

A Milestone as well as a Millstone: The Jiang-Clinton Summit

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During the recent Jiang-Clinton summit, symbolism was used by the Chinese president to a certain extent, which gained the attention of the Clinton administration but was largely ignored by the American public. Facing two different audiences, domestic and foreign, the Chinese goals of the summit were more symbolic and strategic, while the American goals were more specific. This article examines in detail the gains and losses of both countries in the summit, and also analyzes the impact of the summit on Asian security and American domestic politics. It concludes with predictions for the Sino-U.S. relationship in the future.

Keywords: China-U.S. relations; symbolism; Asian security; human rights; U.S. presidential elections

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PRC President Jiang Zemin's recent visit to the United States was the first Sino-U.S. summit since 1989, and was also the first since the Soviet Union's collapse. The sense that China has supplanted Russia as America's prime concern dominated the meetings, in ways both practical and symbolic. The Chinese state visit was also the first Chinese presidential visit after the death of Deng Xiaoping, the paramount Chinese leader who had controlled China for the past two decades. The summit was very significant for both China and the United States, but whether it was "a milestone or a millstone"—to use the words of White House National Security Advisor Sandy Berger—requires careful and comprehensive analysis.

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In the following, the author will discuss Jiang's use of symbolism during the summit for short-term diplomatic gains, obstacles for the two sides' medium to long-term relationship, and the two different audiences that each leader faces. The author will then discuss what will be the next possible moves on each side; while recognizing tremendous opportunities, this paper's conclusion is less optimistic.

Symbolism

The "end of ideology"¹ has not automatically eliminated the use of symbolism in the diplomatic arena. On the contrary, symbolism displayed its important diplomatic value during President Jiang's recent visit to the United States.

Due to recent developments in trade and economic cooperation between China and the American Midwest, particularly in rising grain sales to China, American negotiators urged Jiang to visit Chicago.² However, Jiang turned down that option, choosing instead to visit several sites of symbolic significance, from Pearl Harbor to colonial Williamsburg to Philadelphia.

While PRC Defense Minister Chi Haotian used a trip to Washington in early 1997 to publicly attack Japan and threaten Taiwan, Jiang's visit to Pearl Harbor was aimed at reminding Americans of who their "friends" and "foes" were. In his speech at a luncheon given by Honolulu Mayor Jeremy Harris, Jiang commented, "The Chinese and American peoples once fought shoulder to shoulder against fascist aggression and safeguarded world peace together," a statement obviously aimed at the Clinton administration and the American people. The visit to Williamsburg, on the other hand, was intended to remind Americans of the short history of "universal human rights" in Western civilization, while repeated recitations of President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address reminded Americans of the emancipation of the slaves, in comparison to China's relationship with Tibet, which was a feudal state before the early 1950s. Jiang's visit to Philadelphia after the summit can be seen as a review of the evolution of American democracy, as the U.S. constitution ratified there had "three great compromises," including the Three-Fifths Compromise, which treated each slave as three-fifths of a vote.

¹See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

²Seth Faison, "In Chinese Politics, Too, All Photo Ops Are Local," *New York Times*, October 28, 1997, 14.

Among the concerns of the Chinese guests were three issues: first, that expanding military ties between the United States and Japan would affect China's future dealings with Taiwan; second, that U.S. attacks on China's human rights record would continue; and third, that calls for the independence of Tibet would continue. The Chinese guests carefully crafted their itinerary to the White House by stopping first at the American historical sites mentioned above, where Jiang could make symbolic gestures and speeches to firmly but diplomatically raise the Chinese concerns.

President Bill Clinton received the message; in his welcome speech at the arrival ceremony at the White House South Lawn, Clinton began by noting Jiang's visit to Pearl Harbor, calling Pearl Harbor a symbol of Sino-U.S. cooperation. He also stated, "Now on the verge of a new century, our two great nations must join our strength again."³ On various occasions, Clinton also reassured the Chinese guests that the revised U.S.-Japan defense cooperation guidelines recently adopted would not be directed at China, and he would not interfere with China's domestic affairs. In contrast to his policy in 1996, which was an election year, Clinton indicated that he would leave the Chinese to deal with cross-Strait relations. Before the welcome speech, Clinton also initiated an informal session with Jiang, moving the question of human rights there as a "long, almost philosophical" discussion. According to a senior administration official, the question of human rights was only "raised" but not discussed during the actual summit on October 29.⁴

Jiang also used his visit as a prolonged photo opportunity to show that the Chinese were not strange aliens, but were as human and business-oriented as Americans. On the other hand, he also exploited these sessions to demonstrate that the United States, the only remaining superpower which had tried to "contain" China since 1989, was treating him respectfully. The implicit message was that it was his strength and charisma which had changed Americans' opinions.

Moreover, in preparations for the visit, Chinese delegates were extremely particular about details regarding protocol and symbols. As Deng Xiaoping's state visit to the United States in 1979 had been a sweeping success, Jiang needed to emerge from Deng's shadow and portray himself as not only a national leader but also an international figure. For instance, Chinese

³"Clinton Epitomizes Pearl Harbor for Sino-U.S. Ties," *Japan Economic Newswire*, October 29, 1997.

⁴"The White House: Background Press Briefing by Senior Administration," *Presswire*, October 31, 1997.

negotiators declined an offer to erect an enormous tent outside for the state dinner, but requested to move the affair into the East Room of the White House, where it would look more formal and elegant.

In another maneuver, Jiang sent greetings to the Japanese emperor while flying over Japan on his way to Hawaii. In his message, Jiang "expressed respect for Japan and the Japanese people," as well as "hopes for the prosperity of Japan, peace for the Japanese people, and the health of the emperor."⁵ The message symbolized the current friendly relationship with Japan. Furthermore, during his visit Jiang announced that Premier Li Peng would visit Japan and Russian President Boris Yeltsin would visit China, both events taking place in the following month. These maneuvers were intended to show that China was now a "world player" that could influence the global balance of power should the United States be uncooperative. China has many options in these strategic partnerships: Russia can still be seen as a potential rival to the United States in strategic configurations of global power, while Japan has been a tough economic rival of the United States.

Other symbolic accomplishments included an agreement on setting up a "hot line" between the two leaders, as it was between the United States and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War as well as with other major Western powers. Moreover, Clinton accepted an invitation to visit China in 1998. Through this last group of acts, both China and the United States created an impression of responsible and constructive partners working to better their future relationship and to improve security and prosperity in the world. China's stake in such symbolism can be seen to be slightly higher than the United States', as it wants to be treated as an equal and a "strategic partner."

However, the exchange on human rights at the joint news conference after the summit was reminiscent of the 1959 "kitchen debate" in Moscow between then-Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. Such a symbolic debate in front of the American audience showed that the American president, both with the Soviets and now the Chinese, had to make it clear to the American people that he was tough and hard-nosed, especially on human rights issues. One could also draw the same conclusion for Jiang's effect on his Chinese audience. With this in mind, what will be the real impact of the summit on the future relationship between China and the United States?

⁵"Jiang Sent Emperor Message While Overflying Japan," *Japan Economic Newswire*, October 29, 1997.

Both Sides' Respective Goals: Two Different Audiences

In order to assess the current status and future development of the Sino-U.S. relationship, we should first ask what Clinton and Jiang set out to accomplish in the summit. In answering this question, we should recognize that each leader faced two different audiences: domestic and foreign.

China's goals fall into three categories: symbolic, strategic, and economic. Symbolically, and politically as well, Jiang wanted to consolidate his newly-won stature as a strong national leader, and create an image of himself as an equal among world leaders. He also wished to emerge from the shadow of Deng Xiaoping and show people, American and Chinese alike, that he could do better and more than the late Chinese paramount leader: for example, his knowledge of American history, and his ability to communicate directly with Americans in their own language, and even recite President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Equally important, Jiang took American protests in stride, showing that he was an open-minded leader. Other symbolic goals included personal relations with Clinton, as Jiang's briefers spent a lot of time trying to think of how he could establish a rapport with Clinton. At the same time, Clinton's aides were also scrambling for a way to develop rapport, and it was here that they "hit on the idea of setting up an informal meeting . . . when Mr. Jiang first arrived in Washington," according to the *New York Times*.⁶

China's strategic goals for the summit included: (1) reviving the Sino-U.S. relationship, which had gone sour after 1989, and further deteriorated to a historic low during Taiwan's and U.S. presidential elections in 1996; (2) reconfirming U.S. policy toward Taiwan in favor of the mainland; and (3) halting U.S. attempt at getting Japan involved in China's cross-Strait relations. The main economic goal was to ensure the softening of the U.S. position on China's bid to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), and if possible, win the U.S. support for its membership. Both the Chinese delegation's symbolic and economic goals were targeted to win further support from Jiang's domestic audience at home. It should be noted that in China, a small number of government officials in the high and middle ranks carry proportionately more weight in the targeted Chinese audience.

On the other hand, U.S. domestic critics of Clinton were watching his

⁶James Bennet, "Between Wary Presidents, Signs of Bonding," *New York Times*, October 30, 1997, 1.

every move, ready to accuse him of kowtowing to the Chinese guest, puffing him up in the eyes of his own people, and bestowing legitimacy on the regime he headed.⁷ In his cautious attempt to lower American expectations by saying "holding the summit is itself a success," Clinton set up the following goals in strategic as well as economic areas:

The United States' general strategic goal in the summit was to welcome China back to the international system and make it adopt the "international rules of the game," i.e., begin a process of partnership-building whereby China will play the "universal" rules of the game accepted among nations. The United States also needs China's cooperation in solving crises on the Korean Peninsula and in Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia. If China refuses to comply, the United States hopes that China at least will not be a disturbance in East Asia, or another rival at the strategic level. In the words of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the summit grew out of a calculated, ambitious agenda to create, during Clinton's second term of office, "a set of partnerships where there is some assistance to the sole remaining superpower in dealing with problems around the world."⁸

The specific strategic goal of the United States in the summit was to stop China's sales of weapons of mass destruction to Iran and transfers of nuclear technology to Pakistan, in the hopes of preventing further proliferation of these weapons or technology to these two as well as other countries in the future. As far as the U.S. Congress is concerned, reaching this goal is a prerequisite for U.S. sales of nuclear technology and/or U.S. investment in China's lucrative energy industry. The Chinese market for civilian nuclear power plants, as large as US\$60 billion, has been extremely attractive to American corporations. But American corporations are not allowed to invest until Clinton lifts a twelve-year ban on the sale of American nuclear technology to China. The U.S. Congress will veto Clinton's move unless he can assure it that China complies with the U.S. requirements of nonproliferation. This was thus a major economic goal of the summit, in addition to urging further opening of the Chinese market to U.S. firms.

On the other hand, human rights per se were not among Clinton's goals at the summit, but he had to address them, sometimes in front of the American public. Clinton's Voice of America speech, broadcast mainly to a foreign

⁷Ted Plafker, "Staid Coverage Leaves Home Audience Less Than Thrilled," *South China Morning Post*, October 31, 1997, 2.

⁸Jim Hoagland, "A Foreign Policy That Asks, 'Can't We All Just Get Along?'" *Washington Post*, October 30, 1997, A23.

audience, emphasized the accomplishments of the PRC. However, a large portion of his speech to the U.S. audience prior to Jiang's visit was devoted to human rights and other related issues, as Clinton understood that the post-Cold War audience in the United States was ultimately preoccupied with issues such as human rights, religious freedom, and environmental protection. Moreover, in the midst of ongoing congressional hearings on a campaign fund-raising scandal, Clinton did not waste time in asking Jiang specifically about charges that the Chinese government tried to influence U.S. elections in 1996 by making illegal campaign contributions. It is no surprise that the White House reported loudly that the Chinese president said China was not involved, but would cooperate with any U.S. investigation on the matter. Defending human rights and questioning the "alleged China-backed" campaign funds hence served as minor symbolic goals for Clinton.

In summation, China's goals were to (1) enhance Jiang's stature both in the eyes of his domestic audience and on the international center stage; (2) prevent the United States from getting too close with Taiwan and Japan; and (3) gain support from the United States for its bid to join the WTO. The U.S. goals were to (1) start a process whereby China will adopt the international rules of the game; (2) prevent China from causing the proliferation of dangerous weapons; and (3) create more economic opportunities for U.S. businesses in the PRC.

Substantial Progress: The "Win, Win, Win" Agreement

At the news conference after the summit, Clinton claimed that the agreement reached between the two countries would serve the United States' national security (the first "win"), as well as its environmental and economic interests (the second and third "wins").

On the strategic level, Clinton gained China's agreement in taking further measures to strengthen dual-use export controls over nuclear-related technology. As a result, the United States can expect annual contracts totaling US\$1.6 billion for the construction of atomic energy plants in China, resulting in 25,000 jobs for Americans.⁹ This is a substantial economic gain for the United States, together with the US\$3 billion Boeing deal. The results

⁹U.S. Atomic Industry Applauds China Agreement," Deutsche Presse-Agentur, October 30, 1997.

were promptly praised by Senator Frank Murkowski, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Both countries also agreed to take steps in "promoting U.S.-China relations and strengthening their cooperation in international affairs," including "discussion on the structure and functions of an NGO forum on human rights."

The first substantial gain for the Chinese is that they managed to obtain Clinton's declaration that the alliance between the United States and Japan was not aimed at interfering China's internal affairs. Second, the Chinese media portrayed Jiang's visit as a great success of smiles, handshakes, ceremonies, dinners, and applause. Such symbolic maneuvers were very significant for the Chinese delegation.

For those in China who only watch state television and read the state newspapers, U.S. leaders were seen as warm, courteous, and friendly to Jiang. Others in China could feel proud that their president stood up and defended their national interests in front of the only remaining superpower. By presenting himself as unyielding, especially in warning the United States not to meddle in China's internal affairs, Jiang was presented as a patriotic Chinese refusing to bow to Western demands.

The Losses

The United States offered no substantial promises to "help" China become a member of the WTO by the end of 1998. Chinese officials pointed out that the United States made a similar agreement with Russia for its entry into the trade organization. Clinton stated that he would do "everything possible" to bring China into the organization, but would not ask the organization to bend its rules on tariffs and trade barriers to ease China's entry. This was a major disappointment for Chinese leaders, who had hoped that joining the WTO would minimize obstacles in its expansion of foreign trade worldwide. Joining the WTO would also be of symbolic significance for the Chinese, who do not want to be constrained and possibly humiliated by the U.S. annual review of its most-favored-nation (MFN) trading status.

However, while the United States could be accused of unfairly linking China's accession to the WTO with other political issues, China may have to take the responsibility for its own economic problems at home. Serious problems and slow economic reform in the state-owned sector have hindered China's leaders from accelerating the opening of the Chinese market, and the current economic and currency crisis unfolding in Asia may further slow re-

form of state-owned enterprises. After his trip to China in October, U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin reported to Clinton that Jiang was considering the political impact of joining the WTO, as China's leaders were aware that opening markets too fast could worsen the pain. According to Rubin, Jiang was "quite realistic about the challenges of making this work."¹⁰

On the other hand, China has enjoyed the major benefits of joining the WTO, such as low tariffs for exports to the United States, without having to bear any of the responsibilities of being a member state. Foreign investors poured US\$42 billion into China in 1996, or roughly 40 percent of total global investment in developing nations. China enjoys foreign currency reserves of an astounding US\$130 billion, with a low inflation rate and a high growth rate in recent years. But to a significant extent, the continuing expansion of China's foreign market depends on the MFN status granted annually by the U.S. Congress. Jiang has thus complained about "unfriendly elements" in the U.S. Congress, and has continued to use big U.S. companies to balance "noises" from the U.S. legislature. In this sense, the "loss" for China in the recent summit might be political, but not necessarily economic.

China may not have replaced the former Soviet Union in all respects as an "Evil Empire," but in the collective view of the U.S. media, it is far from escaping the shadow of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown on student demonstrators. This can be seen as the second major unaccomplished political goal of the Chinese guests. China has yet to make any progress in rehabilitating its image since 1989. For the American public, Jiang's visit highlighted and intensified the "wrong side of history." If China's image is not restored in the eyes of U.S. voters, popularly elected politicians in the United States will have limits in improving the bilateral relationship.

During the summit, the Chinese guests were very stubborn in defending China's record of human rights, as evident in their speeches, news conferences, and interviews. The American media searched for any possible clue or hint of recalcitrance in Jiang's speeches, so eagerly that they wishfully thought that Jiang's Harvard speech implied that the Chinese government made mistakes in handling the student demonstrations in 1989, an interpretation that Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen has firmly and categorically denied. For U.S. leaders, especially Democrats, who depend on international humanitarianism as a major election weapon and who have been supported by idealist voters, this was a disappointment.

¹⁰Steven Erlanger and David E. Sanger, "U.S. Lowers Goals on China After Glitches in Early Talks," *New York Times*, October 27, 1997, 1.

China was also very tough on its position toward Tibet. Qian told the American media during Jiang's visit that "Tibet is a part of China no matter what happens there and whatever happens in Beijing or any other city in China; that is also an internal affair. Other countries may disagree but they cannot interfere."¹¹ As the *New York Times* pointed out, the U.S. emphasis on rights seemed merely to harden the Chinese guests,¹² as Jiang used the opportunity to show his Chinese audience that "China can say no."

Another significant setback for the Clinton administration was that it had to constantly defend every move in its general policy toward China. Secretary of State Albright has stated, "We cannot have our relationship with China held hostage to any one single issue. . . . I think it's absolutely essential that the American people understand the importance of pursuing a broad and multi-faceted relationship with China."¹³ Nevertheless, the Clinton administration has met with only stubborn Chinese replies on human rights, an issue that may rally U.S. voters. In another example, democrats in Hong Kong expressed disappointment that the U.S. president failed to defend the territory's democracy in his talks with the PRC president.¹⁴ The U.S. Democrats have thus opened themselves to future attacks on these and similar issues.

Real and Potential Obstacles

For the Chinese audience, Jiang's state visit can be interpreted as the United States changing its "containment" policy toward China, and establishing "friendly" relations at the strategic level, i.e., easing Chinese worries about Japan and Taiwan, as well as from an economic perspective, i.e., lifting ban on technology exports to China.

Although the Chinese media reported only on the smiles of U.S. hosts, hence creating a welcoming and understanding image of Americans, the real obstacle in the bilateral relationship might be the U.S. "public mood," as intensified by media coverage and utilized by the politicians. The U.S. media has tended to dramatize news reports to promote sales, which is commonly

¹¹Agence France-Presse, October 30, 1997.

¹²Seth Faison, "American Urging on Rights Seems Merely to Harden Jiang," *New York Times News Service*, November 2, 1997 (Dow-Jones News/Retrieval: NYTM973060003).

¹³John M. Broder, "Clinton's Goal: Inching Toward a Little Rapport and Some Candid Talk," *New York Times*, October 29, 1997, 18.

¹⁴"U.S.-China Summit Draws Mixed Reaction in Hong Kong," *Dow Jones International News*, October 30, 1997 (Dow Jones News/Retrieval: DJI9730307805).

referred to as "yellow journalism." Politicians have subsequently tended to follow the mood of the public during election years in order to win more votes.

A negative collective American view of China has been in place since the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989. It further deteriorated during Taiwan's and American presidential elections in 1996, and was consolidated by negative media coverage of the Jiang-Clinton summit. As the Chinese president observed during his trip, "There are still some man-made obstacles."

As in the saying that "politics makes strange bedfellows,"¹⁵ the Jiang-Clinton summit rallied all kinds of American lobbyists against China's policies: the AFL-CIO railed against prison labor; the Sierra Club protested China's pollution problems; and the Family Research Council, Catholic Alliance, and Christian Coalition spoke out against religious persecution. As the *New York Times* observed, "There are few issues in America today that unite the likes of Richard Gere [a left-wing film actor] and Oliver L. North [a right-wing National Security Council aide formerly working for the Reagan administration who was involved in the Iran-Contra affair]."¹⁶ The *Financial Times* also observed that there was "a growing anger in the United States at China's abuses of human rights."¹⁷ The Family Research Council called Jiang's visit a "kowtow summit" with the Chinese, and vowed to oppose China. In a Gallup poll taken by CNN and *USA Today* just hours before Jiang's arrival, 36 percent said they regarded China as unfriendly or an outright enemy. In 1983, the figure was 21 percent. A U.S. correspondent for the *China Times*, a Taiwan newspaper, further observed, "What is no less interesting is my impression that there may be more Americans than Chinese-Americans opposed to his visit because of the human rights issue."¹⁸ While the summit provided a chance for many American interest groups to dignify their claims against their domestic opponents, the American "public mood" was against China as well.

Anthony Downs has discovered that U.S. voters do not invest much in collecting political information, for time is finite and resources are scarce.¹⁹

¹⁵See Jason F. Shogren, ed., *The Political Economy of Government Regulation* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989).

¹⁶Steven Lee Myers, "Soapbox is Crowded, and Lather is Richer," *New York Times*, October 28, 1997, 14.

¹⁷"The China Challenge," *Financial Times*, October 28, 1997, 27.

¹⁸Francis Clines, "Among Chinese-Americans, Differing Views on Summit," *New York Times*, October 29, 1997, 18.

¹⁹See Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 207-74.

Two important implications derived from this finding are that the collective view of U.S. voters is hard to change, but that it may be changed by "an information jam," which could take place in two instances. First, politicians in need of votes or businesses in need of capital could inundate the public consciousness with information until the social sentiment they desire is established. Second, a dramatic external shock, "jammed" with information of all its aspects, could change public views in a short period of time. The 1989 Tiananmen demonstration is a valid example of the latter instance.

It is not difficult to imagine the tremendous uncertainty politicians and businesses face and the enormous amount of resources they invest in order to remold public sentiments. Neither is it difficult to assume that politicians will choose a cost-efficient way to rally voters. Although we could expect a leader with the foresight to transcend short-term gains, we need to understand that politicians are constantly competing with each other for extra support. In this sense, they tend to give priority to winning a short-term victory with minimum resources. For instance, if one politician does not utilize the public mood, hundreds of others would mobilize the social resources currently available to outdo him or her. This is especially so in a direct democracy like the United States, where competition is open and information is readily "jammed."

The analysis above is aimed at generating the following view: the overwhelming negative media coverage of Jiang's visit in the United States has further reinforced the current American understanding or misunderstanding of China that has taken shape since 1989. Politicians thus would have to invest huge amounts of resources in order to remold the public mood toward China.

More importantly, as the presidential election approaches, politicians will tend to exploit the public image of an unfriendly country to "rally [the voters] around the flag."²⁰ Hence, ideologically-oriented policies might be adopted, which could sacrifice the hard-earned strategic relationship between the two major powers. Presidential candidates would campaign for patriotism—a no-lose situation—by vehemently criticizing an international enemy. China, the major nondemocratic country in the post-Cold War order, remains an easy target.

In the medium term, the Sino-U.S. relationship may deteriorate during the next American presidential election year in 2000. At a White House background briefing, China scholar Harry Harding criticized the Clinton ad-

²⁰See Xiaobo Hu and John P. Boardman, "The Relationship among Washington, Beijing, and Taipei in the Post-Cold War Era: A Formal Modeling" (Manuscript, 1997).

ministration for being late to inform the American public of China's recent political progress. If American politicians start investing in restoring China's public image, and the 1998 Jiang-Clinton summit in Beijing has a positive impact on the American public, the long-term outlook of the Sino-U.S. relationship could be brighter. However, a lot of work must be done to realize this, as politicians, both Republican and Democratic alike, have already split on the China issue.

A Republican Dilemma; A Democratic Risk

During the Cold War, most elements of American society were on the same side; however, in the case of China, they are not now. American businesses have pushed for freer trade, trade unionists have complained about unfair competition from cheap goods, and congressional activists and religious leaders have stressed human rights. The treatment that Jiang received in New York reflects the split U.S. view: as the *Washington Post* noted, "Captains of industry [rolled] out the red carpet while city and state officials [stayed] away."²¹ This represents a major political dilemma for Republicans and Democrats.

Republicans are generally seen as realists in handling foreign affairs, and a majority of them has always supported China. They played the "China card" against the former Soviet Union, and recognize very well its strategic importance in the Asia-Pacific region. Republicans have also represented primary U.S. multinational business interests. However, changes in the current political culture have presented them with a serious dilemma. On the one hand, after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the United States regards China as the major remaining enemy. On the other hand, Clinton, who initiated the current normalization of the Sino-U.S. relationship, is a Democrat, and has effectively taken away the international strategic weapon of the prudent Republicans. As an opposition party, the Republicans need to distinguish themselves from the Democrats and oppose their policies. Bashing China, however, is inconsistent with Republicans' longstanding realist foreign policy. As paradoxical as it may seem, China-Clinton's biggest foreign policy headache—also represents yet another opportunity for him to weaken and out-

²¹John Pomfret, "Jiang's New York Reception Reflects Split U.S. View," *Washington Post*, November 1, 1997, A7.

maneuver his opponents in Congress and the Republican Party. Currently, Republicans are so deeply divided over how to deal with the Chinese that they cannot mount any coherent, effective opposition to Clinton's policies.

The corporate, pro-business wing in the Republican Party has been its bedrock of support for more than a century. While it has vigorously promoted American commercial interests in China, other key groups within the GOP have seized upon China as an issue that challenges their deepest values. For instance, the Christian Coalition and other religious activists have demanded the United States to wage a war against religious persecution in China; neo-conservatives want the United States to promote freedom and opposing communism as it did against the former Soviet Union, viewing China as a test case for U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era.

Overall, Republican leaders appeared to maintain their calm in handling Jiang's visit. House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a Republican representative, apparently welcomed the Chinese guests and his criticisms were deemed to be "far less harsh." He noted that China was moving toward democracy and should not be viewed in the same way the United States had once seen the former Soviet Union.²² However, conservative newspapers, as natural allies of the Republicans, summoned a nationwide denunciation of China's human rights record.

For Democrats, on the other hand, a too-friendly relationship with China may backfire and result in the loss of many voters on the issue. Human rights groups, environmental groups, and unionists have traditionally supported the Democrats' foreign policy; if Clinton "smiles" too much for the Chinese guests, he may "cry" when he turns back to the American public. In this sense, Jiang's visit can be seen to have also divided many Democrats. For instance, Senator Dianne Feinstein and Representative Nancy Pelosi, both Democrats from California, have promoted different policies toward China. As Feinstein's husband has invested tens of millions of dollars in China on behalf of his clients, she has promoted friendly U.S.-China ties, while Pelosi believes that China should be deprived of its preferential trade benefits until it no longer tortures political prisoners, abuses prison labor, forces women to have abortions, and restricts freedom of speech and religion. The Clinton administration is thus walking on a tightrope.

²²Alison Mitchell, "China's Leader Is Rebuked by American Legislators," *New York Times*, October 31, 1997, 8; and Jim Mann, "China's President Jiang Wins Gingrich's Vote," *Los Angeles Times*, October 31, 1997, A1.

Asian Security

South Korea was among the first group of Asian countries to praise the U.S.-China summit, commenting that "Jiang's visit will serve to further develop U.S.-China relations and contribute to peace and stability on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia."²³ A leading Malaysian daily *Sin Chew Jit Poh* said in an editorial that the summit "made breakthroughs and reaped rich fruits." *The Australian*, the largest national newspaper in the country, regarded the summit as "historic," and laying a "solid groundwork for a turnaround in the U.S.-China" relationship. Moreover, unlike his supporters in the United States, the Dalai Lama was positive about the summit; Tempa Tsering, chief spokesman for the Dalai Lama, noted, "Once you bring [China] back to the community of nations, you [can] expect [it] to act according to international standards."²⁴

A smooth summit between the United States and China has served as a stabilizing factor in Asian security; as the Chinese authorities secure their power and bilateral economic relations are strengthened, the two countries, especially China, will have a great interest and stake in the status quo.

Prior to the summit, Taiwan stated that it welcomed the summit if the talks could promote regional peace and stability. However, it was noted that "the United States should not hurt Taiwan's interests in the talk. U.S.-China and U.S.-Taiwan ties should develop in parallel."²⁵ Taiwan has also preferred the status quo, whereby the ruling party gains a middle ground between independence and unification. It is also in the interest of the United States to maintain the status quo, whereby it can balance China and Taiwan against each other. Moreover, Taiwan may have reasons to be more optimistic about its estranged relationship with the mainland. While Jiang reiterated his "eight-point" proposal to Taiwan during his U.S. trip, he repeatedly emphasized that as long as Taiwan agrees to the "one China" principle, "everything else is open for discussion." There are also signs that cross-Strait relationship will warm up next year; different organizations, both governmental and nongovernmental, on the two sides are in contact with each other to engage in dialogues and symposiums.

²³"South Korea Praises U.S.-China Summit," *The Korea Herald*, October 31, 1997 (Dow Jones News/Retrieval: KHER9730300209).

²⁴"Dalai Lama's Spokesman Calls U.S.-China Summit Helpful," *Dow Jones News Service*, October 31, 1997.

²⁵"U.S. Envoy Arrives to Brief Taiwan on Clinton-Jiang Talks," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, November 1, 1997.

Besides North Korea's hard line, which warns "not to expect any change from [it],"²⁶ the Japanese government was the only one that was displeased with Jiang's visit to the United States, especially Pearl Harbor. However, it would be foolish to believe that the United States will abandon Japan for China, or vice versa.

A Milestone and a Millstone: Predictions

Jiang may have overstated his claim when he pronounced on November 2 that his visit "achieved the goal of enhancing new understanding, broadening common ground, developing cooperation, and building a future together, thus bringing China-U.S. relations into a new historical stage of development."²⁷ If the Chinese leaders' main objective was to use the trip to reverse U.S. perceptions of China or its government, the trip should be considered a failure. Thus, the summit may have consolidated the current "misunderstandings," which will need a longer time to be restored.

Chinese official reports have not only covered the "smiles," but also exaggerated the warm receptions that Jiang received from the United States. The Chinese president may have gained prestige in the eyes of those Chinese who cared about the trip, but definitely lost ground by creating an unrealistic picture of the U.S. response to his delegation's visit for the Chinese public.

Nevertheless, history does not end here. The summit is a milestone, if and only if the leaders and governments on both sides continue to nourish "constructive engagement," and firmly stick to the long-term strategic interests of the two countries: peace and stability in the post-Cold War order. As the Chinese economy continues to grow, and American investments in China increase, both the U.S. government and a growing number of American beneficiaries of U.S. investment in China are expected to gather a stronger voice for supporting a better relationship between the two countries. This is something on which Jiang and Clinton are trying to concentrate their efforts, but it may take longer than we expect.

The summit could be a millstone, if public sentiments in the United States remain unchanged and/or continue to be exploited by vote-seeking politicians and "yellow journalism." If either the U.S. or Chinese economy

²⁶"North Korea's Hard-Line Policies to Stay," *New York Times*, October 30, 1997, 16.

²⁷Seth Faison, "U.S. Trip Is Everything Jiang Expected," *New York Times*, November 3, 1997, 1.

slows down, the bilateral relationship may face tougher challenges: American unionists would complain about high unemployment, while American businesses would complain about the difficulties in penetrating the Chinese market, no matter how desirable it is for the Chinese to maintain a "constructive engagement." In that case, another external shock may be necessary in order to improve both sides' image of each other.

Several new developments emerged during the summit, which may have significant impact on the future relationship between the two countries. First, it is clear that ideology as a weapon in the international arena is not obsolete, but has taken on a new form in the human rights dispute. However it develops, ideology will be used again in the next U.S. presidential election, with China as a likely and convenient victim.²⁸ Second, although there have been "deep and strong disagreements" on human rights and other ideological issues, business is business. Sino-U.S. trade and economic cooperation has been consolidated and expanded, and as long as the two countries agree upon international security issues, they will need access to each other's markets.

Putting these two points together, we may expect a continuing fight over "linkage politics" versus "delinkage politics" in the United States, which may shape its cyclical relationship with China. This pattern would go along with the U.S. electoral cycle, with linkage politics dominant during the election years.

Third, "noises" of dissent picked up by the "sharp ears" of the Chinese president may send another shock wave through the Chinese leadership. Many years ago, Chinese leaders were caught off-guard when they noticed the mass exodus of Hong Kong people upon learning that China would reclaim sovereignty of the territory. The Chinese leadership may move to either tighten up its domestic security or initiate a more thorough political reform, or both. It is in China's interests to maintain a regular dialogue with the United States. With Clinton's pending visit to China in 1998, China needs a peaceful environment, capital, and technology to resolve its growing economic problems. Moreover, Chinese leaders will likely return to the United States in the future. It might be more probable that China will tighten up its security in Tibet and Xinjiang, but promote more reforms in the areas of representation and accountability. Although China should have confidence that it will attain MFN status from the United States every year, uncertainties

²⁸See note 20 above.

may drive its leaders to (1) consolidate its relationship with big companies and/or (2) open up its market quickly for large U.S. investments, two strong areas which China can comfortably offer at the present time.

Appendix

U.S. Concerns over China's Nuclear Trafficking

The following is a list of Chinese sales discovered by the United States:

February 1996: It was discovered that China had sold 5,000 ring magnets to Pakistan for use in Pakistan's secret uranium enrichment facility.

May 1997: The U.S. State Department cited seven Chinese entities exporting chemical weapons technology to Iran.

June 1997: *Time* magazine reported that China had not only transferred nuclear-capable missiles to Pakistan but was also helping Pakistan build missiles of its own.

July 1997: The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency identified China as being "the most significant supplier of weapons of mass destruction-related (WMD) goods and technology to foreign countries."

August 1997: Israeli intelligence reports confirmed that China is supplying long-range nuclear missile technologies to Iran.

September 1997: The U.S. Navy reported that China is the most active supplier of Iran's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons programs.

