old together.
As Washington rebalances to Asia, relations between the United States and China have become increasingly contentious. Chinese leaders have been concerned that the United States was deepening its involvement in the East and South China Seas. The U.S. efforts to strengthen its diplomatic and military relations with its allies and partners in the region have fueled China’s fears of being encircled and pressured. Consequently, “encirclement” has become a popular phrase in Chinese debate about the U.S. East Asian strategy.

The United States, nevertheless, is not in the position to contain China’s rise. As the sole super power after the end of the Cold War, the United States must offer a strategic response to China’s rise. Historically, dominant powers have responded to the challenge of rising powers in at least three ways, with different consequences. One is to ignore it. Refusing to face and adapt to the rise of European powers and Japan, China was defeated by Britain in the Opium War of 1840–42 and by Japan in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894. The Chinese empire collapsed, and China experienced a century of stagnation and humiliation. The second way is to contain it. Historically, dominant powers have responded to the challenge of rising powers in at least three ways, with different consequences. One is to ignore it. Refusing to face and adapt to the rise of European powers and Japan, China was defeated by Britain in the Opium War of 1840–42 and by Japan in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894. The Chinese empire collapsed, and China experienced a century of stagnation and humiliation. The second way is to contain it. Historical experience shows that imperial France’s attempt in the 18th century to contain the emergence of a rising England led not only to a long series of battered and bloodied wars but also ended with Napoleon’s defeat by Wellington at Waterloo. The third approach is to accept it. Facing the challenge of a rising United States in the late 19th century, the British Empire let the United States assume increasingly larger responsibilities for global governance. This action not only avoided unnecessary bloodshed but also allowed the United Kingdom to maintain its institutional legacy in the post-British world.

Now China’s extraordinary rise has put the United States in a similar position of imperial China, France, and Britain. The United States is certainly not willing to ignore China’s rise or simply cede the dominant power position to China. But all-out containment would also be self-defeating because of the following reasons. First, containment as a U.S. policy toward the former Soviet Union during the Cold War was to “isolate Moscow economically; undermine its ideology; and contain its military power with a robust U.S. nuclear arsenal, allies such as NATO to its West and Japan to its East, and an integrated global trade and financial system. Although the United States successfully carried out a containment strategy against the Soviet Union during the Cold War was to “isolate Moscow economically; undermine its ideology; and contain its military power with a robust U.S. nuclear arsenal, allies such as NATO to its West and Japan to its East, and an integrated global trade and financial system. Although the United States successfully carried out a containment strategy against the Soviet Union, China is not the Soviet Union. The U.S.–Soviet relationship is much more complicated than was the U.S.–Soviet relationship. As Henry Kissinger indicates, “The economy of the Soviet Union was weak (except for military production) and did not affect the global economy. China, by contrast, is a dynamic factor in the world economy. It is a principal trading partner of all its neighbors and most of the Western industrial powers, including the United States. A prolonged confrontation between China and the United States would alter the world economy with unsettling consequences for all.” Indeed, economically, China and the United States are deeply interdependent. China has become China’s largest trading partner, with bilateral trade in 2012 reaching $536 billion (the trade between the United States and the former Soviet Union at the best time was only about $4 billion), and China holds more than $1 trillion in U.S. treasury bonds.

Second, while none of China’s neighbors want to live under China’s shadow and most regional powers have been publicly or privately pleased to see a stronger U.S. commitment to the Asia-Pacific region, very few of them can afford to antagonize a rising power and major market and make China an enemy. Therefore, the United States cannot contain China by forging an anti-China coalition in concert with Asian countries, because very few East Asian countries are ready to put all their eggs in one basket or be forced to choose between two potential antagonists. Among China’s neighbors, there are certain countries that believe it is in their best interest to make the United States a rival to China. Among them are the Philippines and Japan, which
have been engaged in protracted, intense disputes with China over maritime and territorial claims. But most of the East Asian countries see their interests better protected by maintaining good relationships with both powers and enmity with neither.

Third, the Obama administration came to office at the juncture of the changing global distribution of power from a short-lived U.S. unipolar dominance to multipolarity due to the rise of China and other non-Western powers. Although the United States may remain the world’s preeminent power for some time, “the U.S.’s relative strength will decline, and U.S. leverage will become more constrained.” Facing a world that is becoming increasingly diffused in power distribution, with competitive rising powers emerging, America’s competitive power position ultimately depends on the health of its domestic political and economy performance. The United States has yet to overcome the seemingly intractable political gridlock that prevents meaningful governmental action to get its fiscal house in order so that it may sustain its focus on Asia over the long run. In addition, the U.S. rebalance is under-resourced on the military side, and it is far from clear whether the Obama administration could afford the cost of a forward naval and air deployment in the region for the long term, in order to deliver on its promises of strengthening the U.S. presence. Assessing the budgetary constraints, a Congressional Research Service report is somewhat pessimistic about the rebalance toward Asia. For one thing, an increased U.S. military emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region might result in a reduction in U.S. military capacity in other parts of the world. One observer in Singapore, therefore, suggests that “the United States’ regional commitment in the longer-term is hostage to fiscal realities and to future changes of administration . . . Like it or not, America’s role in the Asia-Pacific (not to mention globally) is in long-term relative decline.”

Fourth, the Obama administration faces a problem if it expects America to play a larger role in Asia while severely reducing the resources, whether diplomatic or military, necessary to maintain America’s global role. In particular, trying to focus on the Asia-Pacific, the Obama administration may still be sucked back into Middle East and North African conflicts, which remains the center of potential unrest. Some officials in the Obama administration prefer to use “rebalance” over “pivot” because of the unintended consequence of the initial use of the word “pivot,” which suggested “a complete movement away” from the Middle East and other parts of the world and, therefore, caused concerns. Although the administration may not want the Middle East to continue dominating American foreign policy to the extent it did over the past decade, the Middle East could still keep the White House fully occupied, with a deadly civil war in Syria, Iran’s push to develop nuclear weapons, the uncertain future of Egypt’s new government, and the impasse between Israelis and Palestinians. Interestingly, when President Obama started his second term in early 2013, many observers in Washington began to wonder if the administration was going to “rebalance” because, testifying before Congress regarding his nomination to be Secretary of State, Sen. John Kerry indicated that he was uncomfortable with the administration’s “pivot to Asia” and indicated that, in his view, this was neither necessary nor wise.

Although the rise of China is stirring up fear and concerns in many quarters of the world and some policy makers in Washington D.C. are calling for an American containment of China, given the increasing interdependence between the two countries, Asian nations’ desire to peacefully coexist with both China and the United States and America’s domestic political paralysis, containment of China is most likely to fail. Strategic mistrust between the United States and China is unavoidable because of differences in history, values, political system, and policy preferences, but a significant convergence of strategic interests between the two has developed as “power is more equally distributed between them, and each needs to cooperate with the other to address problems it deems critical to its own future.” The interests of both the United States and China would be best served when and if these two countries work together to seriously dedicate their power and wealth to create an enduring regional balance of power rather than to win diplomatic or military contests with each other. As former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton indicates, “China and the United States cannot solve all the problems of the world together. But without China and the United States, I doubt that any of our global problems can be resolved… There is no intrinsic contradiction between supporting a rising China and advancing America’s interests. A thriving China is good for America, and a thriving America is good for China.”
The U.S. government “shutdown” has already reached its second week. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew warned that if the debt ceiling cannot be raised before October 17, the U.S. government risks going into default. It is unknown whether or not Ben Bernanke could leave office before the QE taper. All of these factors seem to be aimed towards a single goal: the restructuring of U.S. debt. This debt crisis has a deeper underlying cause: the phase of the U.S. dollar serving as the core of the international monetary system is coming to an end... [In the context of the current situation] the best-case scenario is that China, Russia, Germany, France, the Middle East and other countries, without threat of force or for personal gain, collaborate together in the event that this new debt crisis overthrows the status of the U.S. dollar. If that were possible it would be a relatively small price for each country to pay, as well as a great opportunity. Yet accomplishing this one small point would also be quite difficult. (QE: Quantitative Easing, a bond-buying program)

On the third day of the U.S. Federal government shutdown, a 34-year-old African American woman, who attempted to drive up to Capitol Hill, was shot dead by police.  The preliminary investigation showed that the incident was related neither to the government shutdown nor intended to voice dissatisfaction with Congress. In the context of the government shutdown, this event is in some ways ridiculous: the police risked their lives to guard 535 members of Congress who, while still getting paid themselves had, with their internal dispute, caused the shutdown which withheld the pay of the very police officers protecting them.

Even though, prior to the shutdown, Washington D.C.’s city council approved the use of emergency funds to keep the local government in operation, this funding could not provide support long term. Therefore the local government ordered the police to continue operations due to the fact that the revenue from the parking tickets police officers issue is a huge source of government income.

The U.S. federal government shutdown could be interpreted as a big issue, or a small one. The shame for the two sides of congress is small, but one party could win out big. In terms of the impact on the economy: the last government shutdown resulted in $1.4 billion in economic losses, which is no small amount. However when compared to the whole of the U.S. economy, which is worth trillions of dollars, it is also not especially large. In terms of the government’s budget, the short-term shutdown of non-essential departments of the federal government is a small problem; debt default triggered by not raising debt ceiling would be a serious issue.

Former Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson joked: “These guys may threaten to take their mother hostage, but they will never hurt their mother;” this joke provides some insights into nature of American politics—in the long term, the crisis will not create change inside the system; it could, however, have a short term effect on elections. Therefore politicians should be cautious and avoid going too far.
In the end, the main cause for the government shutdown is the disagreement of two parties who are following the procedures of the system. The difference of opinion that has broken out over the healthcare issue is not mere partisanship or any kind of farce, it is government working for the good of its people.

CHONGQING YOUTH NEWSPAPER  
10/15/2013  
Liu Zhirong: U.S. government shutdown makes sense

The true “loser” in Washington’s partisan dispute has been its political system. Rather than making essential decisions the White House bickered with congress, the House and the Senate drug their feet, and the House of Representatives couldn’t even reach a consensus among themselves. In the face of increasing partisanship Washington’s efficiency has decreased significantly, and no one can say that the debt-ceiling crisis won’t rear its ugly head again. In the event of another crisis, the fallout will have even more of an impact on the rest of the world.

CHINA NEWS  
10/17/2013  
Washington stuck in partisan disputes

A U.S. Capitol Police officer picks up money that was thrown on the floor by activists protesting against the government shutdown, at the Hart Senate Office building, Oct. 9, 2013, in Washington, DC. | Mark Wilson/Getty Images

BEIJING NEWS  
10/03/2013  
D.C. police on duty without pay during the government shutdown

Due to the shutdown of the federal government, all government employees (with the exception of core services such as law enforcement) will be furloughed. At first glance this may seem to be a stroke of luck for police officers, when in fact they’re getting the raw deal of having to work without pay.

The only people feeling happy may be the local bars and restaurants, who are cashing in on the shutdown by offering special deals. A restaurant in Maryland let it be known that they would be offering free coffee to government employees. On the other hand members of congress, whose internal disputes lead to the federal government failing to pass a budget, would be charged double for meals.
After four days of closed-door meetings, the party’s top officials unveiled a long-awaited blueprint for economic and social reforms. But the message was muddled—sounding at once reformist while also making repeated assurances that the party would maintain its core values of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and the dominant role of the state sector. That left many analysts—and the markets—understandably unimpressed.

On Friday, the ruling party released a much longer document that gave far more prominence to ambitious reformist goals, fleshing out the policy direction if not the nitty-gritty of implementation. It also left many people wondering why the messages were so strikingly different.

This leaves a lot of unanswered questions about what can be translated into practical policies. What analysts and the public might ask is whether we are about to see the real move or to find ourselves left behind by another head fake.

The restructuring suggested by China’s Third Plenum is an enormous opportunity for growth-starved economies like the United States. The coming emergence of the Chinese consumer could be the greatest global growth bonanza of this century, benefiting American manufacturing and services enterprises alike. But that won’t happen unless American leaders have the vision and commitment to restore competitiveness through savings, innovation and investment. An asymmetrical rebalancing—Chinese restructuring and American stasis—is a recipe for failure.

Thirty-five years ago, an earlier Third Plenum gave Deng Xiaoping an opportunity for China to unleash the most powerful economic development story of modern history. America needs its own Third Plenum moment.

… beyond policy reform, the legacy of the Third Plenum may have more to do with politics than with policy. Xi Jinping, China’s newish president, demonstrated that he was firmly in charge, forming two new government bodies to streamline national security and economic policy. Unlike his predecessor Hu Jintao, who took years to consolidate his control of China’s government, Xi appears to have managed this trick in his first year in office, giving a sense that the Third Plenum may just be a prelude to bolder reforms down the road.

What a difference four days make. On Saturday morning, as Communist Party leaders began a much-anticipated conclave to plot economic reforms, investors were joyous. The hope was this would be a Deng Xiaoping moment like the one that launched China’s economic boom in 1978. Hardly. All we got was vague propaganda about how markets will now play a “decisive” role in allocating resources, whatever THAT means. Disappointed investors pushed Asian stocks down today. Markets were troubled that the rather dry communiqué from the four-day summit also said the state will remain “dominant” in the economy. Next time, gents, I’m thinking conference call.

American Media Outlets Comment On
China’s Third Plenum

THE NEW YORK TIMES
11/26/2013
Chinese Reform, U.S. Stasis

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
11/18/2013
Was China’s plenum a fast break to reform or just a head fake?

BLOOMBERG
11/13/2013
China’s third plenum is a dud

THE ATLANTIC
11/19/2013
A Chinese president consolidates his power
IN THE MEDIA | THE U.S.

THE NEW YORK TIMES
11/20/2013
Bringing an end to a senseless policy: China’s ‘one-child’ rule should be scrapped

The phasing-out of the one-child policy has overshadowed all the other decisions coming out of the influential twice-a-decade meeting known as the Third Plenum. The public has embraced the change with unexpected enthusiasm and good will. They see the change as a clear and irrevocable move, a break from empty promises. They see it as a regaining of personal freedoms. And they see it as a sign that the government in Beijing is finally catching up with the times. This seemingly small measure has generated enormous good will, and political capital, for China’s new leadership. It will also help blunt criticisms of abuses like forced abortions and sterilizations.

THE WASHINGTON POST
11/20/2013
China should abolish its one-child policy altogether

The one-child policy was a stake driven through individual freedom. Rather than continue to tinker with this misguided philosophy, China should abolish population controls altogether and unleash the ingenuity and energy of its people by allowing every one of them, individually, to make life’s most important decisions.

THE NEW YORKER
11/19/2013
Two children, no options: China’s limited reform

The Party is pursuing its own interests here. The one-child policy, enacted in 1979 to curb the explosive growth of China’s population (which Mao, the paramount leader, had only a decade earlier urged on), was originally intended to stimulate an economy trapped deep in the doldrums. Thirty years on, the policy has succeeded in controlling population growth, but is causing another set of social problems: a diminishing labor force that chips away at the country’s competitive edge, and an overflow of senior citizens who can no longer depend on their career-oriented only children as homebound caretakers. And the ability of wealthy Chinese to buy their way around the policy had contributed to tensions about rising inequality.
It's a great honor for me as one of the leaders of The Carter Center to welcome you to this Center. I would say that for the last 32 years since we began, the relationship between the United States and China has been at the forefront of our considerations, and we've observed very carefully what's gone on in our country and also in China. I've been to China every chance I've gotten, almost every year, with my wife. We've always been hosted by Madame Li, who takes good care of us, and next year I hope to go back to China around May 15, and she has invited me. So together we're going to celebrate two anniversaries: One is the 35th anniversary of normalization between our two countries, and the other will be the 60th anniversary of the founding of the wonderful organization that she heads. This is what we look forward to. The Friendship Association has been not only a very precious thing for The Carter Center and for the people of the United States but also for foreign leaders from around the world who've gone to China and have formed close relationships with their country.

A lot of people ask me about my life since I left the White House. I think the best and most succinct way I can describe it is to recall a New Yorker cartoon that was in this magazine last year: This little boy is looking up at his father, and he says, “Daddy, when I grow up, I want to be a former president.” So, that’s a position to be cherished, and if you're going to look forward to a great future, just be president first and then enjoy the years afterward.

The thing that has impressed me a great deal is the fact that on Dec. 15, 1978, Deng Xiaoping and I announced simultaneously in Beijing and in Washington that we were going to normalize diplomatic relations the first day of the year, and just three days later, on Dec. 18, Deng Xiaoping announced reform and opening up for the people in his own country. I've always looked upon those
two things as intertwined and inseparable. It’s colored my thinking about the relationship, because I’ve been to China so many times—early on as a guest of Deng Xiaoping, and he wanted to explain to me, in our private sessions, his goal for China. We looked upon his reform and opening as providing new liberty for the Chinese people within their own country to travel freely from one part of the country to another, to guarantee a freedom of worship, opportunity for changing jobs—things that were unprecedented before that. And the other one is opening up to the outside, where China has now become omnipresent or ubiquitous throughout the world. The Carter Center has programs in more than 70 countries. My wife and I have visited more than 140 nations in the world, and we see the Chinese presence everywhere, throughout Latin America, throughout Africa, throughout Asia, all over the world. I think this is what Deng Xiaoping meant by “opening up,” to expand the ancient culture of China and its achievements with others. That would be one of the major purposes of the follow-up to this forum, not only to understand each other but also to see if we can help in any way, and we’ve been invited to do this.

As China shares its remarkable experiences as a very poor developing country with no free economic system at all, and now as one of the most open, free and dynamic economic systems on earth, how they share that benefit as a still-developing nation with other countries who are searching for the truth is not an easy thing. It’s much easier for the Chinese people to say, “This is what’s happened to us, just in recent years, and let us share this with you” to a very poverty-stricken country like Burkina Faso, or Mali, or Niger in Africa than it is for the United States.

We have—as is well-known and as Deng Xiaoping and I discussed even early in 1978 before we made an announcement—differences of ancient history in China and recent history in America. We have a different culture; we have different environmental problems, and challenges, and opportunities; we have different geographical exchanges; we have different alliances next door to us that are very precious to us; we have a different political system, as you all know. These things are inherent, and they’re not going to change. We can move one country to another, but we’re not going to change a political system. One of the things that Deng Xiaoping used to point out to me was that China would make rapid strides and almost incredible economic changes. But as he observed, particularly with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, he was very cautious about any rapid changes in the political system. Sometimes that bothers us at The Carter Center and sometimes it bothers those of us in the United States, in the State Department, and in the White House to see that China is maintaining its political system. That’s been one of the most difficult things that we’ve had to accept from one another.

One of the things that I shared with Deng Xiaoping was the need to break down the cultural barriers that existed, especially during the previous 35 years after the Chinese revolution was successful, and after China became a nation. The People’s Republic of China became a nation, by the way, on my birthday, Oct. 1, 1949. Deng Xiaoping used to bring that up, and so did I, as a matter of faith, and I never have questioned his judgment on that. But I had been in China as a young naval officer, and I had fallen in love with the country and with its people, and that was one of the reasons that I was not constrained, as my predecessors in the White
House had been, in breaking away from our unilateral relationship with Taiwan and moving toward the People's Republic of China, with Taiwan being part of the People's Republic of China. There was also, I would say, a difference in ideology, between some of my predecessors and I—I'm not criticizing them, because they did wonderful things—but those were the times that were transforming in my own life and the life of China, in the life of the Western Pacific, in the life of the entire world. One of the breakthroughs that would break down the cultural exchanges really occurred, you might say, in the middle of the night. A president, when he's sleeping in the White House, is rarely disturbed, unless there's some crisis that arises, something that he needs to address that won't wait until morning. One night, Rosalynn and I were sleeping in the bedroom, and the phone rang about 3 o'clock in the morning. I thought, “Oh my, there’s a tragedy somewhere in the United States,” and I woke up and answered the phone. I found out that it was my national science adviser, who was Dr. Frank Press, a geologist. I said “Frank, what’s happened, another Mount Edna, or something like that exploded?” He said, “No, I’m in China with Deng Xiaoping.” And I said, “What’s happened with Deng Xiaoping? What’s wrong?” And he said, “Deng Xiaoping insisted I call you now to see if you would permit 5,000 Chinese students to come to American universities.” I was very angry. I said, “Tell him to send 100,000,” and I slammed the phone down. Within five years, we had 100,000 Chinese students with us. By the way, this weekend, as reported in the news this morning, there was an analysis of how many Chinese students are at American universities during the 2012–2013 year: 235,000 Chinese students are in America. That makes my heart beat a little bit faster, and it makes my face flush, and it makes me very proud, because that is laying the groundwork for the third principle of this forum and its impact in the future, and that is to break down the cultural differences and make sure that we have a new generation of Chinese and American leaders coming along that will be able to accommodate differences and still cherish the things that bind us together for the common good of all mankind and womankind.

When I was with Xi Jinping on my last visit, it was my fourth visit [with Xi]. I first met Xi Jinping six years ago when I was in China. I’ve met every Chinese leader since I left the White House, and both premiers and presidents have been very gracious to me in letting me meet the future leaders. Sometimes it wasn’t absolutely certain, but sometimes they were fairly sure who was going to be the next leaders. So Hu Jintao and others made arrangements for me to meet with Xi Jinping several times, and so we’ve had a chance to have long and serious discussions at private suppers. One time—I think the last time I met with him—was the 40th anniversary of the Ping-Pong Exchange, and he and I presided over people who were 40 years or older, who were playing ping pong again, in front of me and him and a lot of people, including the ambassador, I believe. And then we had a contest, which I hate to admit, between the Chinese champion and the American champion, of last year. I won't tell you what the results were, but it was somewhat embarrassing to Americans. Those were the kind of wonderful experiences that I had with Xi Jinping, and also with Li Keqiang; I met with him as well. When I met with both of them last year, they suggested that we have this forum, and this is the first example of our carrying out their request. That is just to see what The Carter Center can do—I’d say, working side by side with the Friendship Association, to break down barriers and to make sure that China and the United States understand each other better. So that’s what we are assembled for today.

I noticed that Madam Li said we need to do something of a “big picture” nature, and [with that in mind], I’ll close my remarks with this. I was in South Africa the last weekend in October, with world leaders from all over the globe—former presidents, former prime ministers, a former secretary-general of the United Nations was there, and so forth. They were bemoaning the fact that the greatest challenge that the next generation of earth faces is probably global warming. And the tragedy is that nations have not been able to work harmoniously or in concert. [On this] the Europeans took the early lead; I would say that, in our country, George Bush Sr., George H.W. Bush, was in the forefront in following up on the Tokyo round and also going to Rio de Janeiro. We just had Rio+20 last year, as you know, and the entire process of dealing with global warming has broken down. I think this would be a notable bilateral commitment for our two presidents, our two foreign ministers, and scientific advisors, to say, “Why can’t China and the United States get together in private talks and discussions and work out a proposal to deal with global warming,” and say, “we two nations agree, and now other nations, please come on board with us.” All the European leaders there said that the Europeans would come along instantly if China and the United States could ever agree on what to do about environmental issues in our countries and the threat of global warming in the future. Those are the kind of things that I hope to see our nations adopt as common commitments: helping developing countries improve their lives, understanding one another, developing a new generation of leadership, and taking on two or three, (particularly one big-picture) issues. I think the future relationship between our two countries can be the most glorious historical event that we’ve ever seen, and with the proper leadership on both sides, and with the cooperation of our private citizens of all ages, I hope and pray, and believe, it will come true.
Following President Carter is a hard act, but it reminds me of some fascinating times that I was privileged to have while working for him. It was indeed a phase in history in which something very fundamental happened: A relationship of comprehensive hostility was transformed into a relationship of increasingly extensive cooperation. Of course, there were some moments of tension and disagreement.

The president told you how he handled one short crisis at night when the phone rang and how he reacted critically to what Deng Xiaoping had to suggest. Deng Xiaoping scored some points too. I remember a meeting in the White House when the president was urging Deng Xiaoping to open up the borders of China so that the Chinese people could freely travel or even emigrate abroad, and he kept pushing Deng Xiaoping on it, who was elegantly evading the issues. But then at some point, he decided to take a firm stance, and he simply said to the president, “all right, all right, next year, I’ll let 10 million go. Will you take them?”

Well, that made tit for tat. But I think we have, in fact, witnessed the transformation of a relationship that at one point was very hostile and a relationship that increasingly became an informal alliance, and, at some stages, particularly focused on the Soviet Union. Beyond that, it has been buttressed over time by a mutual realization that we do not have any fundamental ideological conflicts, quite unlike our relationship
with the Soviet Union; no ideological conflicts in spite of professed or practiced different ideologies. We do share interests. We have a recognition—a fundamental recognition of the fact that our economic well-being is very much dependent on a good relationship with each other. That’s terribly important.

Both our leadership and the Chinese leadership are trying to formulate concepts for political cooperation that make this relationship increasingly distinctive historically. However, I think I would be like Pollyanna if I concluded that our relationship, therefore, is invulnerable to problems—quite the contrary. A lot of things could happen that we would very much regret and certainly would not wish for. There are still undertones of distrust on both sides—and they surface very much in the American press, which is open, critical, and sometimes abetted by particular interests—and, of course, Chinese take note of it. The Chinese press is different from ours in that respect, but one sees in it explicit expressions of distrust, and in some cases, one has to say, even open hostility toward the United States. If need be, I can cite some examples.

Behind that, of course, are lingering nationalistic feelings, that could easily be turned in a negative direction if things happened—if something serious happened on the international scene. If either country, or both, were to have serious internal crises that unleashed popular emotions, dramatized differences that exist, or enhanced nationalistic feelings that could be turned into chauvinism. We have to be alert to that; we have to be aware that that possibility exists, in spite of the fact that on some fundamentals, we are already working very closely together.

That brings me to the last point I will make today, since time is limited, namely, that we have to strive to infuse increasingly significant strategic content into our relationship, content that engages us to work jointly on some fundamental problems pertaining to global strategic interest in the preservation of peace and the avoidance of conflict. I have specific examples of what I have in mind. First of all, we have to work closely in East Asia, and the Chinese have been very helpful and very responsible regarding North Korea and its nuclear challenges, but that problem is still far from solved. We are doing what we can, quietly, not in any overtly assertive fashion, to help contain some tensions that have risen lately between China and Japan, because we have an important relationship with each of them, recognizing China’s pre-eminence on the mainland, but at the same time, recognizing the reality of a long-lasting American–Japanese relationship, which in our eyes, contributes to the permanence of our presence in the Far East. Also, we have to think more creatively about the Middle East. The Middle East is a region that could explode into escalating violence involving conflicts of a sectarian type between the Sunnis and the Shiites—conflicts that involve national interests, particularly in regard to Iran, producing a conflict either directly between Iran and Israel with its escalating consequences or drawing America into that conflict, with that conflict then spreading into the region. We have to be engaged in this problem, and I’m delighted that China is participating in the P5+1 discussions on the Iranian nuclear problem very actively. We count on China’s support for the peace efforts regarding Israel and Palestine, and we hope that in the process, the representation of China will also be on the same level that is the case with the other powers that, at this stage, have been more heavily involved in these issues. China has an important role to play in the Middle East, because an explosion in the Middle East would adversely affect China’s own interests, given its dependence on oil from the region. Last but not least, have to think ahead to the dilemmas—but also opportunities—inherent in the changes that are taking place in Central Asia. It has already been noted in yesterday’s discussions that we’ll be disengaging from Afghanistan. But what if thereafter there is a high probability that violence might spread and might not only involve particular movements but possibly some interstate conflicts. In addition to it, of course, Islamic extremism is beginning to be a problem, a security problem, to a number of countries in the region not directly involved in its conflicts but potentially vulnerable to them. That includes, on the one hand, Russia. It also includes China, and indirectly it involves the United States, because one way or another, we are going to be residually present for some time to come in the internal issues pertaining to Afghanistan.

All of that, in effect, means that we need to engage intensively, and at a higher level, and in a more comprehensive fashion, in a strategic dialogue in which we see each other as partners trying to create a framework for global stability. Global stability cannot be the responsibility of one or even several powers. All the major powers—and that notably, particularly means China—have to be engaged in serious discussions. How, collectively, can we structure a more viable system of international security in a world, which for the first time in all of its history, is comprehensively politically awakened and, as a consequence, is stirring in unpredictable fashions, with mounting passions, with increasing conflicts? We are no longer living in an age in which one power could aspire to global hegemony; that is no longer a reality. But we are living in an age in which turmoil could become the decisive reality of international affairs, drawing into that turmoil powers that otherwise wish to avoid being party to conflicts but on whose partnership that global stability fundamentally depends, and that means, above all else, America and China.
TRANSLATE GREAT VISION INTO REALITY

BY AMBASSADOR TIANKAI CUI

It is really a great honor for me to be invited to speak here tonight in front of such a distinguished audience. I know many of you have contributed so much to the relationship between China and the United States. I’m not really sure whether I’m the right person to speak tonight. Actually, when President Carter welcomed Mr. Deng Xiaoping on the south lawn of the White House back in 1979, I was just a graduate student in Shanghai, watching TV coverage with such great excitement and admiration. But I’m very happy to join all of you for this forum on China–U.S. relationships hosted by The Carter Center. I think the forum is taking place at the most appropriate time.

Almost exactly 35 years ago, President Carter and Mr. Deng Xiaoping took a historic step to normalize relations between China and the United States. That was a step taken with great vision and courage, and that was a decision that really changed the course of history. Now 35 years have passed. According to Confucius, people should be standing firm in life at the age of 30. Indeed, this relationship is standing very firm. With the joint efforts from the two sides in the past 35 years, this relationship has grown stronger, more comprehensive, more productive and more resilient than most people would have imagined at that time. Also according to Confucius, people should be free from perplexities at the age of 40. Although this relationship is still bothered from time to time by worries and doubts, there is a clear sense of direction for it in both countries.

Based on the joint efforts of eight presidents from both parties of the United States and successive leaderships in China to charter the course for our bilateral relationship, now our two presidents, President Xi and President Obama, have set the goal for the future development of this relationship, which is to work together and build a new model of relationship between our two great countries. The task before us is to translate this great vision into reality. In doing so, I believe three things are important.

The first one is historical perspective. People often tell us that history is full of rivalries among great powers. I noticed that a few days ago in Tsinghua University, my good friend Dr. Yan Xuetong had a very interesting discussion with professor John Mearsheimer on this particular issue. I also share the view that human beings tend to make
the same mistake again and again. At the same time, I don’t think we should underestimate the capacity to learn. We should not overlook the profound changes that have taken place and are still taking place in the world. After all, we are in the 21st century, not in the 19th century and not in the first half of 20th century. Today, nations and people are much more connected than ever before. There are so many new players on the international scene, state players and nonstate players. Today we are all faced with common challenges, many of which cannot be dealt with by military means alone. We are living in a very different world. What happened in the past does not necessarily have to happen again now or in the future. Indeed, we have the responsibility to make sure that what happened in the past among the great powers will never happen again among the great powers of today and tomorrow, especially not between China and United States.

If we take a closer look at the more recent history of China—U.S. relations in the last three to four decades, we have solid reasons to be optimistic about its present and the future. Our relationship has gone through so many changes and stood the test of so many challenges. We could have a very impressive list of events and changes we have gone through together. For instance, countering the expansionism of the former Soviet Union, restoring peace in Indochina, handling the consequences of the end of the Cold War, responding to 9/11, and the rise of international terrorism. Economically, we’ve gone through at least two major international financial crises. We are still confronted with such security challenges as nonproliferation, the Korean Peninsula, South Asia, and so many global challenges such as climate change, disease prevention, poverty elimination, energy and food security, and so on. Indeed, we have handled quite effectively the crises in bilateral relations such as bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and the EP-3 plane collision. Despite all these, or maybe just because of all these, our relations are much stronger than before, and our cooperation more comprehensive and more effective. We are really creating a new phase of history. That’s why I believe historical perspective is the first thing we need.

Secondly, we both need an open mind. This is called for by the need for better mutual understanding and mutual respect. An open mind will enable us to have an objective and realistic understanding of each other. We will not only find out what differences we have but also why we have these differences and how we can turn them into complementary opportunities for our relations. Or at least we can see to it that these differences will not result in clashes and confrontation. An open mind will also enable us to be more appreciative, accommodative, and supportive to each other’s domestic concerns and priorities.

In this regard, I would suggest that the United States be more open to the situation and new realities in China. Despite all the talks about China being the second largest economy in the world, we are still a developing country with such a huge population and still face very serious problems of unbalanced development, poverty, environmental degradation, etc. When we talk about the Chinese dream, what we mean is that China will rise from its own past. What China is trying to do is to surpass itself, not to prevail over anybody else, especially not the United States. I hope that people in the United States would have an open mind to all this, to the realities in China and to the true aspiration of the Chinese people. That’s how we can achieve harmony without sameness and we can really develop common interests while shelving or managing our differences.

Five years ago, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of our relationship, President Carter said that mutual respect is the most important factor in maintaining and developing China–U.S. relationships. Any potential disagreements we may have or competitions that may arise between our two countries would be resolved in a mutually respectful way. We should all follow the president’s advice.

The third thing we need is a win-win mentality. This is the opposite of a zero-sum game. In today’s world, we have so many common challenges, and the options before us are very simple: win-win or lose-lose. There is actually no zero-sum game to play. This is true in dealing with issues related to climate change, environment, disease, and energy. This is also true, maybe especially true, in economic relations. Better access to each other’s market and greater flow of two-way investment will help both countries create more jobs, raise living standards for its citizens, and have a more successful and effective economic restructuring. In this regard, I hope that the ongoing negotiations on the Bilateral Investment Agreement will be conducted in the win-win spirit.

The win-win mentality also means that we should always try to see benefits from the success of the other and never attempt to take advantage of the other’s problems. A stronger U.S. economy would be something very much wanted in China, and stability and prosperity in China should also be good news for the United States. Likewise in the area of security, if we could work together for common security and cooperative security, we will have a better security situation for both. If we try to play a zero-sum game or if we try to seek absolute security at the expense of security concerns of the other side, we will both end up in less security.

The best geographic area for this win-win mentality and practice is the Asia-Pacific. We are both Pacific countries. Moreover, China is situated in the center of the Asian continent. We fully recognize the interest and presence of the United States in the Asia-Pacific. Of course, as an Asian country, we do have our own concerns and interests in the region. What China and the United States should aim at is more cooperation than competition and a win-win outcome rather than a zero-sum game. The Pacific Ocean is big enough to accommodate both the United States and
China. We do have shared interests in stability and prosperity of this region. This would not only serve our mutual interests but also would meet the expectation of other countries in the region, the expectation of our friends and partners.

These are the three things I would recommend for our future efforts in this relationship. In historical perspective, we have the letter “H.” In an open mind, we have the letter “O.” In a win-win mentality, we have the letter “W.” That’s HOW we build this new model of relationship.

Thirty-five years ago, the 11th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party held the Third Plenum in Beijing. Soon after that, Mr. Deng Xiaoping came to the United States for his visit. These two events took place so close to each other. I don’t think that was just a coincidence. Thirty-five years later, another important Third Plenum of the Central Committee is right now taking place back in Beijing. Our two countries are engaged in joint efforts to build a new model of relationship. I don’t think this is a coincidence either. This fully illustrates the interaction between domestic policy and foreign policy. The big picture is clear. Opportunities are just in front of us. But there is still no guarantee for success. Everything will depend on the choices we make now and we will make in the future. Based on our success in the last 30 to 40 years, I am sure we will make the right choice again, as did President Carter and Mr. Deng Xiaoping 35 years ago.

IT’S TIME FOR A NEW CHAPTER

BY ORVILLE SCHELL

The question of how people on each side of the U.S.–China divide perceive each other often grows as much out of individual, or clusters, of symbolic events as out of actual efforts a policy formation itself. Since we have been discussing policy, which is a fundamental aspect of any bilateral relationship, I thought it might be helpful today to sketch out several very different sorts of these clusters that, in my experience, have been so important in successfully forming how Americans view China, on the one hand, and several other areas where I feel we’ve been rather unsuccessful in engendering a better and more constructive and positive image of each other.

Let me start with the former, with some events that were quite extraordinary in the way they imparted a kind of new sense of possibility about the evolution of relations between the two countries. The first cluster of events was in 1979 when Deng Xiaoping traveled to America to formalized diplomatic relations with the United States. I was on that trip from beginning to end, writing for The New York Times, and a moment, which I subsequently did write about and which was quite extraordinary, took place in Texas. Deng Xiaoping and his retinue had gone to visit the Johnson Space Center, and that night we went off to a little place called Simontown, Texas, where there was going to be a rodeo. I vividly remember arriving, and seeing all these guys with huge stomachs and large silver belt buckles standing around inside the arena with giant plates loaded with ribs and beans and all of the accoutrement of a good barbecue. And then a limousine arrived and out pops Deng Xiaoping, who headed right into the crowd like he was some Texas politician. Lo and behold, after he had taken a seat, the next thing we all knew, two gorgeous young, nubile Texas young ladies galloped up on stallions and presented him with that famous 10-gallon hat, which he then very emphatically clapped over his head, only his ears, as I recall, holding it up from falling down over his entire face. And then the next, next bit of this extraordinary drama occurred when he appeared in a stage coach, driving around the rodeo ring waving as people went absolutely crazy. I mean this was a moment, a truly symbolic moment. What is more, it was the first time anything of its kind had ever been broadcast live back to China. It was a signal to the Chinese that it was time to let go of the past, because the United States and China were entering a new chapter. And, at the same time, it was a symbol to the Americans that Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese were accepting the most American of all symbols—a 10-gallon hat, Texas, a plate of ribs, etc. This was very successful theater. Today we tirelessly speak of branding, but here was branding before we even quite knew what branding was. This was really successful branding!

The next moment, for me, captured something of the ability that symbols have of changing the terms of the foreign policy game, when done well. Now, public relations, which I’m not enormously fond of, can have an enormous impact when they are done well. Chinese comrades call it propaganda, while we call it public relations. But either can be done well. And this next moment came when President Clinton visited China in June 1998. I went on this
trip as well and remember standing on the steps of the Great Hall of the People in Tiananmen Square waiting for him and Jiang Zemin to arrive. You have to remember that this was still in the shadow of 1989. Finally they both arrived, stepped out of their cars with big smiles on their faces, and walked together, almost like a newly married couple, up the steps into the Great Hall of the People. We all went inside to one of its cavernous halls for their joint press conference, where it was announced to the utter reign up, as if he had suddenly thought, “This may be getting a little close to the edge.” And, he said, “If you agree, we will finish this.”

Well, President Clinton was having far too much fun and he countered, “I agree, but you have to let me say something about the Dalai Lama, since you brought it up…” Let me say something that will perhaps be unpopular with everyone [here]. I have spent time with the Dalai Lama. I believe him to be an honest man, and I believe if

astonishment of everybody that President Jiang Zemin had agreed to have it broadcast live on both radio and television. It was an unexpected display of audacity on Jiang Zemin’s part, because he had no script that he was demonstrably reading from. President Clinton radiated his inimitable good-ole-boy aura and very quickly began to really enjoy the banter.

It was quite an amazing moment, because it was so spontaneous. What it suggested was that these two men were enjoying each other’s company. In fact, they even broached the subject of Tibet. But as the conversation about this forbidden topic progressed, Jiang Zemin suddenly kind of

Before I end, let me touch on some events that suggest that all is not sweetness and light in terms of image formation between our two countries, a couple of areas where public perceptions of China have been hurt in this country—or perhaps it’d be better to say have gained a much darker nature. The first is the question of Beijing’s manipulation of visas, largely for journalists and some scholars, who seek to work in China. Denying, even holding up, such visas is really toxic to the relationship. After all, these are the people from whom the American public learns about China, and if you hold them hostage to a visa process, which should actually be done on its merits, not on political grounds, it’s not helpful to U.S.—China relations. The U.S. shouldn’t do it to foreigners seeking to come to America either, although it sometimes has, even though there has usually been a public outcry against such punitive government actions. Nor should China do it against other countries. The cost is far, far too high for any country. And here, I speak from experience as a writer. I have had a lot of colleagues who really find the effects of such a policy difficult to overcome. It leaves them with a sense that they have been, you know, discriminated against.

I won’t labor this point in greater detail, except to say we’re talking about perceptions here. Even though I know we have different political systems, I still believe that people on both sides can agree that it is just and it is right to treat all of our people—even journalists and scholars on each side—with respect, and certainly according to law, to the best of our ability. As Americans, we don’t always succeed in this country in carrying out this great mandate. But I think China has an even longer road to go here. In terms of perception, these failures, because they’re often very public, are extremely harmful to better relations. Extremely. I cannot underline enough how such frictions influence the way in which Americans, and particularly politicians, perceive China. What is more, such unnecessary frictions obstruct the work that the rest of us are trying to do to find constructive areas of collaboration.
First of all, I want to thank John Hardman this morning, for talking about the importance of people-to-people relations and how this is going to be part of the marching orders of The Carter Center going forward, trying to do something about the situation. I would actually have a much less sanguine characterization of Sino-American mutual perceptions in recent years than the one my esteemed colleague, Mr. Zhou Qingan, offered just now. Stable isn’t a word that I would use to describe it.

If we go back a little bit, we’ve all been talking about this “35 years” since the normalization of relations. I think that it’s fair to say that for most of that time, perceptions have been formed by and the relationship has been really driven by elites on either side; most of what happened in the early days happened well out of the public’s view, often behind closed doors through meetings taking place in great secrecy. Policy didn’t have to pay too much attention to considerations of public opinion. That has changed, that has changed very very dramatically, and it has changed only in the last six or seven years. It’s changed for a couple of reasons, I would suggest; it’s changed because of the advent of the Internet and the ability suddenly for Chinese and their American counterparts to encounter each other in a disintermediated setting, one that we haven’t seen before. Encounters used to be polite: They were sister city exchanges, they were trade delegations from this state visiting that province, that sort of thing, and everything was sort of formulaic and nicely run and everyone was on their best behavior. Best behavior does not apply when it comes to Internet comments sections. It’s never an applicable matter.

Through the ’80s and ’90s, Chinese young people learned English well enough that they were able to read what the other side was writing about them, and in the run-up to the Olympics, they were very curious as to what was being said about their country, as Mr. Zhou pointed out. Very curious, and I don’t think that led to anything like stability. I think that they saw instead a profound lack of understanding, a profound unwillingness to be empathetic. What I’d like to drive people toward, what I see as my mission, is driving [people] toward a more informed empathy. I say empathy deliberately (and not sympathy) because I think this idea of an informed empathy does not require one to abdicate one’s own values but rather simply to attempt to understand the context, to understand the assumptions the other side is making; to see what the world looks like through your counterpart’s eyes. It does not require you to embrace those values or take those assumptions to be true. That’s what I’m hoping to move people toward.

The fundamental reality here is we know—outside of this room at least, outside of that rarified circle of professional, or maybe passionate amateur China-watchers, or those of us who have spent (as I have) ungodly numbers of years living in the People’s Republic of China—outside of those circles you can assume safely that anyone who knows anything about China knows what they know through the media. While there’s nothing inherently wrong with this, one really does need to be a very critical reader of the media, because biases exist. Now before I go on and before you paint me as some sort of critic of the American media, I do not subscribe to some crazy conspiracy theory that suggests that the American media is working together to demonize China. I don’t believe that, nor do I think that they do a particularly bad job in all cases. I think there are a very large number of excellent writers out of China, but I would lay a lot of the blame, if not most of the blame, at the feet of Beijing, for some of the reasons that [Dr. Schell] pointed out—the whole visa situation, for example. And
It goes beyond that, the minor maddening things like ministries requiring you to submit questions (that then vanish forever and are never answered) by the archaic means of fax. You actually have to send faxes to ministries to have your questions answered and, of course, they never are. It’s frustrating, the opacity is frustrating, and there are all sorts of things that are frustrating. But beyond that, there are more aggressive means that, of course, one would have to be positively saintly to be able to transcend to be able to write dispassionately about China after having experienced such things. But we must expect this because the relationship is simply too important. Because you are as a journalist, you are shaping the very way that people think about this most important bilateral relationship.

Why is it important now? There has always been sort of a transmission mechanism between public opinion and policy in a democracy, such as America, or a republic like America, in which public opinion translates through the ballot box into policy, or at least [it does] in an ideal world. In China, with the advent of the Internet, you have something like a public sphere. I won’t call it a full-fledged one, but it’s something approximating a public sphere, where once again you see a leadership that is much more responsive now to public opinion. It can take the measure of it and, in fact, is obsessively—from Zhongnanhai all the way down to low-level county offices—is constantly taking the temperature of public opinion as measured online and is more participatory, more responsive, a little more deliberate perhaps. These are all good things one would suppose, but let’s remember that the unruly passions of the masses can strain and, in some cases, constrain the sorts of choices available to Chinese policy makers. This is not always a good thing, and we have to be careful what we wish for.

I want to talk about one thing in particular since I’m an Internet guy, and one element that has crept in very uniformly into media coverage of China that has, I think, really significant problems and that is the over-reliance of reporters now on social media and, in particular, on Sina Weibo. What’s wrong with that? Well, first of all, we all know that it’s rare now to come across a story written by a Western media organization that doesn’t quote someone with some strange handle spouting off his opinion on Weibo. It’s come to completely supplant the old Voxpop where you go out into the street and you talk to somebody out there. [Is there] anything wrong with that? Actually there is. There’s an awful lot wrong… and it’s not just the fact that Weibo isn’t wholly demographically representative. To my mind, this in an important enough segment that it—if it really were an accurate reflection of urban, reasonably wealthy, reasonably educated middle-class—would be indeed valuable. But there’s something more going on here. The first thing that I would point out is that there is a very high Gini co-efficient of influence on Weibo. You have 16 individuals with 50 million followers or more, who account for so much of the retweeted traffic it’s just not even funny. We’re talking about massive inequality of influence on Weibo that is skewing by its very nature.

A second and more sort of insidious thing that goes on is this: How many of you have social media accounts? I mean the young folks here, of course you have a Facebook account, and when you post something whether it’s a picture of your kid or whether it’s some snarky remark or even just a link to a magazine article you like, you go back 20 minutes later and you see if people liked it. You see if people have reposted it, you see if people have commented positively on it, and if they have, a little shot of dopamine goes off in your head. You get a little pleasure from that act. So, too, with people who are posting things on Weibo. Only they learn very quickly that the stuff that is going to be retweeted—the stuff that is going to get you followed; the stuff that is going to be commented on positively—is not stuff where you have taken a serious social situation and you’re weighed things in the balance and you’ve taken a nuanced view, you’ve painted it in subtle shades of grey—no. Nobody is going to read that or retweet it or comment positively on that, no. If you stake out, however, a really stringent position, and if you do it in a snarky and kind of humorous way, you’re apt to get much more virality out of that, right? You know hate is the most viral of emotions, it turns out. That’s unfortunate.

This is a problem, because it really skews perceptions. It makes people appear to be exaggeratedly cynical, it makes them appear to be more anti-party than they maybe would be ordinarily because let’s face it: Sina as opposed to NetEase or as opposed to Tencent or Sohu, has a dominant political ethos to it. It is skewed right; that’s the truth of it. It comes out of the fact that it was always sort of the more reputable among the different news portals; it was the one for hard news, for serious news readers, and it was the one that pioneered long-form blogging. It courted a lot of these gongzhi, these public intellectuals, who are now among the Big Vs, the verified accounts who account for so much of the traffic. This is a way in which Weibo really tends to skew our perceptions, so we have people, a foreign correspondents core in China, that has essentially bought into the cynicism they see on Weibo and believe it to be reflective of reality. I know there are many perches from which to see China, I know that where I work, from the hilltop I occupy, things don’t look as bleak. But I urge everyone to be circumspect when reading things that simply quote Weibo or [using that to] inform your opinions about what “the Chinese people” think. Really, discount this stuff. It’s not an accurate reflection.
"Silent Contest" Provokes Loud Response

A conspiracy-minded 100-minute film produced by the Chinese military ... accuses the United States of trying to undermine the Communist Party’s control of the People’s Liberation Army and impose American values on China.

It is not clear if the video was intentionally released online or somehow leaked ... the film appears to offer a remarkably straightforward glimpse into the Cold War mindset of the Chinese military leadership as well as the deep suspicions of the United States festering inside one of the most influential institutions in the Chinese political system.

Strident Video by Chinese Military Casts U.S. as Menace

Don’t be happy just because the documentary “Silent Contest” has been removed from the web. It’s an internal film and of course should not be made available to the public. All it had to do was stick its head out for a second and bluster a little. No matter how awful it is, a film with that kind of powerful backing always represents a kind of authoritative voice.

Zhang Ming
Tencent Weibo
Nov. 5, 2013

Some websites counterattack and cover up “Silent Contest,” which is a real-life silent contest. Even the “Silent Contest” produced by military top brass is “harmonized” silently, which illustrates the intensity of the real-life silent contest. One can see the problem caused by opinion leaders is very serious, and how Chinese public opinion has lost ground is a terrifying situation. There is almost no position to defend in terms of public opinion. If a more intense counterattack is not launched to recapture the positions in public opinion, nothing will remain to be defended.

Big Foot
Tencent Weibo
Nov. 4, 2013

I got quite a lot out of watching “Silent Contest.” After all, there are so many valuable historical scenes. As far as opinions go, I won’t be moved no matter how much nonsense there is!

Yan Lieshan
Sina Weibo
Nov. 6, 2013

Even foreign media have taken notice of “Silent Contest,” this ideological documentary produced by military top brass. In addition, the fact that it serves as a wake-up call to Chinese society is highly praised. Who leads the army? Don’t they know?! This is a documentary produced by military top brass, and they dare to block it completely. This is a public anti-party act! A video produced in June was made available to the public before the Third Plenary Session. It was removed. The reactionaries are thoroughly desperate!

Strident Video by Chinese Military Casts U.S. as Menace

Sima Nan
Tencent Weibo
Nov. 1, 2013
“Silent Contest,” a documentary jointly presented by several agencies that included the National Defense University and the General Political Department, was recently blocked from Chinese websites. This propaganda film was produced in June 2013 and is more than 90 minutes long. In the film, Western countries, led by the United States, attempt to overrun China on 5 fronts; the film also names leading Chinese liberals Mao Yushi and He Weifang as spokespeople for the American attack on China, and attributes corruption and events involving the defense of individual rights to American conspiracy and infiltration.

I only hoped from the bottom of my heart that our country could head toward democracy; and doesn’t our Constitution prescribe democracy? This work called “Silent Contest” is filled with cold war attitudes and inflammatory comments, and demonizes the words and actions of certain people who pursue freedom and democracy. It even calls the corruption that stems from the lack of democracy and the rule of law a product of American conspiracy. How ridiculous!

Who knows how much taxpayer money was spent on this “Silent Contest” propaganda film to demonize America and universal values? But it got taken down as soon as it was broadcast—probably trashed too badly. What a silent contest, the contest starts and it’s dead.

Is America going too far? The major American news outlets reported today that, after the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon protested against China’s establishment of an air defense zone, two B-52 fighter jets flew over the Chinese air defense zone without weapons or a convoy. The media states that there was no Chinese response. An American scholar said that the Chinese military, logically, should react. Didn’t they think of it beforehand?

Every Chinese xiāngshēng actor can yammer like there’s no tomorrow, but never in a million years would they dare to make fun of top leaders or businesspeople. People like Zhao Benshan mainly make fun of the disabled, fat people, and the mentally ill—the downtrodden, who have no power. Every talk show host in America is eloquent, but never in a million years would they dare to make fun of the disabled, fat people, or the mentally ill. They mostly make fun of presidents and movie stars. (xiāngshēng: a traditional Chinese comedic performance)
Ji Lianhai
Tencent Weibo
Nov. 22, 2013

You talk about elections every day, but do you know that the American president is not elected directly? You talk about votes every day, but do you know that 46 percent of Americans never vote? Because Americans all know that the same boss is behind the so-called two parties! Only the seven families that have the Fed have real power. This is not fundamentally different from the Chinese political system. Americans know these facts. Do you?

Yang Peichang
Tencent Weibo
Nov. 22, 2013

The People's Daily says that the American “every person is born equal” value is far from reality. A netizen posted a brilliant response: there are clouds in America and it's not sunny every day; not everyone is a billionaire in America; the president doesn't get 100 percent of the votes; in America officials are criticized in the newspapers, so we can see that the government isn't perfect either; one percent of the American constitution still hasn't been realized; there is sand in American rice, there isn't a bone in the eggs…

I am in the U.S. at the invitation of Columbia University. I open the newspapers and read criticism of the government. I turn on TV and see people making fun of Obama. I go out and observe protests against taxes. It seems the country is on the edge of collapse. But I drive hundreds of miles and I notice lots of families flying American flags in front of their houses and learn they fly the flags without coercion from the government. True patriotism means you curse the government without any fear; true stable governance means government remain calm when the height of public opinion is taken over by government critics.

“General Luo Yuan: I am on the American assassination list.” Luo Yuan claims that he is listed on the American “Eagle Slaying Project” and will be hunted down. He declares that overseas media outlets are celebrating their strategy of winning the war in the cyberspace. This strategy is “We can wait for a general to emerge in 10 years but we cannot let foot soldiers cross the river everyday.” The U.S. goal is clear-cut, namely, it will slay every Chinese eagle that may engage in possible fight against America.

Li Chengpeng
Sina Weibo
Oct. 15, 2013

Supporters cheer as U.S. President Barack Obama delivers his victory speech at McCormick Place, Nov. 6, 2012, in Chicago, Ill. after being re-elected for a second term. | Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images
By any standard, the 2013 year-end has been quite eventful in U.S.–China relations. Following China’s declaration of its Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) on Nov. 23, the U.S. Air Force dispatched two B-52s to China’s ADIZ without any prior notification. Ten days later, a U.S. guided missile cruiser (USS Cowpens) had a near collision with a Chinese naval ship in the South China Sea where a Chinese aircraft carrier group was conducting exercises. This happened when U.S. Vice President Biden was in Beijing trying to soft paddle the ADIZ issue while echoing China’s call for a “new type of major power relationship,” that is, no confrontation, mutual respect of each other’s vital interests, and striving for win-win outcomes. Welcome to the brave new era of speaking nicely while showing big sticks, by both sides!

If this complex, if not confusing, relationship between Washington and Beijing is hard to comprehend, a recently published joint survey by the Carnegie Endowment and Qinghua University in Beijing (The U.S.–China Security Perceptions Project) adds some extra spinning, as well as comfort, to the multidimensional ties between America and China. The joint survey found that a majority of U.S. and Chinese elites, as well as the general public, viewed the other country as a competitor but not an enemy, despite a low level of strategic trust between the United States and China. Only small minorities of all respondents in both countries saw the other country as an enemy. This, however, was somewhat balanced by the view of substantial minorities of all respondents who saw the other country as a partner (http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/12/12/u.s.-china-security-perceptions-survey-findings-and-implications/gvqk).

DEFINING MOMENT?

The Carnegie–Qinghua survey is just a more recent effort to figure out the complicated bilateral relationship, albeit with a more positive spin. In the past decade, there has been a proliferation of definitions for the Sino–U.S. relationship. In America, Joshua Cooper Ramo’s 2004 Beijing Consensus (vs. Washington Consensus) was followed by Fred Bergsten’s G-2 in 2005, Niall Ferguson’s Chimerica (China and America) in 2006, and more recently, the fashionable frenemy (friend and enemy) mix. The Chinese side has been no less innovative in this area. In the U.S.–China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Washington D.C., in July 2013, Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang used the analogy of “marriage,” which required mutual respect and cooperation in order to prevent a costly “divorce.” Qinghua Professor Yan Xuetong was blunter, as he usually is, when he depicted Sino – U.S. relations as one of “fake friends” (假朋友). Another Qinghua scholar, Dr. Sun Ze, described the relationship as “sweet and sour.”

UNITY OF DIFFERENCES?

Regardless of the differences between these definitions of U.S.–China relations, an emerging consensus among American and Chinese political and intellectual elites points to the unsettling nature of the bilateral relationship. This leaves considerable space for both sides to manage, shape, and fine-tune this important, sensitive, and certainly unique bilateral relationship. What the findings of the Carnegie–Qinghua survey does not reveal, or took for granted, is that this rather moderate mutual perception of the bilateral relationship at both the elite and general public levels was against a backdrop of two vastly different societies, political systems, cultures, and histories.

In retrospect, the U.S.–China relationship can certainly be described as a one of uneasiness; one that is frequently emotional, sometimes difficult, and largely asymmetrical. It is an asymmetrical relationship because, first and foremost, China and the United States are two vastly different paradigms, which affect almost every aspect of their life, outlook, behavior, expectations, interests, political and economic systems, perceptions of each other, etc. America is Western, and China is Asian; Americans are largely religious, and Chinese mostly secular; Americans always look forward, Chinese tend to pause and look to the past; Americans always search for faster speeds and a broader space; Chinese enjoy things in slow motion such
as Taijiquan (太极拳); Americans spend a lot, Chinese save a lot, or in Ferguson’s words, we can observe a “parsimonious China and profligate America” (Niall Ferguson, 2011); Chinese kids study too much, American kids study too little; one wonders where is Goldilocks, where is the happy medium?! America is the world’s most powerful nation, but a relatively young one; China is the world’s oldest civilization, and the only one with a continuous history, according to Dr. Kenneth Lieberthal of the Brookings Institution. Last, but not least, when China makes big mistakes, it is usually the Chinese people who suffer; when America makes big mistakes, the rest of the world suffers more.

ASYMMETRY OF PERCEPTIONS

The list of differences can go on and on. Despite all of this, Chinese and Americans do get along reasonably well in a highly volatile, if not dangerous, world, according to the Carnegie–Qinghua survey. And this is no small matter, considering a rather enduring asymmetry of mutual perceptions or misperceptions between the two countries. That is, Americans tend to see China in a more negative light, while Chinese see America in a more positive light.

For almost 100 years between the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, most Americans looked at China through the tinted lens of missionaries and followed their impulse to “uplift and civilize” the pitiful, backward, and inferior Chinese “race.” In the United States, over 300,000 Chinese contracted “coolies” labored to construct the transcontinental railways, while waves of anti-Chinese violence swept the western states and beyond. In 1882, the U.S. Congress enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending immigration by all Chinese, the first and only law against a particular ethnic group. It was not until 1943 when the Chinese Exclusion Act was lifted, thanks to the Japanese war-time propaganda accusing America as a racist nation. Although China and America were war-time allies against Japanese militarism in World War II, average Americans had little understanding of the tidal force of Chinese nationalism that eventually triumphed in the form of Chinese communism. As a result, Americans believed that China was “lost”—as if China had been “found” by the United States in the first place. Even in the past 35 years when bilateral relations have considerably broadened and deepened, bilateral ties have roller-coasted over the issues of Taiwan, the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, the EP-3 airplane collision, human rights issues, Tibetan independence, etc. Samuel Huntington went as far as to imagine a “Confucian–Islamic” conspiracy against the West in his provocative “clash of civilizations” treatise.

Fast forward to the 2012 U.S. presidential election. The campaign machines of Romney and Obama were shooting at each other, day in and day out, with endless “China-cheating” commercials. That however, was not a surprise, as China bashing has been a rather stable recipe in America’s presidential cycles. In the early 1990s, Bill Clinton accused President George H.W. Bush of “kowtowing
to butchers from Baghdad to Beijing.”

In 2000, George W. Bush vowed to turn China from “a strategic partner” into a “strategic opponent.” The ubiquitous China-cheating commercials in 2012 elevated the negativity of China in America’s domestic politics to a new height. One may recall that the last time the United States branded another nation as a “cheater” was Dec. 7, 1941, when the Japanese ambassador delivered the declaration of war a day after Pearl Harbor was attacked.

America’s largely negative perception of China, however, has not been reciprocated by most Chinese, who tend to perceive the United States in a more positive way, at least a mixed one. To begin with, the Chinese characters for the United States mean “beautiful nation” (美国). In the mid-20th century, this reference became “beautiful imperialist” (美丽帝国主义) according to Shambaugh’s 1991 book; or a “sentimental imperialist” nation, wrote James Thompson in 1980. The United States was still viewed as an imperialist nation, but with a bigger heart than those of the Europeans and Japanese. These mixed feelings toward America continued even after the Chinese embassy was “accidentally” bombed by the American B-2 stealth bombers in 1999. Professor Wang Jisi of Peking University summarized China’s thinking of the United States as “beauty and the beast”: “beauty” stood for America’s domestic politics, which has checks and balances; “beast” for America’s overbearing, unilateralist foreign policy. The reasoning goes that even if America’s foreign policy is “bad,” China should continue to learn from the U.S. democratic system.

HARMONY OF DIFFERENCES VS. ALLIANCES OF SIMILARITIES

The discussion of the asymmetric mutual perceptions between China and America reveals that China’s mixed perception of America has been quite consistent, while the U.S. perceptions of China seem moving toward a more nuanced position. For this more sophisticated view to take roots in America’s mind-set, one needs to comprehend the Confucian notion of “harmony of differences [和而不同],” which constitutes a deeper philosophical underpinning that guides China’s intercultural/civilizational interactions with others. For Confucius and his contemporary disciples, diversity in culture, society, and policy is not only normal but preferred. Furthermore, harmony is needed precisely because of those differences. Along this line of thinking, contemporary China is embracing multilateralism, not necessarily to oppose the West, but because China is comfortable with a world of diverse ideas and political systems. Such a concept is also obvious in the making, and operations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Central Asia, which interfaces with nearly all major religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Confucianism, all kinds of political systems with democracies and nondemocracies, and big/strong and small/weak states. Within this context, the rise of China, together with the rise of other non-Western states, will by no means be the end of the West, though it does mean the end of the West’s domination of the non-Western.

Western international relations theories and policies, in contrast, insist on unity because of (or by, of, and for) sameness; hence, NATO members must be democracies, and European Union members must be European, Christian—and perhaps even white. Turkey has been an associate member of the EU since 1963. Despite decades of talks for a formal membership, Turkey is unlikely to join the EU in the near future, given the unfavorable public opinion among EU population largely because of a thinly disguised race factor in the name of “religion.” The quest for similarity is perhaps the hallmark of the West in the 20th century when Western liberalism, Marxism, fascism, and nationalism turned to militarism feverously competed for primacy. Each tries to change the rest of the world according to its own ideological type; neither wants to live in an imperfect world full of gray areas; both see the world in black-and-white terms; together, they dragged the rest of the world into the last phase of the “Western Civil Wars,” according to William Lind. This solipsism of the West was the root cause of the world wars, hot and cold, in the 20th century, which was the bloodiest century of human history.

In real times, the Confucian notion of unity in diversity is perhaps more challenging and necessary for interactions among states of different types than those with similarities. In this sense, what the ubiquitous democracy-peace theory has enshrined is perhaps the minimum of what countries of similar political systems should do. Indeed, the West, which has barely found ways to live with minorities of different races and religions within its borders, has a long way to go in order live with much of the non-Western part of the world.

From a historical perspective, there is perhaps nothing wrong with democracy as a political system that evolved through Western history and culture. It deserves both respect and serious consideration by others, including China. Indiscriminately imposing democracy anywhere and anytime, however, amounts to a witch doctor prescribing Viagra to every patient, regardless of his or her age, gender, or symptoms. Ultimately, it may undermine one’s own interests, as is the case of Iraq, which has become the bloodiest democratization ever in the world’s history.

Partly because of the Confucianist notion of “harmony of differences,” China has so far been able to avoid the excessiveness of Western ideologies. This comes, of course, in the wake of China’s protracted learning and experimentation.
with almost all Western ideologies: after 30 years of its experimentation with Western market capitalism, 60 years after its switch to Western Marxism, and 90 years after its dismay with Western liberalism, China is searching for its own answers, guidelines, and approaches for many of its problems and those of the world.

CHINA AS A DIFFERENT POWER

The Carnegie–Qinghua survey, if reasonably accurate, may indicate a gradual shift away from the West’s alarmist view about China’s historical rise. This may be because some in the West start to see China as it is, rather than as what it should become. In this regard, the still common “China threat” perspective is rooted perhaps more in the West’s own historical experience that the “rise” of any nation-state would inevitably mean a disruptive war against the status quo order. The historical trajectory of China, however, shows a different story: A weak China would be either the prey of stronger powers or a cornered beast, reacting with militant policies toward others, which is the case for both traditional and modern China. In the first 30 years of the People’s Republic of China (1949-1979), China’s peripheries became the skirmish lines either with superpowers or with neighbors, or both at the same time. Its current policy of peaceful development is being implemented as China is enjoying the longest period of sustained stability and development since 1840. Instead of imposing itself on the rest of the world and waging endless wars when the West was rising, a relatively stable and reasonably strong China is not repeating Western steps. China so far has no military bases outside of its own soil, no armed personnel outside of its own borders other than those on U.N.-authorized missions, and does not have a single piece of nuclear weaponry deployed on another countries’ soil. And China is the only nuclear power in the world to declare, from the beginning, that it will never use nukes in the first place and will never use it against non-nuclear states. A stronger China, therefore, is more likely to use diplomacy, rather than its power, in its dealings with others.

This historical trajectory of China is almost the opposite of the West. For example, the United States has pursued three different foreign policy paradigms in search of security in the past 100 years:

• Wilsonian collective security when the United States was one of several major powers in the world in the early 20th century;
• Cold War bilateral security when Washington reluctantly accepted the MAD concept (mutually assured destruction), meaning that its own security depended on the fact that Moscow, too, should feel secure; and
• Unilateralism for absolute security during the post-Cold War when the U.S. primacy in comprehensive power towers over the rest of the world.

In each stage, a stronger America moved from multilateralism to bilateralism and unilateralism. In the post-Cold War decades, American power is simply unchallenged, unbalanced, and unrestrained, which eventually led to Bush’s preemption and unilateralism after 9/11, which cost the lives of thousands of Americans and perhaps hundreds of thousands of others.

* * *

For the “China issue,” Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) had an aphorism, if not a solution: “Let China sleep; when she wakes she will shake the world.” Almost 200 years after his death, this famous aphorism (or cliché, for Sinologists) by the French military genius is both right and wrong. He was right because China, indeed, had gone into almost a century-and-a-half “sleep”—a benign word for the prolonged national devastation that lasted from 1839 to 1979 and included wars, defeats, occupation by foreign powers, revolution, civil wars, and political upheaval. Napoleon was wrong, however, to predict that China’s awakening would shake the world, meaning that it would pose a challenge to the West-dominated international system. Thirty-five years after China unfolded its historical reform, a strong and stable China—instead of switching between Napoleonic “sleeping” and “shaking” modes—has served as the world’s factory and has been a stakeholder of the existing international system still dominated by the West.

Beyond that, the French military genius would definitely remember that China, as the world’s biggest economy with nearly a third of the world GDP (in purchasing power parity), never attempted to drive to Moscow like what he did. Instead, this richest country at the time with the only unbroken civilization in world history was waiting, unknowingly, for the arrival of the European gunboats. And the rest is history. It is anybody’s opinion to consider whether traditional China was smart or stupid at the dawn of the modern world in which might makes right. China was just different then from the West; and will continue to be different in the 21st century.

The purpose of General Qiao’s visit to the United States was to personally experience and observe the misconceptions that exist between Chinese and American people. General Qiao stated that the accurate predictions he made in his book “Unrestricted Warfare” on the subject of 9/11 have been met with some misunderstanding in the United States. Some Americans believe he is the spiritual godfather of Osama bin Laden and that his book is a textbook on terrorism. In response to this, General Qiao Liang explained that his book explicitly points out the insufficient breadth of U.S. security. The 9/11 terrorist attacks were, to a large degree, a result of this. The subtitle of this book—“War and Strategy in the Age of Globalization”—has been mistranslated as “China’s Master Plan to Destroy America.” General Qiao Liang expressed that this misinterpretation could, to a certain degree, be understood because every country has left-wing, right-wing, and moderate factions, and both right- and left-wing members may be inclined toward extremism. For example, in China’s Internet world, the differences between the so-called “Fifty-Cent Party” and “Welcoming Party” can reach verbal warfare. In fact, a certain degree of divergence—even opposition—exists between the modes of thinking between the average American and Chinese public, specifically on matters of politics and social culture. This discrepancy—in addition to the informational asymmetry received by both parties—often creates misunderstandings. For instance, Chinese people frequently view the unfriendly comments of American congressional leaders toward China to be expressions of U.S. governmental policy. But in reality, politicians in the United States may freely express their personal opinions; their personal views have absolutely no bearing on the government’s attitude toward China. As another example, when reviewing China’s recent disputes with its neighboring countries over island sovereignty, Western countries often presume that China is forcibly expanding its territory through relying on its increasingly strong national strength. But in fact, China’s government does not wish to provoke these sovereignty disputes; it is the neighboring countries that trumpet these issues. Qiao believes that international relations are extremely complex and, moreover, it is very difficult to acquire enough information to clearly see the beginning and end of an entire situation. However, when dealing with interest-driven international relations, we can adhere to the following principle to determine the relationship of cause and effect in international affairs: “Who is the greatest beneficiary?”

On the subject of foreign media concern over the publication of Chinese military opinions in public media outlets in recent years, Qiao said that it is not at all necessary to pay much attention to military opinion because these opinions can barely influence China’s policymakers. This can be compared to our need to clarify the differences between thinktank analyses and actual policy; there are often many voices in think tanks, but there is, however, a large difference between the policy options at the policy-making level and the multitude of initial, diverse ideas. This is because there is a strict screening process for actually policy implementation, and very few of these ideas will be used. Qiao subsequently said that the concept of national interests has only recently appeared in China. Following the development of many aspects of Chinese society, the number of voices concerned over China’s national interests will inevitably increase. Furthermore, the humiliations of China’s recent history have caused the common people to prefer tough and unyielding stances, like those from the so-called “Hawk Faction.” But in Chinese traditional culture, more Chinese people...
favor public figures with “moral integrity” than those who involve themselves with practical interests, even if those in the latter category have made great contributions to China over the course of history. Nonetheless, Chinese people have begun to realize the importance of [national] interests in recent years. Qiao emphasized that he himself belongs to the rational school of thought. National interests are an important standard by which to measure international affairs; whichever methods are most conducive to promoting national interests are the methods that should become options.

On the subject of the diversity of global cultures and systems, General Qiao made a comparison to the theory of natural selection. If a species’ eating habits are too uniform, that species will inevitably near extinction as a result of the fragility of its basis for survival. On the other hand, over-diversification will unavoidably lead to excessive confrontation and competition over resources that will inevitably become uncontrollable. The problem of national system selection is also like this. The overemphasis of a single system will inevitably become a pitfall of invariable difficulties. The best option is to locate the largest common denominator and the most advantageous balance point between diversity and uniformity. Because of this, universal values will inevitably face questions of uniformity, and yet, without a basic consensus, the world will collapse. Therefore, the many scholars that monitor international issues and national security ought to concern themselves with locating this balance point.

**Q&A Session**
On the relationship between media and warfare, Qiao believes that media holding a hand in warfare has already become reality. Taking the second Gulf War as an example, the media’s comprehensive war reporting therein enabled humanitarianism to become a weapon in restraining the violence of war. Yet at the same time, one of the effects of this reporting became an invisible yet effective means of multiplying and spreading weapons and wartime violence.

On the question of whether China can be democratized, Qiao believes that commercial culture and contractual spirit are the most important foundations of democracy. A constitution is a type of universal contract. However, in comparison with the popularity of the age-old contractual spirit in the West, China’s commercial culture is exceedingly frail; the construction of democracy on this foundation would inevitably lead to many problems. As to Taiwan’s realization of democracy, we should note that in Taiwan’s so-called democracy, aside from elections, all other aspects are non-democratic. The fissures and conflicts between the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) and KMT (Kuomintang) have already begun to divide Taiwanese society. Therefore, we do not want this type of democracy.

On the subject of Internet security, Qiao Liang believes that network security has already become an integral aspect of today’s national security, while presently every nation has yet to realize that they must restrict internet warfare.

On the subject of future military changes, he believes that in an era where capital is king, weapons systems should adapt. The aircraft carrier was in its golden age in an era when material substance was king, but it has not yet adapted to the demands of the capital-driven era on weapons systems; this is beyond doubt.

On the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC (Communist Party of China) Central Committee proposal to establish a Chinese national security commission, Qiao believes that China absolutely must establish a state security commission; this is a necessary decision based on the grim realities both domestically and abroad and the internal reforms of current national security agencies.

---

**MORE UPDATES**

Nov. 10: The Carter Center’s China Program held a closed-door session on U.S.–China relations.

Nov. 10: Daniel R. Russel, assistant secretary of state for East Asia and Cui Tiankai, Chinese Ambassador to the United States, delivered speeches at the forum on U.S.–China Relations.

Nov. 11–12: The Carter Center and the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries hosted The Carter Center Forum on U.S.–China Relations.

Nov. 19: General Qiao Liang discussed misperceptions between the United States and China with the staff and local scholars at The Carter Center.

Nov. 22: Dr. John Hardman, president and CEO of The Carter Center, met with Yu Hongjun, vice minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China, and Hugo Shong, executive vice president of International Data Group.

www.uscnpm.org
U.S.-China Perception Monitor is designed to render an objective and accurate diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of the world’s most significant bilateral relationship.