

**STRATEGY
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CHINA: A NEW BEHAVIOR?

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Chinese and American relations can be best characterized as correct and cooperative during the 1970's and 1980's. But the United States has unilaterally initiated a breach in these relations when over the past five years the U.S. has strongly criticized Chinese behavior and intentions. What has gone wrong with the close ties that the two countries enjoyed during the previous two decades? This paper focuses on Chinese conduct when U.S. and Chinese relations were more cordial. It demonstrates that China has consistently maintained her policies since the initial thaw in American/Chinese relations during the Nixon Administration. U.S. attitudes toward China have changed but not Chinese behavior.

Chinese and American relations can be best characterized as correct and cooperative during the 1970's and 1980's. Both countries respected, if not supported, the other's interests and actions. But the United States has unilaterally initiated a breach in these relations when over the past five years the U.S. has strongly criticized Chinese behavior and intentions. At times this criticism has bordered on condemnation. The previously close cooperation between the two nations has turned to rancor and thinly disguised animosity.

What has gone wrong with the close ties that the two countries enjoyed during the previous two decades? Has Chinese behavior changed dramatically? Or have U. S. foreign policy interests toward China changed? This study will not attempt to explain this shift in U. S. attitudes toward China. But we should at least note that this change comes at a time when the triangular relationship among the U. S., the Former Soviet Union, and China is no longer necessary to maintain world order. China is no longer a Cold War intermediary but a contemporary competitor, whose economy may outpace the U. S.' in the next 25 to 30 years. Irrespective of changing U.S. attitudes and China's emergence as an economic competitor, this study will focus on Chinese conduct when U.S. and Chinese relations were more cordial. It will demonstrate that China has consistently maintained her policies since the initial thaw in American/Chinese relations during the Nixon Administration. China's behavior has remained constant. What is even more startling is that much of this Chinese behavior was in place even before Sino-American relations were formalized. The United States was fully apprised of Chinese conduct.

Recently, U.S. officials have been attacking the conduct of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on a broad front. Among the many China issues

that are bandied about Washington, perhaps the most important is China's stubbornness surrounding the Taiwan issue. To underscore the present U. S. attitude, Taiwan's representative to the United States was the first foreign dignitary that Jesse Helms, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, received after taking his key committee chairmanship. Even Newt Gingrich has publicly called for the admission of "The Republic of China on Taiwan" to the United Nations and for diplomatic recognition of the ROC by the United States.¹ Our officials persistently ask why China does not soften her position vis-a-vis Taiwan. Further, human rights activists criticize China's harassment and imprisonment of dissidents, her prison camp system, the number of executions carried out every year (about 5,000 in 1994), restriction on freedom of speech, and her persecution of Tibetans. U. S. national security specialists point with alarm to China's military modernization program, improvements in her nuclear forces, military exercises carried out near Taiwan, and her assertive policy in the South China Sea. Arms control advocates are concerned about Beijing's exports of weapons, including missile systems, to Pakistan. Mickey Kantor, the current United States Special Trade Representative, has publicly announced that China does not respect other countries' intellectual property rights, since the country promotes the pirating of books, records, and computer software. Cumulatively, these issues have exerted a strong, negative impact on current U.S./Chinese relations. There is a growing perception in the United States

¹ David Shambaugh, "The United States and China: A New Cold War?" *Current History*, Volume 94, Number 593, September 1995, p. 242.

that recent Chinese behavior across a wide range of issues is inimical to American interests.² But has Chinese behavior really changed?

Two key American/Chinese documents serve to define China's position regarding the Taiwanese issue: The Shanghai Communique of 1972 essentially normalized relations between the two nations then the Joint Communique of 1978 formalized these relations. In the former, the Chinese openly stated their position to the U. S. government: The Taiwan question was the crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States; the Government of the People's Republic of China was the sole legal government of China; Taiwan was a province of China which has long been returned to the motherland; the liberation of Taiwan was China's internal affair, in which no other country had a right to interfere. The Chinese government opposes any activities which aim at the creation of "one China, one Taiwan," "one China, two governments," "two Chinas," and "independent Taiwan" or that advocate that "the status of Taiwan remains to be determined."³ In the 1978 communique, the United States openly supported the Chinese position that there was but one China and that Taiwan was a part of China.⁴ In effect, these two documents removed a great symbolic barrier by cumulatively derecognizing the Republic of China on Taiwan.⁵ In the 1978 communique, there was neither a PRC

² Ibid., p. 242.

³ The Shanghai Communique between the United States and the People's Republic of China, 1972.

⁴ Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China, 1978.

⁵ William R. Kinter & John F. Cooper, The China-Taiwan Issue in U. S. Foreign Policy, 1979, p.7.

commitment to refrain from using force against Taiwan nor a unilateral U. S. commitment to the security of Taiwan.

Yet, President Carter's statement accompanying the Joint Communiqué on establishing diplomatic relations did state that "the United States continues to have an interest in the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue and expects that the Taiwan issue will be settled peacefully by the Chinese themselves." The PRC immediately responded to this statement by insisting that the decision as to the method by which Taiwan would be brought back to PRC control was part of China's "internal affairs" for "unifying the country." Since under international law it is recognized that a country may use force in its internal affairs, the Carter statement on the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue was in fact and in law rejected by the Chinese. Later, Deng Xiao-ping publicly acknowledged that the Chinese cannot restrict their options by renouncing the possibility of using force for the reunification of Taiwan and mainland. He also said the future of Taiwan "is entirely an internal Chinese affair" but that Beijing would "take note" of President Carter's wish that the dispute be settled peacefully.⁶ Whether either of the documents "sold out" Taiwan at the expense of the communist regime on the mainland is superfluous: The United States has clearly recognized Taiwan as an internal problem of the PRC. Thus current criticism of the PRC regarding the Taiwan issue is well intentioned but meaningless. The PRC has not changed her behavior; it is merely continuing a long-standing policy which the United States has concurred with. The PRC will never waver on this most fundamental issue.

⁶ Hungdah Chiu, China and the Taiwan Issue, 1979, p. 184.

Condemnation of the PRC regarding human rights' violations are legitimate. Nevertheless, PRC behavior has not changed. China was and still is a violator of individual human rights. The present violations are no worse than those of 20 years ago when the U. S. first acknowledged the existence of the PRC. Since the birth of the PRC, Chinese leaders have consistently given greater priority to the need to control the population than to grant human liberties and to respect individual rights. The PRC regards rights as nothing but the rights of the egoistic person who is separated from others and the community in general. Mao and his followers also asserted, like Marx, that capitalism or, more correctly, the capitalist era of history gave rise to the notion of natural rights; they regard this as a distinctly Western concept of human rights. Global socialism, Mao said, would erase this notion of human rights from human history. Mao specifically rejected the notion espoused by some social contract theorists that the individual possesses certain inalienable rights vis-a-vis the state, irrespective and independent of the individual's duties, obligations, or responsibilities. Chinese Communist theory posits that rights derive from duties. Without duties, there were no rights. Furthermore, these duties were objective and concrete, not abstract and theoretical. For that reason, citizens' duties have been carefully specified in all of China's constitutions. When duties and rights are seen together, one cannot help but come to the conclusion that in the Chinese context duties are more important, and maybe all important. One also cannot help but wonder if failure to fulfill duties may result in the loss of human rights. On the other hand, Western constitutions, which support rights above duties, are radically different.⁷ The Chinese have stated emphatically that the state is more

⁷ Yuan Li-wu et al, Human Rights in the People's Republic of China, 1988,

important than the individual and that the collective good takes priority over the individual's rights. In fact, this is something that Chinese leaders have said repeatedly in their statements on human rights issues since they joined the United Nations in 1971.⁸ Since then, China has refused to participate in the Commission on Human Rights, preferring to address the subject of human rights in the Economic and Social Councils and, in particular, in the Commission on the Status of Women. China's representatives to the UN as a rule avoided the issue of human rights in interviews and most public statements.⁹

The Tibetan issue has also drawn sharp criticism from U. S. officials and human rights activists in the past several years. But reports of severe human rights abuses have come out of Tibet since 1950, and Chinese behavior towards Tibetans has unfortunately been very consistent. Numerous human rights groups have issued periodic reports on the abysmal situation in Tibet. Refugee reports tell of arbitrary arrest and torture, summary executions, enforced or involuntary disappearance, and long imprisonment, beginning with the PRC invasion of Tibet in 1949.¹⁰ Chinese behavior towards the Tibetans has not changed--no matter how despicable this behavior is today and was forty-five years ago. In the early years of Chinese occupation, U. S. policy clearly denounced the PRC's forced occupation of Tibet. After Nixon's visit to China, our policy began to change. When the Cultural Revolution ended in 1973, U. S. policy began to accede to the PRC's claim of sovereignty over Tibet. The first time the U. S. stated

pp. 10-11.

⁸ Ibid., p.13.

⁹ Ibid., p.15.

¹⁰ Donald Altschiller, China at the Crossroads, 1994, p.196.

unequivocally that Tibet was a part of China was 1978. Since then, *official* U. S. policy has fully accepted the PRC position.¹¹ Nonetheless, Congress has passed a number of resolutions relating to the situation in Tibet since 1987. The majority of these resolutions have urged the U. S. government to support Tibetan human rights in all appropriate international forums. They have also sought legislation that stipulates that Tibet is an occupied country whose true representatives are the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile.¹² China, for her part dismisses these actions since they are not *official* U. S. policy. China regards such efforts as the meddling intrusion of China bashers in the Congress. Again, Chinese behavior has not changed. While U.S. policy has, perhaps reluctantly, acceded to Chinese policy, obviously U.S. human rights' activists have continued their condemnations of Chinese conduct. The issue of whether our *official* policy should call for toleration and democratization in China is not in question in this research. Surely, we should continue to promote U. S. values abroad, and the U. S. should continue to object to Chinese human rights violations. But Chinese behavior has remained remarkably consistent regarding the issue of human rights over the past 20 to 40 years. The U. S. must also not lose sight of the fact that what we tolerated in the 1970's and 1980's is now what we openly criticize.

Critics often cite that China's defense budget is rising dramatically; and that those dollars are purchasing intercontinental rocketry, a modernized army, and a blue-water navy. They also contend that China is extending its reach deep into the South China Sea, claiming islets hundred of miles from

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 194-195.

¹² Ibid., p. 200.

China near four of its neighbors, but within reach of its rapidly growing military.¹³ Most of these accusations are accurate. But has Chinese conduct changed?

A new era in Chinese defense policy followed the ascent in 1977 of China's most powerful political and military leader since Mao. After being disgraced in 1966 and again in 1976, Deng Xiao-ping returned to the ruling ranks for the third time in July 1977. A decade of quiet internal development and reform would result. That decade's endeavors had one overarching goal: that the PRC should stand strong and able in the 21st century. In accordance with this mission, defense development in the period since 1977 has been guided by the strategic doctrine of *people's war under modern conditions*.¹⁴ The credibility of this slogan was ultimately linked to the government's adoption in 1978 of the "Four Modernizations Program." The four areas for modernization were agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense.¹⁵ Since 1978, China has slowly, but methodically, increased the qualitative combat power of her ground, naval, and air forces to include strategic weapons systems. Critics frequently cite China's "emerging" nuclear forces and her development of a blue-water capability. China's nuclear capability began in 1964 when she first detonated an atomic device, making her the fifth member (joining the U. S., the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France) in the world's nuclear club.¹⁶ Later, in 1967, the

¹³ Charles Krauthammer, *Why We Must Contain China*, Time Magazine, July 31, 1995, p. 72.

¹⁴ Rosita Dellios, Modern Chinese Defense Strategy, 1990, p.1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 41-42.

¹⁶ Thomas Dell Washburn, "The People's Republic of China and Nuclear Weapons: Effects of China's Evolving Arsenal," Defense Documentation Center, September 1979, p.1.

PRC became the fourth nation to explode a hydrogen bomb.¹⁷ At the time of Beijing's hydrogen blast, France had still not achieved the same level of sophistication. Thus China is hardly a newcomer to the strategic weapons hierarchy. As far as strategic weapons delivery systems are concerned, China has also had a long history of development and deployment. China has developed three ranges of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM): full, extended, and limited. The full-range ICBM is the Dong Feng 5 (DF-5), which is estimated to be capable of delivering a five-megaton payload--presumed to comprise 10 Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicles (MIRV)--to a distance of 12,900 kilometers. The DF-5 was successfully tested in 1980, two years after the U. S. formally recognized the PRC. The DF-5 is deployed in hardened silos in central China.¹⁸ China has also developed sea-based systems: She successfully test-fired a submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) in October 1982 and a cruise missile three years later. The Chinese SLBM is a variant of the DF-3, an earlier land-based Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) system.¹⁹ The SLBM's are carried on several XIA-class Ballistic Missile Nuclear Submarines (SSBN), which were initially developed in the 70's.²⁰ All of these programs had their genesis in the late 60's and early 70's.

China's persistent endeavors to develop a blue-water capabilities support her ambitions in the South China Sea. However, these ambitions are not of recent vintage. The question of sovereignty over the South China Sea and its islands became an issue in the late nineteenth century when China's

¹⁷ Ibid., p.3.

¹⁸ Rosita Delios, Modern Chinese Defense Strategy, p.212.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 213.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 214.

first ambassador to Great Britain is reported to have stated in 1876 that the Paracel Islands belong to China. Later in 1883 the Qing government implicitly issued a claim to the Spratly Islands.²¹ China subsequently occupied the Paracels in 1974. After the annexation, a Canton newspaper made the following observation concerning the Paracels and the Spratleys:

"As it lies between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, the South China Sea is a vital strategic area. It acts as the gateway to the outside world for mainland and off-shore islands of China. The Paracel and the Spratly archipelagos occupy a position central to the shipping lanes connecting Canton, Hong Kong, Manila, and Singapore. Their geographical position is extremely important."²²

In short, China has publicly considered the South China Sea gateway an essential sea line of communication for at least 20 years. Chinese claims to the South China Sea archipelagos have been long-standing and should not surprise anyone who has followed recent Far Eastern events.

Consistent with her claims in the South China Sea, China has attempted over the last 20 years to modernize her navy and the infrastructure to support it. The development and expansion of harbor facilities and several key ports has been and remains critical to the success of China's modernization efforts. As defined by then Premier Hua Guo-feng in his report to the Fifth National People's Congress on 26 February 1978, this maritime project entailed the expansion of five major harbor and port facilities. In fact, however, some 19 ports have been designated for major redevelopment. Furthermore, of these 19 projects, at least nine focus primarily on the South China Sea.²³ Chinese intentions to open up the South

²¹ Marwyn S. Samuels, *Contest for the South China Sea*, 1982, p. 52.

²² *Kuang-ming jih-bao* (Canton), 24 November 1975, p. 2.

²³ Marwyn S. Samuels, p. 140.

China Sea to her interests have been evident for at least 20 years. Along with port modernization, the expansion of China's merchant fleet has also been essential to the fulfillment of her modernization program. Efforts to expand the fleet began in 1971 and have been relatively successful. By 1976 the fleet had grown by at least 35 per cent. Fleet modernization and expansion has continued at a similar pace since 1976. By 1982 the Chinese merchant fleet consisted of about 800 vessels. Its overall capacity almost doubled in the seven years between 1972 and 1979²⁴. At the time of U. S. recognition, there was no mistaking Chinese intentions to increase her maritime wherewithal.

China's growing reliance on overseas trade underscores one of her most pressing strategic problems. Whatever its position as a continental power in Asia and in the world, the PRC is highly vulnerable at sea and along China's maritime frontier. This vulnerability has acted as a powerful incentive to establish a larger and more obvious Chinese naval presence along and beyond the frontier. This has been the general trend since the early 1970s. By the early 1980s, the Chinese Navy was already more than twice the size of Great Britain's; it included a submarine fleet that ranked third largest in the world by quantity. This submarine fleet ranks just below Russia's and the United States' potential power.²⁵ Even so, China does not yet possess a blue-water capability. But she is inexorably developing this capability. This development began in the 70's when China did not incur the wrath of the elected representatives of the U. S. Congress. Doubtless, China

²⁴ Ibid., p. 141.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 142.

will continue to develop a world-class navy in order to achieve her objectives in the South China Sea.

Both as symbol and reality, China's occupation of the Paracel Islands and her persistent claims to the Spratly Archipelago affirm the growth of China as a major maritime power in Asia, one of whose principles is to reassert an historic presence in the southern maritime frontier.²⁶ The roots of these objectives lie in the past and are certainly not new or unprecedented aggressive behavior. The U. S. must also remain aware that China has never denied international freedom of passage in the South China Sea. She has consistently indicated that her claims in the area do not restrict other nations from using the Sea as an unrestricted waterway. Chinese views on this subject are totally consistent with the U. S. position on international freedom of navigation. Further, Chinese views on this matter have been common knowledge for the past quarter of a century, documented in numerous publications.

Foreign Relations and Arms Proliferation experts object to China's weapons transfers to nations such as Pakistan and Iran. They point to China's indiscriminate sales as evidence of China's disregard for current international accords. But are these Chinese transfers of recent vintage? Or are they old habits which the U. S. tolerated when keeping good relations with China was more in our self-interest? China has been supplying weapons to Pakistan since at least the late 1960's. In testimony before the Ninetieth Congress in 1967, experts affirmed that China had been supplying major military equipment to Pakistan since 1962.²⁷ Later, following the second India-

²⁶ Ibid., p. 150.

²⁷ Hearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South

Pakistani war of 1971, in which Pakistan suffered defeat and dismemberment, China set out to totally resupply its ally's armed forces, all at no charge. China viewed Pakistan, and still does, as a particularly critical client, given its strategic position along the former Soviet "arc of encirclement" and as an important deterrent to then expanding Soviet influence and as an obstacle to Indian bids for regional supremacy. Military exports have come from all four categories of Chinese major weapons production: aircraft, armor and artillery, naval vessels and missiles. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan became all the more important to China as a bulwark against further Moscow-led expansion in South Asia, and Chinese arms shipments to its allies in the region, particularly Pakistan, continued on a large scale.²⁸ China's arms transfers to Pakistan have made an enormous contribution to China's strategic and political relationship with Pakistan. Moreover, Chinese arms transfers to Pakistan will probably continue well into the next century. With the Russians out of Afghanistan and the end of the Cold War, Pakistan has lost much of its importance in the eyes of security analysts in Washington. But PRC interest has not flagged at all; in fact, it has been strengthened as result of the American decision in 1990 to cut back on military aid to Pakistan due to suspicions regarding its nuclear weapons program. All of this has worked in Chinese favor to further strengthen its ties with Pakistan. Clearly, Chinese arms transfers to Pakistan from the 1960's to the present day are not motivated by profit. Rather they improve upon the increasing strategic and political cooperation the two countries enjoy. Close

Asian Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Ninetieth Congress, First Session, March 14, April 13, 20, 25 and June 22, 1967.

²⁸ R. Bates Gill, Chinese Arms Transfers: Purposes, Patterns, and Prospects in the New World Order, 1992, pp. 71-72.

PRC ties with Pakistan not only serve to deter strategic threats in the region--from Russia and India--but also foster relations through Pakistan to other Islamic nations such as Iran. In short, China's relationship with Pakistan offers an excellent example of how Beijing uses arms transfers to achieve its contemporary security goals of independence and regional influence.²⁹

Chinese arms shipments to Pakistan are heavily rooted in over 30 years of history. China has not changed her policy; nor will she likely do so well into the next century. U. S. attitudes toward Chinese policy will have to change; it's a certainty China will not alter her commitment to Pakistan.

Chinese arms transfers to Iran go back to at least 1982. China reportedly supplied Iran with up to 70 per cent of its arms in the 1980's. Iran first needed such arms starting in September 1980 when she began her war with Iraq. China first took orders in 1981 for shipments of major conventional weapons to Iran in 1982. In all, during the 1980's China shipped to Iran fighter aircraft, armor and artillery pieces, and antitank, surface-to-air, surface-to-surface and antiship missiles. Not only did China willingly provide arms for Iran's war Iraq, but also the two countries shared a mutual interest in stemming Soviet aggression against Iran's neighbor, Afghanistan. The strategic and political importance of Iran to Chinese leaders has long been in evidence, and arms exports have provided an extremely useful tool by means of which Beijing can enhance the Sino-Iranian relationship in these areas. In large measure due to its military relationship with Teheran, China stood as the only major power in the world on friendly terms with Iran, which, given the volatile nature of the region, provides China with an important, if subtle, and possibly influential role in the Persian

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 158-159.

Gulf in the years ahead.³⁰ Chinese arms transfers to Iran are not, however, a recent practice: they began at least 15 years ago. Again, it is unlikely that China will alter her practice of arms shipments to Iran.

In sum, over the course of the last 35 years or so, China's arms exports have expanded significantly in quantity and quality, and in the number of recipients, such as Pakistan and Iran, who are considered in the eyes of U. S. policymakers as possible destabilizing influences in their regions. The U. S. tolerated these sales and exports until recently. But we might as well continue to do so since Chinese practice in this realm will likely not change. Even in a world where the former Soviet Union and the U. S. do not present the same pressing threat that Beijing once felt they did, China nevertheless will pursue its arms transfer in similarly motivated fashion: seeking to enhance PRC strategic, political and economic interest through arms transfers. The growing regional influence of the PRC is a trend in the world balance of power that is likely to continue and in which PRC arms transfers will continue to play a significant part. Arms transfers have helped and will continue to help China make significant strides toward this greater security.³¹ Chinese behavior has not changed; it will continue to be constant in this area.

Lastly, U. S. officials frequently criticize China because of its laxity in enforcing the pirating of compact disks, computer software, videotapes, books, and commercial logos.³² This is the most frivolous accusation hurled against the Chinese. Anyone who has been to the Far East knows that piracy of this kind occurs throughout the region. The practice is not confined to the

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 100-104.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 208-209.

³² David Shambaugh, "The United States and China: A New Cold War?", Current History, September 1995, Volume 94, No. 593, p. 241.

Chinese mainland. From my visits to Taiwan, I can attest that shops designed to circumvent U. S. copyright laws were located right across the street from the U. S.-Taiwan Defense Command compound in downtown Taipei in the late 1970's. These stores sold U. S. books, records, and tapes-- all of which were pirated. South Korea had similar retail stores at least throughout the 1980's. To suggest that this phenomenon is unique to the PRC mainland is totally inaccurate. This behavior is deeply ingrained in the Oriental culture and will not be easy to overcome. The U.S. must not single out the Chinese government regarding these infringement violations, since these practices are Oriental in nature and not Chinese unique. The Chinese government may acknowledge U.S. complaints, but the U. S. must keep in mind this behavior is fully ingrained in the Oriental culture.

Clearly, U.S. perceptions of China have altered far more than Chinese policies and behavior have changed. Many in Congress and in the current administration disdain the Chinese Communist regime and system--which they see as internally repressive, antithetical to American values, and potentially threatening militarily to American national security interests in Asia.³³ But Chinese behavior has emphatically not changed: It probably will not change, even on those issues which are in her interests to change, at least until the current adversarial relationship between herself and the U. S. becomes less critical and a more constructive relationship emerges. The U. S. must recognize that Chinese behavior, which currently The U.S. finds unacceptable, was acceptable just a short five years ago. Without this recognition, Chinese behavior will never change.

³³ Ibid., p. 247.

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