

Executive Memorandum

No. 907
December 2, 2003



Published by The Heritage Foundation

Needed: A Realistic Look at China Policy

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Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's December 9 visit to Washington is an opportunity to reassess the U.S.–China relationship and dispel myths that color the U.S. view of China's role in Asia. Secretary of State Colin Powell recently noted, "neither we nor the Chinese leadership anymore believe that there is anything inevitable about our relationship—either inevitably bad or inevitably good," but this candor was swamped by his assertion that "U.S. relations with China are the best they have been since President Nixon's first visit." Overexuberance regarding China is counter-productive.

In 2003, China has renewed threats of war against Taiwan, dragged its feet in the war on terrorism, lent moral support to North Korea's nuclear program, continued proliferating dangerous weapons, accelerated its military buildup, been increasingly aggressive in the South China Sea, and cultivated an ever-worsening human rights environment.

The Administration and Congress should reexamine their China policy and reconsider why they abandoned the candid, firm, and successful pre-September 11 approach for a policy of conciliation and compromise, which has yielded little beyond rhetoric.

China Myths. At the outset, it should be recognized that China:

- Has stepped up threats of war against democratic Taiwan,

- Has *not* been a significant "partner" in the war on terrorism,
- Was not helpful during the Iraq War,
- Fully supports North Korea in its tense nuclear negotiations with the U.S.,
- Continues to be the world's premier proliferator of technologies relating to weapons of mass destruction,
- Continues its pattern of severe human rights abuses, and
- Is likely to force another maritime confrontation with the U.S. in the South China Sea.

Taiwan. Last summer, China's relentless campaign to isolate Taiwan internationally barred Taiwan from participating in World Health Organization efforts against the SARS epidemic. As Taiwan moves to hold a referendum to demonstrate its people's indignation with China's action, China threatens war, declaring that the "referendum" is tantamount to "independence." Taiwan is a self-governing, democratic nation and has been a U.S. ally for over 50 years. Moreover, the U.S. has never accepted China's claims of sovereignty over Taiwan. China seeks to bring Taiwan

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This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
www.heritage.org/research/asiaandthepacific/em907.cfm

Produced by the Asian Studies Center

Published by The Heritage Foundation,
214 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Washington, D.C. 20002-4999
(202) 546-4400 heritage.org

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under its control to bolster the image of communism's supremacy over democracy and undermine the confidence of other Asian democracies in America's regional leadership.

Terror. Beijing has not helped significantly in the war on terrorism. It remains suspicious of the U.S. presence in China's Central Asian backyard and has warned the U.S. that "counter-terrorism should not be used to practice hegemony." Within days of the 9/11 attacks, China lobbied U.N. Security Council members to restrain the U.S. campaign against Afghanistan. Since then, U.S.–China cooperation in the war on terrorism has been one-way, with Americans supplying intelligence to China, but getting little in return from China. One U.S. commander complained about the lack of "detailed, tactical information of the type you need to take action... we need to get to that level with Beijing, and it's not quite there yet."

Iraq. On October 25, 2002, President Jiang Zemin told President George W. Bush that China would not obstruct U.S. military action against Iraq, and on November 8, China voted for Resolution 1441. But China has worked against subsequent U.S.-drafted resolutions. At one point, China's official press called U.S. actions in Iraq "nothing short of a war crime."

North Korea. Washington may still believe that Beijing could move Pyongyang in its direction, but Beijing has only tried to move the United States in North Korea's direction. In fact, Beijing wants the nuclear weapons issue to be "resolved peacefully," but is otherwise willing to live with it. China has consistently supported all North Korean demands in the "six-party talks," and China's official view is that "the American policy towards DPRK—this is the main problem we are facing," not North Korea.

Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The CIA has said that China's actions "continue to be inimical not just to our interests, but... stimulate secondary activities that only complicate the threat that we face, our forces face and our allies face, particularly in the Middle East," and "in some instances *these activities are condoned by the government.*"

Human Rights. In the 14 years since the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, every annual State Department human rights report has noted that the

Chinese "government's poor human rights record worsened" or "remained poor."

Maritime Incidents. In April 2001, Chinese jets downed a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft over international waters. Chinese forces continue to harass U.S. ships and aircraft in international waters and airspace. China will expand its maritime surveillance and control rights in its economic exclusion zone (EEZ) from 50 miles to 100 miles by the year 2010 and already claims a 200-mile EEZ that covers the entire Taiwan Strait. Given the Chinese government's inability to manage crises effectively and China's increasingly aggressive behavior, maritime incidents are potentially the most volatile issue in U.S.–China relations.

Military Expansion. Another serious concern is China's military build up. The Pentagon's annual report on China's military power estimates military spending at \$65 billion—the world's second largest military budget for the world's largest standing army—and annual spending could increase three-fold by 2020. China's military doctrine envisions the U.S. as its most likely adversary in any future war scenario, especially those involving Taiwan.

The Administration should:

- Reassess America's strategic interests in the Western Pacific with respect to China's role, as a friend, a neutral, or—as is so often the case—an adversary.
- Make democratic reform in China the top priority of America's China policy.
- Firmly adhere to America's 50-year-old policy of dismissing China's claims of sovereignty over Taiwan.
- Be publicly candid about China's behavior and avoid painting U.S.–China relations in undeservedly glowing terms such as "delighted" and "better than ever."
- Hold China to results-based standards rather than trade U.S. concessions for China's promises to improve its proliferation behavior, and aggressive military buildup.

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