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ADVANCING FREEDOM IN CHINA: THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Ever since the Chinese government sent tanks into Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, the issue of human rights in China has increased in interest and importance to Americans. The brutal suppression of thousands of student demonstrators, captured on television and in print, dashed the unrealistic hopes of many Americans that the People's Republic of China was in the midst of a rapid and bloodless transformation from communism to democracy. This disappointment only deepened as Americans watched a wave of democracy crash through Eastern Europe and even the Soviet Union in 1989 and 1990. Many began to wonder why the people of China, after so many positive moves toward greater openness and free enterprise, were unable or unwilling to overthrow Communist Party rule in the dramatic fashion witnessed elsewhere around the world.

Every year since 1989, the American people have demanded that their government find ways to compel or encourage greater protection of human rights in China. Media and other reports have raised public awareness of other forms of government-sponsored oppression in China, in addition to the graphic images of the Tiananmen Square massacre already firmly etched in their minds. Prison labor, the jailing of government critics, "one child" family planning, and the control of religious expression emerged as priority issues for the United States at a time in which, with the end of the Cold War, international security seemed a less pressing concern.

Although Americans have long been aware of the problems that must be addressed in China, how to resolve these problems most effectively has been the subject of heated and serious debate. Some have called for a boycott of Chinese-made goods or the formal linkage of trade to progress on human rights. Others have called for greater access to China through commerce and trade as the way to bring about greater individual liberty and respect for human rights. U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich framed this viewpoint well in recent remarks to the Foreign Affairs College during his visit to Beijing on March 29, 1997:

America cannot remain silent about the basic lack of freedom—speech, religion, assembly, the press—in China. Were we to do so, we would not only betray our own tradition, we would also fail to fulfill our obligations as a friend of China. For no one can be considered a true friend if that person avoids the truth.... The historic truth is that economic vitality ultimately depends upon political freedom.

However much Americans may disagree over tactics, they agree on one principle: Standing up for freedom and democracy is part of what it means to be American. The American people will not support a policy that does not address sufficiently the rights and values they believe are universal and unalienable. China's leaders need to hear Americans articulate their belief in the historic truth, articulated so carefully by Speaker Gingrich during his trip to China, that economic vitality depends ultimately on political freedom. If China's impressive economic performance is to continue long into the future, political change is unavoidable.

To address the moral concerns Americans have about conditions in China, and to promote the expansion of freedom for the Chinese people, the United States should:

- **Speak out on the value of freedom.** Concerned U.S. policymakers should follow Speaker Gingrich's example of frank and open diplomacy. Because economic freedom is indivisible from political freedom, the need for political openness to accompany China's economic success is great.
- **Support the expansion of democratic reform in China.** Such organizations as the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute are making positive contributions to the improvement and expansion of democratic reform in China and should be given greater recognition and financial support. At the same time, policymakers should understand that democratization may be a long-term process.
- **Honestly and publicly identify real problems.** U.S. policymakers and negotiators should not shy away from sensitive issues like religious persecution; at the same time, they should propose cooperative solutions to these problems. Problems can be solved only after they are clearly defined. Specific definitions also help measure progress when it is made.
- **Urge China to sign and ratify the two United Nations human rights covenants: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.** This would bring China into the fold of states that recognize the universality of certain fundamental human rights. It would make it a matter of international law that internationally recognized rules and norms are respected in China.
- **Broaden the U.S. definition of human rights to include economic freedom.** Economic rights and political rights are recognized equally in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A broader definition of human rights would allow the United States to recognize improvements in economic rights in China while continuing to call for improvements in political rights as well.
- **Keep channels for people-to-people contact open.** Official relations between governments are important, but ordinary Americans often are the best ambassa-

dors of America's beliefs and values. The experiences that Americans and Chinese share with friends and strangers while traveling to one another's countries for vacation, business, or school have the power to open Chinese hearts and minds to the American experience and value system.

- **Support the efforts of the many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to improve living conditions and human rights in China.** Domestic and international NGOs provide education and relief to distressed areas in China. They address concerns ranging from environmental degradation to poverty and legal reform. Their work is invaluable in improving living conditions and human rights in China.
- **Encourage private-sector expansion in China.** Developing China's private sector through commerce and trade is the best way to free the Chinese people from government control in the short term. In the long run, private-sector development will empower a Chinese middle class to bring about a more representative and responsible government.

THE LEGACY OF COMMUNISM IN CHINA

Communism is an evil lie that robs people of their wealth and freedom in the guise of egalitarianism. By definition, it violates fundamental human rights. A government built upon this lie inevitably will fail, either because of economic disintegration or at the hands of an emerging middle class no longer willing to be bound. The question is not whether communism will fail, but when and under what circumstances.

China came under the spell of communism with the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, under Mao Zedong. During this brief interval in China's 4,000-year history, the Chinese people have experienced the brutal reality of the communist lie. During Mao's Great Leap Forward, a government program intended to launch China into the ranks of developed states through collectivization and mass mobilization, more than 30 million people starved to death. Government-sponsored human suffering of such magnitude was surpassed only by the maniacal ideological warfare of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that ran from 1966 until Mao's death in 1976. More than 100 million people were targets of torture and persecution, and estimates of death due to execution or maltreatment range from several hundred thousand to the tens of millions. The toll of this bloody campaign on Chinese society is almost immeasurable. In addition to the lives lost, families were destroyed as children turned against their parents, businesses were shut down by angry mobs, schools were closed, and the nation's economy was stripped of the ability to provide for the basic needs of its people. The unskilled and disillusioned "lost generation" that survived the Cultural Revolution still bear the scars of the excessive radicalism unleashed by Chairman Mao.

The legitimacy of communism in China died with Mao Zedong in 1976. Deng Xiaoping, Mao's eventual successor, was forced to resort to the antithesis of communism, the free market, both to raise China out of poverty and to keep the Communist Party in power. The failure of communism, the system that perpetrated the grossest violations of human rights in China, was inevitable. Its replacement—described by Deng as "market socialism"—is a blend of free-market experiments under authoritarian political control. This new system, although an improvement over the communist disaster, still systematically violates fundamental freedoms that Americans and other citizens of the world consider

universal and unalienable. According to the U.S. Department of State's 1996 report on human rights practices in China,

The Government continue[s] to commit widespread and well-documented human rights abuses, in violation of internationally accepted norms, stemming from the authorities' intolerance of dissent, fear of unrest, and the absence or inadequacy of laws protecting basic freedoms.¹

China's constitution promises an impressive array of freedoms.² The Chinese people are promised the right to practice their religious beliefs, to criticize the government, to organize demonstrations, and to publish and speak freely. The same constitution also states, however, that "citizens of the People's Republic of China, in exercising their freedoms and rights, may not infringe upon the interests of the state." Furthermore, they "must not commit acts detrimental to the security, honor and interests of the motherland." These "interests of the state" form the primary legal rationale offered by Beijing to justify the many offenses the Chinese government has committed against its own people.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The status of the fundamental freedom of expression in China is disturbing. China's 1982 constitution promises citizens freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, procession, and demonstration. It also promises the right to criticize and make suggestions regarding any state organ or functionary. In reality, however, citizens are free to express themselves only in ways the government perceives to be in the interests of the state. Any form of speech, publication, or demonstration that the government determines to be "counter-revolutionary" or "destabilizing" is put down by force. The most frequently quoted passage of the 1996 State Department report reflects this reality:

All public dissent against the party and government was effectively silenced by intimidation, exile, the imposition of prison terms, administrative detention, or house arrest. No dissidents were known to be active at year's end.³

It is puzzling that the government of a country perceived by some as an emerging super-power should be so vulnerable to criticism from students and a handful of dissidents. The government may subscribe to a domino theory of dissent, believing that tolerating any level of criticism will open the way for thousands or millions of dissidents to destabilize China. But this paranoid implementation of draconian control over speech is repugnant to more than just Americans. Controls over the free flow of information eventually will slow the pace of China's economic development, and available technology will defeat government attempts to control information. Neither of these outcomes is fully appreciated by China's current government.

- 1 U.S. Department of State, *China Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996*, January 30, 1997, as accessed on the Internet at <http://www.usis.usemb.se/human/china.htm>, p. 1.
- 2 *Constitution of the People's Republic of China* (Beijing, China: Foreign Language Press, 1990).
- 3 Department of State, *China Country Report on Human Rights*, p. 2.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

China's 1982 constitution states that the "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief." Yet it also places conditions on that freedom:

No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.

China has long been sensitive to (or paranoid about) foreign control over areas or groups within China, as well as to secret societies that organize to subvert the government. The Taiping Rebellion of the 1850s and 1860s, the first major rebellion to expose the weakness of the Qing Dynasty, was organized by a self-proclaimed Christian leader who was converted by a foreign missionary tract. "Separatist" movements in Tibet and Xinjiang have caused the Chinese government to view Buddhists and Muslims in these areas with great suspicion. This sensitivity was fed by disputes between China's emperor and the Pope and by foreign occupation of key areas along China's coast. One of the key objectives of the Communists was to retake territory "stolen by foreign imperialists" and protect the people from foreign interference and domination. One of the key steps toward achieving that objective was the imposition of tight controls over all religious activities.

During the 1966–1976 Cultural Revolution, according to the 1996 State Department report, the government forcefully suppressed all religious observances and closed all seminaries. Then, in the late 1970s, it began to restore or replace damaged or confiscated churches, temples, mosques, and monasteries, and to allow seminaries to reopen. By law, all religious organizations are required to register with the government and to abide by the regulations of various "patriotic" associations. For example, Catholics are required to register with the Catholic Patriotic Association and Protestants are required to register with the Three Self Patriotic Movement.

If religious organizations choose not to register with the government, or if they hold meetings in facilities other than those approved by the government, they are deemed common criminals and face the full force of China's law-enforcement establishment. The State Department reports that the local authorities have used

threats, demolition of unregistered property, extortion of "fines," interrogation, detention, and reform-through-education sentences. Unofficial religious groups have been hard hit in Beijing and in the nearby provinces of Henan, where there are rapidly growing numbers of unregistered Protestants, and Hebei, a center of unregistered Catholics.⁴

This harsh treatment extends to foreign contacts as well:

The authorities permit officially sanctioned religious organizations to maintain international contacts as long as these do not entail foreign control. The January 1994 regulations codified many existing rules involving foreigners,

4 *Ibid.*

including a ban on proselytizing by foreigners, but they allow foreign nationals to preach to foreigners, bring in religious materials for their own use, and preach to Chinese at churches, mosques, and temples at the invitation of registered religious organizations.⁵

According to Nina Shea, Director of the Religious Freedom Project at Freedom House, China today has more Christians in prison because of religious activities than any other state. Believers within the Roman Catholic Church, for example, are forced to affiliate with the government-sanctioned Catholic Patriotic Association, which does not recognize the ultimate earthly authority of the Pope. Foreigners also face tight restrictions in exercising their religious rights inside China. Decrees issued in recent years bar them from importing Bibles and religious tracts for distribution, as well as from evangelizing, establishing schools, and appointing religious leaders.⁶

Despite the government scrutiny and persecution, the number of Christians in China continues to grow. Estimates range from the tens of millions to over 100 million. Religious and government leaders would do well to focus first on allowing religious believers to recognize the legitimacy of their own spiritual leaders without requiring government approval. Religious organizations should commit themselves to focusing on the welfare of souls and shy away from engaging in politics from the pulpit until greater freedom is secured; these organizations offer social welfare services to the Chinese people at a time when the central government faces tough fiscal constraints. Finally, the Chinese government should allow religious believers to share their beliefs openly with others through missionary work. The rapid growth rate among Christian and other religious groups in China clearly demonstrates a domestic demand for this freedom.

FAMILY PLANNING

Family planning is the area of Chinese government policy that many Americans find most objectionable. That women would be forced, physically or by intense persuasion, to have an abortion is objectionable to both sides of the abortion debate. Many Americans believe strongly that this amounts to the state-sponsored murder of innocent, unborn children. Furthermore, there are concerns about how a government might go about monitoring people who might be trying to have children.

China's government introduced the "one-child" policy in the 1970s to control population growth. With over a billion people and an underdeveloped economy, the government was concerned about how the state would provide for basic food, shelter, and clothing needs—a concern with which much of the international community can sympathize. The problem has been one of implementation. According to the State Department report,

Population control policy relies on education, propaganda, and economic incentives, as well as on more coercive measures including psychological pressure and economic penalties. Rewards for couples who adhere to the policy include monthly stipends and preferential medical and educational benefits. Disciplinary measures against those who violate the policy include fines, withholding of social services, demotion, and other administrative punishments that sometimes result in loss of employment.⁷

5 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

6 Nina Shea, *In The Lion's Den* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1997), pp. 57–66.

Although the State Department report states that “[t]he Government does not authorize the use of force to compel persons to submit to abortion or sterilization,” instances of forced abortion and sterilization have been documented by international human rights organizations. Poor supervision of local officials who are under intense pressure to meet misguided, if not immoral, family planning targets is to blame for this outrage.

One of the unintended consequences of China’s one-child policy and the availability of prenatal technology is that parents are able to abort children selectively based on gender. Regulations forbid gender selection abortions; but because of the traditional preference for male children, particularly in rural areas, people with money and access to willing doctors participate in this abhorrent act. According to the State Department, the Chinese press reported the ratio of male to female births in rural areas to be as high as 117 male to 100 female. The statistical norm is 106 male births to 100 female.

This policy does not apply to minority groups, however, and rural farmers face less rigid restrictions. In addition, because of economic development, private-sector employees can afford to pay the fines for choosing to have more than one child. But this is a “glass much less than half full” perspective.

DUE PROCESS AND THE RULE OF LAW

China’s 1982 constitution also specifically promises protection from unlawful detainment without due process and the right to receive compensation if “civic rights” have been violated. “Unlawful detention or deprivation or restriction of citizens’ freedom of the person by other means is prohibited, and unlawful search of the person of citizens is prohibited,” for example; and “Citizens who have suffered losses as a result of infringement of their civic rights by any state organ or functionary have the right to compensation in accordance with the law.”

Despite such promised constitutional protection, however, many Chinese citizens, especially political and religious dissidents, have been detained and jailed without any form of due process. The State Department and international human rights organizations have reported cases in which dissidents were taken into custody, tried, convicted, and sometimes tortured without time for or access to adequate legal defense. Treatment while in prison, especially the use of torture and the use of prison labor to produce export commodities, has been a major concern of international organizations and foreign governments. Of most concern, however, has been China’s refusal to grant access to the International Red Cross for inspection of prisons and reform-through-labor camps.

China has made some progress in the area of legal reform. China’s leaders know that transparent laws and regulations, respect for contracts, and physical security are important to international investors and businessmen. The lack of transparency, trained legal professionals, and independent oversight, however, leaves the country’s legal system in desperate need of further reform. International assistance, especially in education and training, is available to China without posing any threat to its sovereignty. On these rule of law issues, Chinese officials are beginning to see at least the economic reasons for improving legislation and law enforcement.

7 Department of State, *China Country Report on Human Rights*, p. 10.

UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Whenever Americans have raised human rights concerns, Chinese officials typically have responded by denouncing this supposed interference in internal affairs and declaring their resolve to resist any attempt by foreigners to impose their values on the Chinese people. Basic human rights, however, like respect for freedom and democracy, are not simply American values; they are internationally recognized principles that have been promised to the Chinese people in their own constitution. According to the State Department report,

Despite [the] public acknowledgment of universal human rights principles...Chinese officials reject the theory of the universality of human rights. They argue instead that a nation's political, economic, and social system and its unique historical, religious, and cultural background determine its concept of human rights.⁸

China should acknowledge that the international community is governed by an international regime on human rights—a regime in which China already participates to some extent.⁹ China is slowly coming around to participating, in some fashion, in international human rights regimes. With the promised application in Hong Kong of two UN human rights covenants—the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights—China is considering signing the covenant on social and economic rights this year. This would represent major progress in the struggle to get China's government to recognize any universal aspects of human rights. Signing the covenant on civil and political rights would go a long way toward assuaging fear and uncertainty about human rights protections in Hong Kong and probably would lead to improved protection of human rights in China. As the international community encourages China to sign and ratify these two international covenants, the United States should remember that it did not ratify the civil and political rights covenant until 1991 and still has not ratified the covenant on social and economic rights.

SLOWLY, FREEDOM SPREADS

Based on the State Department's assessment, the key to expanding freedom in China is the liberation of China's workers from state-sector bondage:

Economic liberalization is creating diverse employment opportunities and introducing market forces into the economy, thus loosening governmental monitoring and regulation of personal and family life, particularly in rural areas. In urban areas, however, most people still depend on their government-linked work unit for housing, permission to have a child, approval to apply for a passport, and other aspects of ordinary life. The work unit, along with the neighborhood committee, are charged with monitoring activities and attitudes, although these institutions have become less important as means of social or political control in urban areas.¹⁰

8 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

9 Harry Harding, Ph.D., Dean of the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University, argues that the United States should adopt a more comprehensive definition of human rights that includes social and economic rights, as well as a longer-term perspective toward the issue of democratization, and that Beijing should acknowledge that the international community is governed by an international regime on human rights. See Harding's chapter in Ezra F. Vogel, ed., *Living With China: U.S./China Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, to be published by W. W. Norton in late 1997.

Although productivity in the private sector far surpasses that of the state-owned sector in China, and the private-sector share of gross domestic product is ever increasing, a majority of Chinese workers still are employed by state-owned enterprises. Government control over the livelihood of the Chinese people is carried out largely through these state-owned enterprises. State workers are paid incredibly low wages—as low as \$400 a year—although government-subsidized housing, health care, food, clothing, and education are given as non-wage compensation. What is important is not the level of compensation Chinese workers receive for their work, but how they are compensated. State workers are forced to depend on government-subsidized benefits. Because they are paid too poorly to choose private alternatives, Chinese workers are forced to comply with intrusive government regulations, such as family planning and controls on speech, or risk loss of vital benefits like housing, health care, and child care. To break this cycle of dependence, China's workers need more private-sector employment alternatives.

U.S. firms in China assist in the development of the private sector. U.S. firms free Chinese workers from the bonds of state enterprises that control their lives by making them dependent on subsidized food, shelter, clothing, child care, and education. Employees at U.S. firms earn higher wages and are free to choose where to live, what to eat, and how to educate and care for their children. As the private sector in China grows, so will the scope of these freedoms. This real and measurable expansion of freedom does not require waiting for a middle-class civil society to emerge in China; it is taking place now and should be encouraged.

DEMOCRACY BEGINS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Although Chinese citizens may lack the means to change the laws and the officials that govern them at the national and provincial levels, significant progress has been made at the local or village level. In these local areas, acting through competitive elections, citizens now choose the officials who will govern them. The success of the effort to democratize elections for the “village committees” has been praised openly within China as well:

The Chinese government's efforts to introduce a measure of democratic voting and assembly procedures...represent a definite and positive step forward in the nation's delicate move towards a more democratic and participatory form of village government. At this point, over 90 percent of the village committees in China have been formed by local elections, although the election process varies widely in terms of fairness and transparency. The move towards village elections has already fundamentally altered local government structures for over eight hundred million Chinese peasants, who represent close to a seventh of the world's population. As a result of local election reforms, diverse constituencies are obtaining representation in village government.¹¹

These local officials lack the authority to change the national family planning policy or to improve the country's incomplete legal and judicial process. They are the level of government closest to the people, however, and the fact that they have to face the discipline of competitive elections makes them more responsive to the interests of the people as they

10 Department of State, *China Country Report on Human Rights*, p. 9.

11 *People's Republic of China Election Observation Report, May 15–31, 1994*, International Republican Institute, May 1995.

interpret and apply national and provincial regulations. Local village elections may seem like a small step, but they make a significant difference to the more than 800 million Chinese citizens who live in rural areas and now enjoy some measure of democracy.

Nearly 50 years ago, when the Nationalists fled to Taiwan after being defeated in the civil war on the mainland, the Nationalist or Kuomintang (KMT) Party under Chiang Kai-shek began to hold elections at the village level. For most of the past 50 years, Taiwan has been a one-party state in which all national, provincial, and county officials were loyal to the KMT and citizens lived under martial law. Even at the village level, only KMT (and, eventually, some “independent”) candidates were allowed to run for office. Despite significant amounts of diplomatic, military, and economic assistance from the United States, the political system on Taiwan was little better than that of the mainland until the mid-1980s.

By the 1980s, however, Chiang Kai-shek’s son, Chiang Ching-kuo, began to see the need to open Taiwan’s political system to participation by those who resided in Taiwan before Chiang Kai-shek and the “mainlanders” arrived in 1949. Taiwan-born leaders, like current President Lee Teng-hui, were promoted by Chiang Ching-kuo, and opposition parties were legalized in order to allow the government to reflect more precisely the people it governs. Martial law was lifted; and in the 1990s, direct popular elections were held for Taiwan’s highest government offices.

Taiwan demonstrates that the values of freedom and democracy are consistent with Chinese civilization. But it also demonstrates that, even with a very close and generous relationship with the United States, democratization can be a very slow and incremental process—in this case, a process that began nearly 50 years ago with local village elections. The democratization of the Chinese mainland does not have to take 50 years; but considering that it took that long for democracy’s 20 million allies on Taiwan, Americans should not be under any illusion that the development of democracy for the 1.2 billion people of China is likely to be either rapid or smooth.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

The expansion of freedom is the most effective way to address human rights problems in China. The promotion of individual freedom through private-sector development must be accompanied by an honest identification of the problems and a compelling case for the value of greater freedom and openness. To advance the cause of human rights in China, the United States should:

- **Speak out on the value of freedom.** Concerned U.S. policymakers should follow Speaker Gingrich’s example of frank and open diplomacy. They should take every opportunity to remind China that, because economic freedom is indivisible from political freedom, it is imperative that China’s economic success be accompanied by political openness. Economic freedom in China advanced in real terms for the Chinese people during Deng’s reform era, even though there is still a long way to go. By the same token, political freedom has expanded only minimally. The development of local elections is a positive step that should be encouraged and promoted. For China to sustain rapid economic growth, however, freedom of the press and freedom of speech must be expanded to give the market the signals it needs to direct the large flows of foreign investment most efficiently.

- **Support the expansion of democratic reform in China.** Organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute are contributing to the improvement and expansion of democratic reform in China. They should receive greater recognition and financial support. At the same time, policymakers should understand that democratization in China may be a long-term process. Even the close allies of the United States on Taiwan took a full half-century to move from local village elections to the direct election of their President. It is unrealistic to expect the same process to take place rapidly or smoothly in China.
- **Honestly and publicly identify real problems.** U.S. policymakers and negotiators should not shy away from sensitive issues like religious persecution; at the same time, however, they should propose cooperative solutions to these problems. Problems can be solved only after being clearly defined. Specific definitions also can help measure progress when it is made. The Chinese expect Americans to be frank and direct in identifying areas of the relationship that are unsatisfactory. If it fails to address problem areas clearly, the United States sends a signal to the Chinese that it is less than fully committed to improvement because of some fear that it might offend them.
- **Urge China to sign and ratify the two UN human rights covenants: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.** This would bring China into the fold of states that recognize the universality of certain fundamental human rights, and would make it a matter of international law that universally recognized rules and norms are respected in China. The PRC has committed itself to applying the principles of these two covenants to Hong Kong, but they have not yet signed and ratified them. Having China sign the covenants would assuage fears in Hong Kong about China's commitment to implementation of the covenants commit China, under an international regime, to recognition of the universal nature of basic human rights.
- **Broaden the U.S. definition of human rights to include economic freedom.** Economic rights and political rights are recognized equally in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A broader definition of human rights will allow the United States to recognize China's improvement in economic rights while continuing to call for improvement in political rights. As the United States seeks to get China to recognize the international standards embodied in UN covenants, it is important to recognize also that economic rights of freedom are just as important as political rights.
- **Keep channels for people-to-people contact open.** Official relations between governments are important, but ordinary Americans often have been the best ambassadors of American beliefs and values. The experiences that Americans share with friends and strangers while traveling to China for vacation, business, or school have the power to open Chinese hearts and minds to the American experience and value system. Funding academic and cultural exchange programs, maintaining a strong governmental presence in China, and encouraging a strong media presence by demonstrating policymakers' high level of interest in what is happening in China will have positive effects on these shared

experiences. Americans living in China may have professional reasons to be there, but they also are living there as individuals who best represent America's values and expectations. The experiences shared with Chinese who come to the United States for the same reasons will have the same power.

- **Support the efforts of the many NGOs working to improve living conditions and human rights in China.** Domestic and international NGOs provide education and relief to distressed areas in China. They address concerns ranging from environmental degradation to poverty and legal reform. Their work is invaluable in improving living conditions and human rights in China. Members of Congress should make every effort to speak to these groups, participate in their events, educate their constituents about what NGOs are doing, encourage them to participate in the work of these organizations, and publicize as widely as possible the good work that is being done in China.
- **Encourage private-sector expansion in China.** Developing China's private sector through commerce and trade is the best way to free its people from government control in the short term. Most government controls over people's lives in China are implemented through the state-owned sector. People who work for state-owned enterprises are forced to depend on the state for a wide range of basic benefits like housing, education, and health care. Because of this dependency, they are forced to comply with intrusive government regulations or risk the loss of these basic benefits. Private-sector employment offers them the wealth and freedom to choose private alternatives to government regulation and restriction. In the long run, private-sector development will empower a Chinese middle class to bring about a more representative and responsible government.

The advancement of freedom and democracy always should play a prominent role in the conduct of U.S. relations with other countries. China is no exception. Americans should feel confident and comfortable in extolling the value of freedom in the economic and social development of their own country and take pride in the tremendous power for good that the U.S. promotion and protection of freedom and democracy have had on the entire world as nearly every state moves in the direction of free-market democracy.

Human rights abuses in China continue today, and the United States has a duty to respond to them. But U.S. policymakers should respond in ways that aim at stopping the abuse without undermining positive changes already taking place. In politics, morality should be judged by consequences, not intentions. Even a policy with the most laudable goals and intentions still needs to meet the test of how well it increases freedom. In addition, politicians need to beware of unintended consequences, such as the impact that a policy aimed at China might have on U.S. allies in Hong Kong and on Taiwan.

The PRC has bet it can expand freedom in economics without loosening controls on politics. History tells us this will be a losing bet. As Ronald Reagan said during his visit to the PRC in April 1984, "Economic growth and human progress make their greatest strides when people are secure and free to think, speak, worship, choose their own way and reach for the stars."¹² More recently, Speaker Gingrich expressed American doubts well:

12 John F. Copper, Franz Michael, and Yuan-li Wu, *Human Rights in Post-Mao China* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), p. 1.

Indeed, any effort to provide a partial freedom to any people, to tell them that they can be free in one sphere but not in another, will ultimately fail. The Chinese leadership needs to understand that political freedom must accompany economic freedom. If it attempts to halt the spread of freedom, it will suffer political and economic consequences.¹³

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HERITAGE STUDIES ON LINE

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13 Remarks to Foreign Affairs College, Beijing, March 29, 1997.

14 This study appeared originally as a chapter in *Between Diplomacy and Deterrence: Strategies for U.S. Relations with China*, edited by Kim R. Holmes and James J. Przystup and published by The Heritage Foundation in May 1997.

