

How Cold War legacies add to constraints precluding China's leadership in Asia¹

Introduction: Do foreign policy legacies of the Cold War matter today?

Sitting with four other academic China specialists prior to a PhD defense in Washington in 2011, the conversation turned to the topic of the importance or lack of importance of the Chinese experience under Mao and during the decades of the Cold War in the overall sweep of Chinese historical development. Students were said to be uninterested in the Cold War period, which seemed to have little to do with the great Chinese successes and the overall rise of China in regional and global importance since that time. China was viewed as ascendant and resuming its historical place as the leader of Asia after an abnormal period of internal chaos, external aggression and overall decline. The importance of Chinese foreign policy behavior under Mao and later during the Cold War seemed to have little relevance to today's cash-rich and confident China, an emerging leader in Asia and the world.

As someone who has been a professional analyst of Chinese foreign relations since the 1960s, such treatment did not seem accurate. At the meetings, I was reserved as I suspected but could not show persuasively how the past behavior of the People's Republic of China (PRC) during the four decades of the Cold War actually has influenced Chinese foreign policy and foreign relations in recent years. The situation prompted a study of the 60 plus years of Chinese foreign relations under the PRC. That study shows that Chinese behavior from 1949 to 1989 indeed has mattered a great deal in contemporary Chinese foreign relations. The policies, practices and legacies from the Cold War period have been particularly important in nearby Asia, the area of the world where China has always focused its foreign policy efforts and where China has always exerted the greatest international influence. Unfortunately for those predicting an Asian order dominated by China as seen in some Chinese dynasties in the past, the legacies of Chinese behavior toward nearby Asia during the Cold War add to constraints that encumber China's rise in Asia and preclude Chinese leadership there for the foreseeable future.

Image versus reality in Chinese foreign relations

The record of Chinese foreign relations since 1949 shows significant gaps between the image of China in foreign affairs fostered by the Chinese administration and the actual practice seen in the events of Chinese foreign relations. One of the first issues an observer encounters in dealing with Chinese foreign relations involves how much weight to give to China's image building in foreign affairs and what are its actual implications for Chinese foreign behavior.

¹ Draft paper for panel "Legacies of the Cold War: The Role of History in the PRC's Foreign Behavior in Contemporary Chinese Foreign Relations," Annual Conference, American Association for Chinese Studies, Atlanta GA, October 13, 2012 by Robert Sutter, Professor of Practice of International Affairs, George Washington University, Washington DC, USA

Examining the record of Chinese foreign behavior shows longstanding efforts by Chinese officials to support the positive in China's pursuit of its objectives abroad. In recent years, China's salience as an international economic, military and political power has been reinforced by attentive efforts by the Chinese foreign ministry, various other government, party and military organizations that deal with foreign affairs, various ostensibly nongovernment organizations with close ties to Chinese government, party and military offices, and the massive publicity/propaganda apparatus of the Chinese administration. The opinions of these officials, non-government representatives and media accounts provide sources used by international journalists, scholars and officials in assessing Chinese foreign relations. On the whole, they boost China's international stature while they condition people in China to think positively about Chinese foreign relations. Such efforts have been common in past periods of PRC foreign relations. Points of emphasis in these efforts include the following:

- China's foreign policy is consistent.
- It follows principles in dealing with foreign issues which assure a moral position in Chinese foreign relations.
- The Chinese administration deals effectively with international events and adopts policies and takes actions in accord with Chinese principles and moral leadership.
- Abiding by principles and seeking moral positions provides the basis for effective Chinese strategies in world affairs
- Such strategies insure that China does not make mistakes in foreign affairs, an exceptional position reinforced by the fact that the People's Republic of China is seen to have avoided publicly acknowledging foreign policy mistakes or apologizing for its actions in world affairs.²

Many in China and some foreign observers base their analysis of Chinese foreign relations on the information provided by the above-noted Chinese outlets. Their analysis shows how China's image building efforts support a leading role for China in Asian and world affairs which enjoys support from Chinese people and various constituencies in China. They conclude optimistically that China will follow a contemporary policy emphasizing recent themes stressed by the Chinese administration. The themes include promoting peace and development abroad, eschewing dominance or hegemonism in dealing with issues with neighbors or others even as China's power grows, and following the purported record of historical Chinese dynasties in not seeking expansionism as China's power increases.³

Some specialists in China and many others abroad, including this writer, duly consider Chinese provided information but also examine closely the actual behavior of China in dealing with foreign affairs, behavior that can be measured both from the perspective of

² Denny Roy, *China's Foreign Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998) pp. 36-39; Samuel Kim, "China's International Organizational Behaviour," in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, eds. Thomas Robinson and David Shambaugh (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) pp.401-405; Harry Harding, "China's Changing Role in the Contemporary World," in *China's Foreign Relations in the 1980s* ed. Harry Harding (New Haven CT: Yale University Press 1985) 177-179.

³ Dai Bingguo, "Adhere to the Path of Peace and Development," *Xinhua* December 6, 2010 (available at <http://china.usc.edu/ShowArticle.aspx?articleID=2325> accessed July 3, 2012)

China as well as the perspective of the foreign governments and others concerned. Such assessments show that Chinese image building may help China's pursuit of goals in foreign affairs in some ways, but it also represents a serious liability in China's pursuit of effective policies, especially toward its Asian neighbors and the United States.

Principles versus interest-based foreign policy.

While China's foreign policy actions are usually said to be based on adherence to righteous and moral principles, there are notable weaknesses in China's long avowed adherence to such morally correct principles. Chinese foreign policy expert Samuel Kim twenty years ago labeled China's "peculiar" operational code of conduct—"firmness in principle and flexibility in application." The result for Kim and other foreign observers is a big gap between principle and practice, with China repeatedly attempting to show through often convoluted discussion of a sometimes dizzying array of various and often newly created sets of principles governing Chinese foreign relations that China is an exception to the interest-based policies and practices of great powers. Chinese discourse does not address the net effect of all the different sets of Chinese principles, which as seen by Kim and others allows China to be all things to all nations on all salient international issues, and thereby provides little in the way of concrete guidance on how and why China behaves in a particular set of circumstances.⁴

The course of Chinese foreign relations is littered with examples where principles were reinterpreted or put aside in favor of other sets of principles as Chinese interests in a foreign relationship changed. Jawaharlal Nehru seemed truly surprised when his efforts to nurture a cooperative relationship with Zhou Enlai under the rubric of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence seemed to count for little as China pursued border interests at odds with India's interests. Non-communist Southeast Asian leaders could be forgiven for skepticism as they observed China's flawed observance of its principle of non-interference in another state's internal affairs at various times in their checkered relationships with China. For example, Deng Xiaoping reached out to improve relations with non-communist southeast Asian neighbors in the mid-1970s as China was constructing a broad front of nations to oppose Soviet-backed Vietnam's pending attack against the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge government in Cambodia. Deng did so on the understanding that these governments would accept reconciliation with China while Beijing at the same time continued support for the tens of thousands of insurgents China had trained, supplied and supported in their armed struggles against the very Southeast Asian leaders with whom Deng was seeking to improve relations.⁵

Albania's Enver Hoxa was more vocal than other more important Communist leaders in Hanoi and Pyongyang as well as less prominent communist leaders aligned with Beijing whose interests were adversely impacted by China's opening to the United States despite longstanding Chinese commitments to them in the struggle against American imperialism. Meanwhile, Pakistan, the only country with which China has been able to

⁴ Kim, "China's International Organizational Behaviour," p.402

⁵ Ezra Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011) pp. 266-292.

sustain a close relationship since the early 1960s, has seen China's commitment to an "all weather" relationship diminish as China in the post-Cold War period has backed away from previous support for Pakistan's position in the Kashmir dispute in order to open the way for improved Chinese relations with India.⁶

China's exceptional exceptionalism.

It is common for states to redefine their foreign policies as their interests change in light of changing circumstances at home or abroad. And when states follow those changed interests and shift stated policies and commitments deemed principled and moral in new directions to the detriment of others, they rarely apologize; they tend to only grudgingly acknowledge negative consequences and mistakes.

Leaders of my own country, the United States, are widely seen as prone to an arrogant sort of exceptionalism in foreign affairs. They are loath to apologize for policy changes or international actions that sometimes grossly hurt others or are at odds with longstanding American principles. Nonetheless, the American political process, open media, active interest groups and regularly scheduled elections allow for recognition of foreign policy failings and proposed remedies. In contrast, Chinese exceptionalism in foreign affairs is much more exceptional than that of the United States. One reason is the continuing need for the Chinese Communist Party-led system to sustain its legitimacy partly through an image of correct behavior in foreign affairs consistent with Chinese supported principles. Another reason is that while there have been some recent debates on foreign policy issues in Chinese media, they fail to deal well with many Chinese legacies of egregious malfeasance in the past. And no corrective is provided by elections or a legitimate political opposition.

The unwillingness and seeming inability of the Chinese administration to address forthrightly some of the major negative features of the PRC history is well represented. Samuel Kim acknowledged that Chinese Communist leaders have addressed and corrected some of their large domestic policy failures, while sustaining an image of correctness in foreign affairs.⁷ Reflecting a tendency to avoid attention to the negatives of the PRC's record, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution merit only tiny displays in the otherwise detailed recounting of the history of the modern Chinese revolution in the large National History Museum in Beijing.

This writer's frequent lectures to university audiences and otherwise well informed citizen groups in China shows very weak understanding of such sensitive issues as Chinese support for the Khmer Rouge as well as other communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia during the latter years of Mao Zedong's leadership and most of the period of Deng Xiaoping's leadership. Many Chinese elites and broad popular opinion truly believe that the People's Republic of China has always followed morally correct foreign policies based on principles in support of progressive world forces. Against this background, it was not surprising that a senior Chinese foreign policy researcher

⁶ *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011) 117-118, 194.

⁷ Roy, *Chinese Foreign Relations* p. 38

associated with the Chinese foreign ministry presented a written keynote address to a trilateral international meeting of Vietnamese, Chinese and American specialists in 2011 that was attended by the author and emphasized that “the People’s Republic of China has always been a stabilizing force in Asia.” The speaker seemed oblivious to the reaction of the Vietnamese delegates as they squirmed in their seats. He showed little awareness that the Vietnamese are among China’s neighbors with the strongest reasons to disagree.

Explaining China’s interest-based behavior in foreign affairs

Whatever importance one gives to the wide array of principles and moral norms that are said by the Chinese administration to govern Chinese foreign relations, the fact is that the private calculus of Chinese leaders in making key foreign and domestic policy decisions remains shrouded in secrecy. It is a crime subject to serious punishment to disclose such matters. Thus, the explanation of Chinese foreign policy decisions provided here joins other studies in basing analysis mainly on patterns of Chinese behavior that can be observed and supported by evidence from Chinese and international sources.⁸

⁸ In addition to works already cited, see among others, A. Doak Barnett, *China and the Major Powers in East Asia*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1977); Michael Yahuda, *China’s Role in World Affairs* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1978); Allen Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975); Robert Ross and Jiang Changbin, eds. *Reexamining the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); Michael Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Harold Hinton, *China’s Turbulent Quest* (New York: Macmillan, 1972); Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); Melvin Gurtov and Byong-Moo Hwang, *China Under Threat* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); John Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People’s Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall 1993); Lowell Dittmer, *Sino-Soviet Normalization and its International Implications, 1945-1990* (Seattle, WA.: University of Washington Press, 1992). Yong Deng, *China’s Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Chinese works related to the foreign relations of the People’s Republic of China include: Hu Sheng. *Imperialism and Chinese Politics*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1985; Jiang Changbin and Robert S. Ross, ed. *Cong Duizhi zouxian Huanhe: Lengzhan Shiqi Zhong Mei Guanxi zai Tanta* [From Confrontation Toward Détente: A Reexamination of U.S.-China Relations During the Cold War]. Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2000; Pei Jianzhang. *Yanjiu Zhou Enlai: Waijiao sixiang yu shijian* [Researching Zhou Enlai: Diplomatic Thought and Practice]. Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1989; Wang Taiping et al. *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiao shi, 1957-1969* [A Diplomatic History of the People’s Republic of China, 1957-1969]. Beijing: Shijie Zhishi, 1998; Gong Li. *Kuayue: 1969-1979 nian Zhong Mei guanxi de yanbian* [Across the Chasm: The Evolution of China-US Relations, 1969-1979]. Henan: Henan People’s Press, 1992; Lin Qing. *Zhou Enlai zaixiang shengya* [The Career of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai]. Hong Kong: Changcheng Wenhua Chubanshe, 1991; Wang Shuzhong, ed. *Mei-Su zhengba zhanlue wenti* [The question of contention for hegemony between the United States and the Soviet Union]. Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe, 1988; Wang Yu-san, ed. *Foreign Policy of the Republic of China*. New York: Praeger Publisher, 1990; Xie Yixian, *Zhongguo Waijiao Shi: 1949-1979* [China’s diplomatic history: 1949-1979] Henan: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1988; Men Honghua. *China’s Grand Strategy: A Framework Analysis*. Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2005; Yan Xuetong. *Zhongguo guojia liyi fenxi* [The Analysis of China’s National Interest] Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin Chubanshe, 1996.

A defining feature of the foreign policy behavior of the People's Republic of China is change. As noted above, it seems impossible to explain these changes realistically on the basis of the muddled array of principles used in Chinese foreign relations over the past sixty years. The discussion in this article explains Chinese decisions as heavily interest-based. As seen from the list below, the Chinese foreign policies changed markedly and frequently, apparently driven by changing calculations of Chinese interests that were in turn driven by changing circumstances at home or abroad.

During the Maoist period (1949-1976), those interests were often seen focused on fostering and promoting domestic and international revolution; though Mao also valued domestic development and made several policy initiatives, including the opening to the United States in the late 1960s, in pragmatic moves to buy time and gain influence and leverage in order to protect China's national security. Deng Xiaoping and following leaders had a clearer focus on the top priorities of sustaining communist party rule through effective economic development. Foreign policy was to serve these primary goals. Nevertheless, the leaders wrestled periodically with conflicts in interests. Questions over how far to go in accommodating the United States in the interests of fostering a strong united front against Soviet expansion were superseded after the Cold War with questions on how to balance Chinese goals to lead the international struggle against U.S. superpower "hegemonism" and seek a multi-polar world order versus more pragmatic pursuit of peace and development beneficial to China and others it interacted with. As the issue of Taiwan independence rose to prominence with the Taiwan president's visit to the United States in 1995, Chinese leaders had a hard time discerning how to balance imperatives to protect China's claim to Taiwan and prevent Taiwan independence while sustaining and deepening advantageous economic and other ties with Taiwan's main protector, the United States. Most recently in 2009-2011, advocates of a more assertive Chinese posture on sensitive territorial and other issues involving the United States and many of China's neighbors seriously complicated China's ongoing effort to reassure those and other concerned governments that China's rise would be peaceful and not adverse to their interests.

In retrospect, key stages with intervening change in Chinese foreign relations were:

1949-53—Amid domestic consolidation, China evidenced strong support for revolution at home and abroad in opposition to the United States. Against this background, miscalculations resulted in war with the United States in Korea.

1954-57—Chinese-backed Viet Minh forces defeated French forces in Indochina. China attacked islands in the Taiwan Strait, driving out some Chiang Kai-shek-led forces

supported by the United States. China then shifted to a more moderate stance echoing Soviet-backed peaceful coexistence and improving relations with India and other non-Communist neighbors.

1958-1965—Mass domestic mobilization in the ultimately disastrous Great Leap Forward was accompanied by Chinese artillery attacks on islands held by Chiang Kai-shek forces in the Taiwan Strait. The United States reacted with threats of nuclear war and the Soviet Union chafed over China's provocative international behavior and irrational economic policies involving large amounts of Soviet assistance. Moscow ended aid in 1960 and Sino-Soviet polemics spread from the international communist movement to competition among newly independent developing countries and insurgents resisting colonial rule. Radical Chinese policies in support of various foreign groups and nations generally failed to make many lasting gains; growing Chinese influence in Indonesia collapsed with a bloody purge of communists and pogroms against ethnic Chinese, killing half a million.

1966-68—Excesses during the radical phase of "Red Guard diplomacy" in the early years of the Cultural Revolution saw the collapse of the senior levels of the foreign ministry. China's relations with all but a handful of states suffered serious setbacks. Chinese mobs assaulted Soviet diplomats and set fire to the British mission with foreign officers forced to flee the flames into the mob.

1969-1978—Soviet military pressure and the threat of nuclear attack forced China's opening to other states helpful in China's search for security. The United States for its own reasons was seeking reconciliation. Cooperation against Moscow would bind the United States and China together amid intense leadership struggle in China that did not subside until the death of Mao and arrest of the gang of four in 1976 and the ascendance of Deng Xiaoping to leading power in 1978.

1979-1989—China repeatedly maneuvered for advantage between the United States and the Soviet Union. Most of the time, it found improvements with the Soviet Union less beneficial than the advantages of cooperative relations with the United States.

1989-2001—China used generally pragmatic means to climb back to international importance following the imposition of Western isolation of China after the Tiananmen crackdown in the 1989, the decline of China's strategic importance to the West as a result of the end of the Cold War, and Taiwan's international prominence as a new democracy. In the mid-1990s, China found its strong actions in defense of claims to Taiwan and territories in the South China Sea alarmed and alienated many neighbors. It adopted a new set of principles in a New Security Concept that recalled the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in pledging a policy of reassurance to China's neighbors. Nevertheless, China's moderation was not directed to the United States. China persisted with steady widely publicized attacks against perceived U.S. hegemonism and took careful aim against U.S. alliances in the Asia-Pacific.

2002-2012—Faced with an initially tough American stance against China under the George W. Bush administration, China broadened its reassurance efforts to now include the United States. Its objections to U.S. alliances subsided; China did not want to be seen pressing Asian neighbors to have to make a choice they didn't want to make between aligning with the United States and aligning with China. U.S.-China relations remained smooth until the first year of the Obama government. During 2009-2011, there was an upsurge of Chinese opposition to U.S. security and other policies in the Asia Pacific, more assertive Chinese positions and commentary directed at China's neighbors, and stepped up Chinese support for North Korea during a period of leadership succession that also featured egregious North Korean attacks on South Korea. The Chinese behavior and assertiveness undermined China's influence throughout its eastern and southern flanks. The behavior was stopped in favor of a revival of reassurance directed at the United States and China's neighbors, even though China remained firm in protecting its disputed territorial claims and other interests.

Features of China's changing foreign policy priorities and behavior

Chinese-centered calculus

A common feature in the changing Chinese priorities and behavior is that the changes are China-centered--grounded in a fairly clear and narrow set of Chinese interests. Mao Zedong talked often about world revolution but in practice he generally focused on China-centered interests. For example, available scholarship shows how Mao was prepared to confront the American containment system around China's rim in the 1950s, in part to mobilize support for domestic change and revolution in China.⁹ Recent disclosures show how Mao insured that considerations of Chinese domestic politics were reflected in defining the principles used by Deng Xiaoping in his inaugural speech at the United Nations in 1974 setting forth China's renowned "Three Worlds Theory" in foreign affairs.¹⁰

Deng Xiaoping's first decade in power beginning in 1978 focused foreign policy on protecting China in the face of Soviet pressure and coercion. Against this background, Deng turned out to be as supportive of the reviled Khmer Rouge as were Mao and the revolutionary gang of four. His interest seemed carefully calculated as the Khmer Rouge government and later insurgency was the best fighting force available to counter Soviet-backed Vietnam's expansion along China's southeastern flank.¹¹

Post-Deng leaders have created a new principle, the "win-win principle," which underlines a continuing China-centered concerns. The formula is useful for reassuring neighboring countries and other nations China interacts with that China is interested in their development and concerns along with China's interest in its own development and

⁹ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflicts, 1949-1958*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping*, 83-87

¹¹ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping*, 266-292.

concerns. China's partners like the approach as it generally does not require them to do anything they wouldn't ordinarily do. For its part, China also does not do anything it wouldn't ordinarily do, thereby avoiding initiatives that don't have a pay-off for a narrowly defined Chinese win-set.¹²

Concern with the United States and near-by Asia-Pacific countries

The long record of the policy and behavior of the People's Republic of China in the Asia-Pacific region during the Cold War and later shows repeated maneuvering to keep China's periphery as free as possible from hostile or potentially hostile great-power pressure. Asia, especially the countries around China's periphery, has been the main arena of Chinese foreign relations. At bottom, this area has contained sovereignty issues (e.g. Taiwan, other disputed territorial claims) and security issues (e.g. U.S. and/or Soviet "encirclement" or "containment") that have been at the very top of the list of Chinese foreign policy priorities in most years. Chinese efforts to keep this periphery free of potentially hostile great-power presence and pressure represent a long-lasting trend that shows persistent wariness and sometimes overt hostility toward such large outside powers. China has used sometimes offensive and sometimes defensive measures to thwart the perceived great-power ambitions in the region, which is seen as central to Chinese security. This trend has persisted, along with the growing Chinese economic integration, increasing political and security cooperation and active engagement with various multilateral organizations in the region. Thus, as Chinese officials declare greater confidence as China rises in influence in Asia, they work assiduously in trying to ensure that the United States and its allies and associates do not establish power and influence along China's periphery that is adverse to Chinese interests.¹³

Victim mentality

China's enduring concern with the United States (or in the past, the Soviet Union) working with countries near China to establish a strong presence around China's periphery has been reinforced by a strong sense among Chinese elites and public opinion that China has been the victim of foreign imperialism and dominance for much of the past two centuries and should work assiduously to prevent such dominance in the future. Chinese and foreign specialists acknowledge that citizens and leaders of the People's Republic of China throughout the Cold War and later have long been conditioned through the education system, government-sponsored media coverage, and various other means to think of China as having been victimized by international powers beginning in the early

¹² Michael Chambers, "China and Southeast Asia: Creating a 'Win-Win' Neighborhood," *China's "Good Neighbor" Diplomacy* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars Asia Program Special Report 126 January 2005); "Wen Rolls Out 'Win-Win' Strategy in Africa," IPS News. June 21, 2006 <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=33702> (accessed July 16, 2010)

¹³ Yan Xuetong, "The Instability of China-US Relations," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2010), pp. 1–30; Zhang Liping, "A Rising China and a Lonely Superpower America," in *Making New Partnership: A Rising China and Its Neighbors*, ed. Zhang Yunlin (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press 2008), 324–55; Wu Xinbo, "The End of the Silver Lining: A Chinese View of the U.S.-Japanese Alliance," *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (winter 2006): 119–30..

nineteenth century. Emphasis on this historical conditioning was strengthened after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) crisis at the time of the Tiananmen demonstrations and bloody crackdown in 1989 and continues up to the present. Sensing that communism no longer provided adequate ideological support for continued CCP rule, the authorities instituted a patriotic education campaign and other measures that encouraged regime-supporting patriotism in China by recalling the more than 100 years of foreign affronts to Chinese national dignity.¹⁴

United Front tactics, seeking leverage against the “main enemy”

In its maneuvers against the United States and the Soviet Union focused on the Asia-Pacific region, China resorted repeatedly to tactics used against adversaries during the war against Japan (1937-1945) and Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist government (1945-1949). Mao Zedong and post-Mao leaders focused on the “main” enemy and sought leverage and influence against it through mobilization of support within China and cooperation with other states or international forces. Sometimes the search for support brought China into close contact with international radicals, like the Khmer Rouge, or abusive authoritarians including Zaire’s Sese Mobutu, Chile’s Augusto Pinochet, the Shah of Iran and Serbia’s Slobodan Milosevic. China’s depiction of its adversary often was as an exaggerated threat, presumably in order to foster greater domestic Chinese vigilance and international resolve. Thus, even though the end of the Cold War saw the People’s Republic of China for the first time face no imminent threat of superpower military attack, the Chinese debate following the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 featured authoritative Chinese media arguing for a strong international united front against President Bill Clinton whose actions in Yugoslavia were equated with the atrocities of Adolph Hitler.¹⁵ Meanwhile, China repeatedly employed building leverage and using united front tactics against lesser powers—notably Taiwan, but also including Japan, Vietnam, Burma, Thailand and others—that were important targets for Chinese use of sometimes attractive and sometimes coercive levers of influence to bend these countries more to China’s will.

U.S. at the center of Chinese foreign calculations

The United States was often the “main” enemy in Chinese foreign policy calculations. Even when China shifted focus to the Soviet Union as the main enemy as the United States seemed to be in significant decline beginning in the late 1960s, Chinese leaders remained focused on relations with the United States as the chief bulwark against feared Soviet expansion. Although foreign and Chinese specialists advise in the post Cold War period that China is increasingly less focused on the United States as American primacy

¹⁴ Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); Peter Gries, *China’s New Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 151–74. John Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People’s Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 1–28.

¹⁵ David Michael Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2001), p.60

is seen to decline and for other reasons, available evidence shows strong Chinese awareness of China's increasing dependence on international commons and key world regions controlled or heavily influenced by America, notably many of the oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf. Meanwhile, the Barack Obama administration's reengagement efforts around China's rim in the Asia-Pacific became notable in 2011 and are viewed with carefully measured Chinese concern as they impact areas of direct salience to Chinese security and sovereignty.¹⁶

China often reactive, not in control of developments

In contrast with the image fostered by Chinese officials that Chinese foreign policy has been effective and moral under the guidance of far-seeing officials, more often than not the twists and turns in Chinese foreign policies and practices listed above resulted from unforeseen developments that required Chinese policy makers to make adjustments and shift course. China obviously was surprised by the U.S. reaction to China-supported North Korea's attack on South Korea in 1950, and it may not have anticipated Soviet threats to invade China and destroy its nuclear facilities following a series of border clashes in 1969. Also, internal Chinese turbulence or other developments sometimes have spilled over into foreign affairs, causing Chinese policy officials to respond. Examples include reactions to the excesses of so-called "Red Guard diplomacy" at the start of the Cultural Revolution and efforts in the past two years to curb the assertiveness of a range of Chinese foreign policy actors whose commentaries and initiatives compromised Chinese efforts to reassure its neighbors and improve Chinese influence in the nearby Asia-Pacific region.

Competing goals=muddled strategy

The zigzag pattern of adjustments and major changes in Chinese foreign relations suggests that China has had a hard time coming up with a coherent foreign policy strategy. A close look at developments underlines this finding. Even with the more consistent policy priorities of Deng Xiaoping and later leaders, Chinese decision makers repeatedly wrestle with competing priorities that remain hard to reconcile in a national strategy worthy of the name. Thus, for example, Chinese leaders over the past two decades seemed to give top priority to sustaining strong economic development in order to promote domestic support for continued one party rule. Nevertheless, if challenged by Taiwan moves toward independence, Chinese officials made clear they would go to war with Taiwan and the United States to prevent such moves, even at the expense of China's achievements in economic development.

Legacies add to complications in the Asia-Pacific

As explained above, the Asia-Pacific region and its main outside power, the United States, have represented the focus of PRC foreign policy efforts. Unfortunately for contemporary Chinese influence in the region, the zigzag pattern of often intense and

¹⁶ Martin Indyk, Kenneth Lieberthal, Michael O'Hanlon, *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2012) p. 61-62.

violent Chinese behavior toward the United States and neighboring Asia has not been forgotten. Available scholarship and other evidence has reinforced the findings of this writers' interviews with 210 officials in ten Asia-Pacific countries since 2004 to underscore the importance of this powerful and largely negative Chinese legacy to China's neighbors. The United States, meanwhile, has a very large intelligence and security apparatus as well as a variety of scholars and specialists who delve into the past as well as the future in discerning dangers to American interests. The United States and all Asia-Pacific governments as well as most other states were relieved and pleased as China after the Cold War has embarked with some twists and turns on an approach emphasizing reassurance of its neighbors. There is no interest among regional officials in digging up major negative episodes from the past. Nevertheless, the past is not forgotten and China has an awful lot to live down given the record of its changing and often violent behavior.¹⁷

For example, the People's Republic of China arguably was the most disruptive element in the Asia-Pacific for forty of its sixty-plus years. Most bordering countries have experienced intrusion or invasion by PRC security forces. They and others somewhat further away have experienced armed insurgencies for decades whose strength depended on training, financial support and arms from China.

The twists and turns of changing Chinese foreign policies in the region have baffled senior foreign leaders. Nehru was surprised and shamed. Nikita Khrushchev was appalled by Mao's reckless behavior confronting the United States and what the Soviet leader called Mao "harebrained schemes" involving misuse and waste of Soviet aid. Ho Chi Minh sought a united Sino-Soviet front in his war against America which China rebuffed. His successor, Le Duan may not have expected China to invade Vietnam and create a Vietnamese government in exile in reaction to Vietnamese war against the provocative Khmer Rouge regime. Chinese willingness to follow up with years of periodic massive artillery attacks into Vietnamese border regions and other aggression underlined Chinese resolve to pursue its interests with military force and coercion.¹⁸

The United States was surprised with the Chinese backed invasion by North Korea of South Korea and the subsequent massive Chinese intervention into the Korean conflict with the United States. After that negative experience, Americans tended to be careful to avoid direct war with China in following years, but they were surprised again with China's militant reaction to the Taiwan president's visit to the United States in 1995. They worried about further abrupt Chinese behavior and violence directed at the United States after the U.S. bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade in 1999, and after the crash between a Chinese fighter jet and an American surveillance plane in 2001. The harassment of a U.S. surveillance ship by several Chinese government vessels in 2009 and Chinese public warnings against any further deployments of U.S. aircraft carriers into the Yellow Sea in 2010 served as indicators that China could react to perceived affronts

¹⁷ Evelyn Goh, "Southeast Asia: Strategic Diversification in the 'Asian Century.'" In *Strategic Asia 2008–2009*, edited by Ashley Tellis, Mercy Kuo, and Andrew Marble. Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008. 261–96.

¹⁸ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping* 266-292

from the United States or its allies and associates in disruptive and perhaps violent ways.¹⁹

Japan has reason to be very perplexed with China's changing priorities. China's pragmatic turn to Japan for economic support after the Chinese break with the Soviet Union and disastrous collapse of the Great Leap Forward was broadly welcomed in Japan which maneuvered for exceptions regarding the U.S. backed economic embargo of China. Japan was surprised by the U.S.-China announcement in 1971 of Nixon's visit in 1972. The Japanese government changed leaders and quickly established diplomatic relations with China. China's strident opposition to Soviet expansion muted past worries about Japanese militarism and Deng Xiaoping and his colleagues encouraged Japan to more strongly adhere to a Chinese-supported international front against the USSR. Japan was not seeking confrontation with Moscow and reluctantly signed a peace treaty with China in 1978 that contained a clause seen targeting Moscow. The strong Ronald Reagan-Yasuhiro Nakasone relationship fended off Soviet expansion in Asia in the 1980s to China's general satisfaction.

Disputes with Japan over history books and Japanese atrocities in China during the first half of the 20th century were put aside as China welcomed Japan's efforts to renew normal economic relations including substantial foreign assistance with China after the Tiananmen crackdown and subsequent allied isolation of China. The Japanese emperor—the living symbol of imperial Japan—was warmly welcomed by a grateful China in 1992. But relations soon declined as Chinese leaders reflected the stronger Chinese emphasis at the time on patriotism and resolve to avoid any repetition of foreign, especially Japanese, infringement on China. Historical issues as well as territorial disputes and competition for Asian and international leadership saw relations decline; and they further deteriorated with Japanese Prime Minister's Junichiro Koizumi's (2001-2006) repeated visits to a controversial Japanese war memorial. How sour the overall relation had become was seen in mass demonstrations in some Chinese cities that broke out without Chinese government support in 2005, resulting in extensive property damage. Japan was a major target of the Chinese assertiveness over territorial and related issues in 2009-2011.²⁰

For their part, the South Koreans had worked hard in the post Cold War period to win Chinese favor regarding issues on the Korean peninsula while building ever closer economic relations. Relations were very close and growing in 2004, a time of major decline in South Korea's relations with the United States. Persisting differences over some historical issues and divergence over how to deal with North Korea checked further forward movement in China-South Korean relations, but the South Korean leadership and public were not prepared for China's strong support for North Korea despite two North

¹⁹ Robert Sutter, *U.S.-Chinese Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010)

²⁰ Ming Wan, *Sino-Japanese Relations: Interaction, Logic and transformation*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press. 2006. Richard Bush, *The Perils of Proximity* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2010)

Korea military attacks on South Korea resulting in dozens of military personnel killed and some civilian casualties.

India too found that agreements during seemingly warm meetings with Chinese leaders in the past decade did not translate into significant progress on pending issues. The border dispute flared again with officials on both sides making strong accusations and military forces preparing for action.

Other countries moving from close convergence to wariness in dealing with China included Australia and New Zealand. Vietnam, the Philippines and others in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) became deeply concerned with China's perceived assertiveness in recent years in the South China Sea and how that blocked their ambitions to use the Sea resources.

As explained in more detail below, the legacies of negative behavior and volatile change add to the many differences between China and neighbors and the United States over issues fundamentally important to China's security, stability, development and national ambition. China's exceptionalism and image building make dealing with these issues realistically and effectively very difficult. The result is prevailing suspicion and wariness in the U.S. and among China's neighbors as they deal with China's increasing power.

Complications of the past add to contemporary constraints

Contemporary China demonstrates many strengths as it rises in power and influence in the Asia-Pacific region. As noted earlier, the region has long been the international area where China has exerted the greatest influence and has long been the focal point of Chinese foreign policy concerns. It contains sovereignty, security and development issues of top priority in Chinese foreign relations. The region also is the arena where China interacts most directly with the United States, the prevailing international superpower seeking to sustain and expand its influence in the region in ways opposed by China.²¹

Among the most important Chinese strengths in the Asia-Pacific region are:

- China's position as the leading trading partner with most neighboring countries and the heavy investment many of those countries make in China;
- China's active leadership attention and active diplomacy in interaction with neighboring countries both bilaterally and multilaterally;
- China's expanding military capabilities

These strengths are offset by some general Chinese practices in world affairs and by some Chinese practices specific to the Asia-Pacific region

Practices Limiting Chinese Influence in Asian and World Affairs

²¹ *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia*, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Report 42448, March 28, 2012.

Leadership in the region involves strong efforts to support common goods involving regional security and development. An examination of Chinese international behavior shows that China has a well developed tendency to avoid risks, costs or commitments to the common good unless there is adequate benefit for tangible Chinese interests. Like many other world governments with a strong sense of nationalism, the Chinese leadership continues to emphasize a restricted scope of national interests and assures that its policies and practices serve those interests.

Examples abound of China pursuing narrow interests, often to the detriment of others in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere. Although it has over \$3 trillion in foreign exchange reserves, China continues to run a substantial trade surplus and to accumulate large foreign exchange reserves supported by currency policies widely seen to disadvantage trading competitors in the Asia-Pacific and elsewhere. Despite its economic progress and role as an international creditor comparable to international financial institutions, China annually receives over \$6 billion a year of foreign assistance loans and lesser grants from international organizations like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Program and over 20 other UN agencies, and foreign government and non-government donors that presumably would otherwise be available for other deserving clients in the Asia-Pacific and the world. It carefully adheres to UN budget formulas that keep Chinese dues and other payments remarkably low for a country with Chinese international prominence and development. It tends to assure that its contributions to the broader good of the international order (e.g. extensive use of Chinese personnel in UN peacekeeping operations) are paid for by others. Despite its status as a leader in production and export of wind-power, solar power and other alternative energy products, China remains one of the top two users of provisions in the Kyoto Protocol giving cost-free access to the advanced environmental technologies of developed countries. At bottom, the “win-win” principle that undergirds recent Chinese foreign policy means that Chinese officials make sure that Chinese policies and practices provide a “win” for generally narrowly defined national interests of China. They eschew the kinds of risky and costly commitments for the broader regional and global common good that Asian leaders have come to look to U.S. leadership to provide.²²

A major reason for China’s continued reluctance to undertake costs and commitments for the sake of the “common goods” of the Asia-Pacific and broader international affairs is the long array of domestic challenges and preoccupations faced by Chinese leaders. The precise impact of these domestic issues on the calculations of Chinese leaders is hard to

²² Xin Zhiming, “Government Clears \$5.4b World Bank Loan,” *China Daily*, July 25, 2008, p. 13; Asian Development Bank, *Asian Development Bank and the People’s Republic of China: 2008 A Fact Sheet* www.adb.org; Fu Jing and Hu Haiyan, “China, UN jointly unveil five-year aid framework,” *China Daily* April 2, 2010; Gillian Wong, “China rises and rises, yet still gets foreign aid,” *AP* September 27, 2010 www.ap.com; Antoine Dechezlepretre, et al., “Technology Transfer by CDM Projects,” *Energy Policy* 37, no.2 (2009): 1; Keith Bradsher, “China Leading Global Race to Make Clean Energy,” *New York Times* January 31, 2010. www.nytimes.com (accessed February 2, 2010); The World Bank, “Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Projects in China,” July 2009; The World Bank, “World Bank, GEF-Backed Energy Efficiency Program Expands in China,” January 2008; Asian Development Bank, *Asian Development Bank and People’s Republic of China: Fact Sheet*, December 2008, p. 3.

measure with any precision, though their overall impact appears substantial. Those domestic issues include securing smooth leadership succession and Communist Party unity; battling pervasive corruption in order to foster good governance for Chinese constituents; sustaining strong economic growth in order to insure employment and material benefits for the vast majority of Chinese people; boosting administrative support for those left behind by China's economic modernization so that the gap between the rich and poor in China will stop widening and narrow somewhat; ending grossly wasteful use of China's limited resources and those imported from abroad; and finding efficient and economical means to gradually reduce the widespread environmental damage caused by Chinese economic development.

Given these preoccupations as well as China's heavy interdependence with the United States and other leading powers, it has appeared that the Chinese leadership, unless provoked, would seek to avoid substantial confrontation with the United States and other powers over issues in Asian and world affairs. Though some opinion leaders in China from time to time have argued for challenging the United States in Asian and world affairs in defense of Chinese interests, the senior Chinese leaders generally have adhered to a more reassuring approach. They have sought to avoid complications as China exploits what it views as the current period of generally peaceful and advantageous strategic opportunity for China's development and the advancement of Communist rule in China.²³

China's Encumbered Rise in Asia

More relevant to the focus of this article is the fact that China appears to have far to go in reassuring Asia-Pacific neighbors of its intentions. Recent Chinese assertiveness has reminded its neighbors that the 60-year history of the PRC has much more often than not featured China acting in disruptive and domineering ways in the region.

China has been rising in the Asia-Pacific region free from superpower threat since the end of the Cold War over 20 years ago. The record of Chinese advance in the region since then can be measured using Chinese and international evidence. What is shown is a mixed and arguably mediocre record of accomplishment with China far from a position of leadership.

China faces major impediments as it endeavors to reassure Asian neighbors and advance Chinese regional influence. China's longstanding practice of building an image of consistent and righteous behavior in foreign affairs blocks realistic appraisal of the wary view of China held by most neighbors and the United States. The latter countries fear another in the long series of historical shifts in Chinese policies away from current emphasis on reassurance and toward past practices of intimidation and aggression. Absorbed in Chinese publicity regarding China's exceptional position of consistent, moral and benign foreign behavior, Chinese elites and public opinion have a poor appreciation of regional and American concerns.

²³ Douglas Paal, "The United States and Asia in 2011," *Asian Survey* Vol 52, No. 1, p.7

On the other hand, the Chinese elites and public opinion remain heavily influenced by prevailing Chinese media and other emphasis on China's historic victimization at the hands of outside powers like the United States, Japan and others. They have long registered deep opposition to foreign powers like the United States establishing and deepening strategic presence in cooperation with Asian countries along China's periphery. Such attitudes reinforce depiction of the United States today and in the past and the Soviet Union in the past as the main target of Chinese efforts to counter suspected superpower encirclement and containment.

Measuring significant limitations and shortcomings seen in China's recent relations in Asia can start with China's relationship with Japan, arguably Asia's richest country and the key ally of the United States. The record in recent years shows that China usually has been unsuccessful in winning greater support, despite many positive economic and other connections linking China and Japan. During the tenure of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006), China engaged in an effort to isolate Japan and diminish its prominence in Asian and world affairs. In general, the effort did not work well and was quickly put aside once Koizumi left office. Recent relations worsened because of disputes over territorial and resources claims in the East China Sea, intrusions of Chinese naval vessels into Japanese claimed areas, and competition for influence in Southeast Asia and in the United Nations.²⁴

Asia's other large powers, India and Russia showed ambivalence about relations with China. India's interest in accommodation with China has been very mixed. The border issue between the two countries has run hot and cold, as has their competition for influence among the countries surrounding India and in Southeast and Central Asia. The limited progress in Sino-Indian relations became overshadowed by a remarkable upswing in India's strategic cooperation with the United States during the past decade.²⁵

Meanwhile, Russian and Chinese interest in close alignment has waxed and waned and has appeared to remain secondary to their respective relationships with the West. Key differences were on display when President Vladimir Putin in 2001 abruptly reversed policy strongly supported by China against the U.S. development of a ballistic missile defense system, and again in 2008 when Russia sought in vain Chinese support for the Russian military attacks on Georgia.²⁶

Until recently, China had a very negative record in relations with Taiwan. The election of a new Taiwan government in 2008 bent on reassuring Beijing changed relations for the better. China's economic, diplomatic, and military influence over Taiwan grew. The

²⁴Peter Ford, "Japan abandons bid to make China a key pillar of its foreign policy," *Christian Science Monitor* November 17, 2010 www.CSMonitor.com;

²⁵ Lawrence Saez and Crystal Chang, "China and South Asia: Strategic Implications and Economic Imperatives," in *China, The Developing World, and the New Global Dynamic*, eds. Lowell Dittmer and George Yu (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010) 83-108; John Garver and Fei-ling Wang, "China's Anti-encirclement struggle," *Asian Security* 6:3 (2010) 238-263

²⁶ Yu Bin, "China-Russia Relations: Guns and Games of August: Tales of Two Strategic Partners," *Comparative Connections* 10, no. 3 (October 2008): 131-38.

government was re-elected in 2012 but the political opposition in Taiwan remained opposed to recent trends and improved its standing with Taiwan voters.

Strong Chinese nationalism and territorial claims have complicated Chinese efforts to improve relations with Asian neighbors, including South Korea. South Korean opinion of China declined sharply from a high point in 2004 initially because of nationalist disputes over whether an historic kingdom controlling much of Korea and northeast China was Chinese or Korean. South Koreans also became increasingly suspicious over growing Chinese trade with and investment in North Korea and enhanced political support for the Pyongyang regime. China's efforts seemed designed to sustain a viable North Korea state friendly to China—an objective at odds with South Korea's goal to reunify North and South Korea, with South Korea being dominant. China's refusal in 2010 to condemn North Korea's killing of 46 South Korean sailors in the sinking of South Korean warship and killing of South Korean soldiers and civilians in an artillery attack strongly reinforced anti-China sentiment.

Chinese diplomacy at times endeavored to play down Chinese territorial disputes in Southeast Asian countries, but clear differences remained unresolved and became more prominent in recent years, especially over disputed claims in the South China Sea. On balance, the continued disputes served as a substantial drag on Chinese effort to improve relations with these countries

China's remarkable military modernization and its sometimes secretive and authoritarian political system raised suspicions and wariness on the part of a number of China's neighbors, including such middle powers as Australia.²⁷ They sought more transparency regarding Chinese military intentions, as they endeavored to build their own military power and work cooperatively with one another and the United States in the face of China's military advances.

As noted earlier, the People's Republic of China's has a record of repeated aggression and assertiveness during the forty years rule of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping toward many Asian countries that remains hard to live down. This experience also means that China has had few positive connections on which to build friendly ties with its neighbors. Chinese interchange with Asian neighbors has depended heavily on the direction and leadership of the Chinese government. Non-government channels of communication and influence have been limited.

An exception is the so-called Overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asian countries. These people have provided important investment and technical assistance to China's development and represented political forces supportive of their home country's good relations with China. At the same time, however, the dominant ethnic, cultural and religious groups in Southeast Asia often have a long history of wariness of China and sometimes promoted violent actions and other discrimination against ethnic Chinese.

²⁷ Linda Jacobson, "Australia-China Ties: In Search of Political Trust," *Policy Brief* Lowy Institute June 2012

Limitations and complications also showed in the areas of greatest Chinese strength in Asia—economic relations and diplomacy.²⁸ Double counting associated with processing trade exaggerated Chinese trade figures. As over half of Chinese trade was conducted by foreign invested enterprises in China, the resulting processing trade saw China often add only a small amount to the product; and the finished product often depended on sales to the United States or the European Union. Taken together, these facts seemed to offset China's stature in Asia as a powerful trading country.

The large amount of Asian and international investment that went to China did not go to other Asian countries, hurting their economic development. For many years until very recently, China invested little in Asia apart from Hong Kong, a reputed tax haven and source of “round-trip” monies leaving China and then returning to China as foreign investment.

Chinese aid figures are not clearly presented by the Chinese administration. What is known shows that China's aid to Asia is very small, especially in comparison to other donors, with the exception of Chinese aid to North Korea and, at least until recently, Myanmar. China's large foreign exchange reserves served many purposes for the Chinese administration that was trying to maintain stability amid many domestic preoccupations. They did not translate to big Chinese grants of assistance abroad. China's attraction to Asian producers of raw materials was not shared by the workers in Asian manufacturing. Asian entrepreneurs tended to relocate and invest in China and they appeared to do well; but their workers could not relocate to China and appeared to suffer.

In keeping with China's “win-win” diplomacy, the sometimes dizzying array of meetings, agreements, and pronouncements in the active Chinese diplomacy in Asia did not hide the fact that China remained reluctant to undertake significant costs, risks, or commitments in dealing with difficult regional issues.

North Korea remains a special case in Asian and world affairs. It reflects an unusual mix of Chinese strengths and weaknesses in Asia. On the one hand, China provides considerable food aid, oil and other material support. China is North Korea's largest trading partner and foreign investor. China often shields Pyongyang from US-led efforts at the United Nations to sanction or otherwise punish North Korea over its nuclear weapons development, ballistic missile development, proliferation activities, and military aggression against South Korea. The United States and other participants in the six party talks rely on China to use its standing as the foreign power with the most influence in North Korea to get Pyongyang to engage in negotiations over its weapons development and proliferation activities. On the other hand, North Korea repeatedly rejects Chinese advice and warnings. North Korean officials tell American and other officials of their

²⁸ Thomas Lum, coord., *Comparing Global Influence: China's and the US Diplomacy, Foreign Aid, Trade, and Investment in the Developing World*, Report RL34620 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, August 15, 2008); Yu Yongding, “A different road forward,” *China Daily*, December 23, 2010, p. 9; “China's Reforms: The Second Long March,” *The Economist*, December 11, 2008, <http://www.economist.com>.

disdain for China. Nonetheless, Chinese leaders are loath to cut off their aid or otherwise increase pressure on North Korea to conform to international norms for fear of a backlash from the Pyongyang regime that would undermine Chinese interest in preserving stability on the Korean peninsula and in northeastern Asia. The net effect of these contradictions is that while China's influence in North Korea is greater than other major powers, it is encumbered and limited.²⁹

Conclusion

In addition to the elements discussed above, other assessments of the complications facing China's rise in Asia include the extraordinary role of the United States. Notably, the United States undertakes major costs and risks as the region's security guarantor of choice and a favored trading partner. The United States spends \$50-100 billion annually to maintain its widespread and multifaceted security presence in the region; its military personnel are ready and willing to be placed in harms way and get killed if necessary for the sake of Asian stability. The nation building priorities of most Asian governments depend on stability and yet these governments' officials remain wary and do not trust one another—a condition that reinforces their appreciation of the United States. The United States absorbs imports from Asia's export oriented economies to the point where it annually runs a trade deficit with the region of \$350 billion.

No other power or coalition of powers is able or willing to undertake even a fraction of these costs and risks—an important fact well appreciated by officials in the region, including officials in China. Appreciation for the major costs and risks the United States undertakes in order to support regional stability needed by Asian nation-building elites who remain very wary of their neighbors could be offset by concerns of perceived U.S. assertiveness, coercion or dominance. But those concerns, sometimes common in the past, are in abeyance, replaced in part by concerns over possible U.S. withdrawal.

Today, the Asian government leaders are focused on the change in regional power dynamics that could reduce their freedom of action—the rise of China. They seem determined to get along with China and benefit from its rise, but they also engage in contingency plans (usually including close security and other ties with the United States) in case China were to change course once again and resume the kinds of domineering and disruptive policies that characterized its interaction with the region for 40 of the 60 plus years of the PRC. The inability and unwillingness of Chinese elites and broader public to deal realistically with China's negative past record in Asia heads the list of obstacles facing China as it attempts to improve its mediocre record of the past 20 years in endeavoring to reassure and win over regional governments to support China's leadership in Asia. This Chinese shortcoming is compounded by the acute sensitivities of these elite and public opinion to actions by China's neighbors in line with the United States that continue to be portrayed in extreme terms as the latest in a long series of foreign efforts to contain and victimize China.

²⁹ Scott Snyder, "China's Post-Kim Jong Il Debate," *Comparative Connections* Vol.14, No.1. 2012, pp. 107-114.