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A COMMONSENSE STRATEGY TOWARD CHINA

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China's emergence as a great power will be one of the defining events of the 21st century. Considering its size, economic dynamism, and military potential, the way in which China integrates itself into the international system, or fails to do so, promises to shape the very nature of the international order in the coming century.

For the United States and for other members of the international community, the challenge will be to structure an environment in which China will view this integration, based on existing international norms, as beneficial to its own national interests. Within this context, a central goal of U.S. policy should be to expand the scope of freedom and the pace of political change in China.

The Opportunity

In 1978, in the aftermath of the twin disasters of Maoism (the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution), Deng Xiaoping launched China on a national strategy of economic reform and modernization. Deng recognized that success would require access to international markets and finance. He also recognized that this opening of China would bring with it external influences. As he put it, an open window will allow in some flies.

In abandoning Maoist calls for revolution, Deng ordered China's diplomacy toward developing the stability necessary for sustained economic growth. China normalized relations with Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Republic of Korea—all states with which it had a long and often troubled history; it moved from its long-standing support for the Khmer Rouge to embrace the Paris Peace Accords, which ended the civil war in Cambodia; and it abstained in the United Nations Security Council vote authorizing the United States to use all possible means to expel Iraq from Kuwait.

China also has demonstrated an interest in greater international integration, joining the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) forum and making entry into the World Trade Organization a major foreign policy objective. Similarly, Beijing signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in September 1996 and recently declared an end to nuclear testing.

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Yet, at the same time, Beijing has evidenced a willingness to use force to advance its interests—against Vietnam, in the South China Sea, and most recently in the vicinity of Taiwan in 1995 and 1996. Likewise, Beijing has accelerated its military modernization program with an emphasis on acquiring power projection capabilities.

Internally, China remains a one-party dictatorship that represses the political, religious, and human rights of its 1.2 billion citizens. The State Department's annual human rights report stands as testimony to this reality. As Speaker Newt Gingrich made abundantly clear in his recent visit to China, these issues are major concerns of the United States.

China's complexity, however, raises fundamental questions about its nature as an emerging great power and its relationship to the United States and the international system.

For example, is China a revolutionary or revisionist power seeking to transform the very nature of the international system? Is it an assertive but basically status quo power? Does it represent a global ideological adversary like the former Soviet Union? Is it like Germany in the 1890s—a rising expansionist power prepared to challenge the international status quo? Or is it perhaps a Gaulist-like France, using cultural nationalism and independence to restore national purpose while remaining a status quo power?

There are, of course, no appropriate historical models. Reality is much more complex. In all likelihood, China's conduct will not be a predictable black or white, but some shifting shade of gray instead. It is likely to be both cooperative and assertive on a wide range of issues, undoubtedly seeking to shape, to its own advantage, the terms and conditions of its engagement with the world. This will complicate the lives of policymakers in Washington.

Ideally, China will evolve into a modern, open, rule-based society, supportive of international peace and stability—and there are powerful forces inside China moving it in that direction. But that outcome is not inevitable, and we must be prepared for other futures.

The Policy Debate

Unfortunately, there is no bumper sticker for China policy. To deal with China, the United States needs to move beyond the now-sterile engagement-versus-containment debate. Quite simply, this is a false choice.

Containment worked against the Soviet Union for a number of reasons that do not apply to China today. The Soviet Union represented an ideological and expansionist military threat to the very existence of the United States and democracies across the globe. This allowed Washington to build and sustain an alliance coalition against Moscow. China does not, at present, represent a similar challenge. At the same time, the Soviet Union was an autarky, closed to external trade and investment. China, on the other hand, is the world's third-largest economy, open to foreign trade and inviting to foreign investment. Foreign competition for the markets of China is intense.

As for engagement, in reality, the United States has never *not* been "engaged" with China in one way or another. For example, in the early 1950s, we fought against China on the Korean Peninsula; through the late 1960s, we tried to isolate and contain China; and following President Nixon's historic visit to China, the United States evolved a strategic, quasi-alliance relationship with China to contain the Soviet Union. The real issue is the nature, quality, and purpose of our engagement.

What is needed is a way to clear away the fog of the present debate and get back to basics—to focus on a realistic strategy which relies on both diplomacy and deterrence to protect and advance U.S. interests. For want of a better bumper sticker, I would call this the Morgenthau or Commonsense Strategy.

Far too many years ago, in a classroom far away at the University of Chicago, Hans Morgenthau observed to his students, of whom I was one, that good foreign policy generally is nothing but good

common sense, and good common sense generally makes good foreign policy. This is a good starting point for this discussion.

Policy must be consistent, and diplomacy ordered toward clearly understood objectives or national interests, and those interests must be pursued in a coherent fashion. The recent twists and turns over the linkage of most favored nation (MFN) status and human rights, over Taiwan, over protection of U.S. commercial interests, and over non-proliferation must be avoided. These twists and turns have failed to communicate a clear understanding of U.S. interests to the Chinese leadership. And they have risked misunderstanding and miscalculation in Beijing.

For example, the Clinton Administration's failure to respond forcefully when Beijing first staged military exercises against Taiwan in summer 1995 may have caused the Chinese leadership to believe that a similar U.S. response would greet renewed Chinese exercises at the time of Taiwan's presidential election. Those exercises led to the Taiwan Strait crisis of March 1996. That two U.S. aircraft carrier battlegroups were sent to the waters off Taiwan in March 1996 underscores the essential need for diplomacy to be backed by deterrence.

This will continue to be true. Deterrence must remain an essential component of any successful strategy. In Asia, this starts with the maintenance and strengthening of the U.S. alliance system, and it extends to the provision of missile defenses to protect U.S. forward-deployed forces as well as U.S. allies and friends.

Likewise, U.S. diplomacy must be used to advance the cause of human rights in China. As Speaker Gingrich has demonstrated, American leaders can have productive meetings with the Chinese leadership and still promote American values of freedom and human rights. Indeed, U.S. policies must aim at advancing freedom in China, and the United States must use every opportunity and means to do so.

In this regard, let me close with a few words on the upcoming MFN debate. As you may know, analysts at The Heritage Foundation consistently have supported the extension of MFN to China. As Heritage Foundation President Ed Feulner argued in an op-ed piece published in *The Washington Times* on April 14, U.S. commerce and a U.S. presence in China are instruments for expanding the frontiers of freedom for countless thousands of Chinese. By drawing them into the private sector and away from the state-controlled economy, American companies have lessened the degree of state intrusiveness in the day-to-day lives of their employees. Similarly, the growing number of American non-governmental organizations in China serves to attenuate state intrusiveness and expand areas of freedom.

As long as the door to change remains open in China, we should continue to expand the opening. We do this best by going through that door, not by closing it.

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