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An Uncertain Future: The Politics of U.S.-China Military Relations—From Nixon, to George W. Bush, and Beyond

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Since its formal inception in 1980, the U.S.-China military relationship has gone through a number of twists and turns. During much of the 1980s, the relationship was close and amicable, but military ties became strained in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Incident. For the rest of the 1990s, military relations developed in fits and starts, as the United States and China waged political battles over human rights, trade, and nonproliferation issues. Moreover, military relations suffered as a result of a number of crises, including the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis and the accidental U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999. Despite these setbacks, the Clinton administration strove to carry out a consistent and efficient military relationship with China, which often evoked a torrent of criticism. For its part, since 2001, the George W. Bush administration has carried out a noticeably less enthusiastic military relationship with China, mainly because of bureaucratic inefficiency and policy battles between the State Department and the Pentagon. The United States and China will have to overcome a number of deep-seated differences regard-

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ing the utility and goals of the military relationship, as well as differing strategic aims for East Asia, if military relations are to withstand future crises.

KEYWORDS: **U.S.-China relations; U.S. military; PLA; military exchanges.**

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Since its official inception in 1980, the U.S.-China military relationship has undergone a number of twists and turns that have rendered futile the task of accurately predicting its development. Indeed, despite the strategic debates about the desirability of U.S.-China military relations that occurred in the United States during the 1980s, many observers were surprised that ties suffered so drastically after June 4, 1989. Four long years passed before the relationship re-emerged, and even then, the pall that was cast by the Tiananmen (天安門) killings guaranteed that the spirit of cooperation that characterized military relations during the Reagan years was gone for the foreseeable future.

For the rest of the 1990s, U.S.-China military relations developed in fits and starts, with periods of engagement between the two militaries punctuated by the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, the 1999 Belgrade bombing, and the April 2001 EP-3 incident. In fact, throughout the 1990s, military relations between the United States and China seemed destined for trouble.

Since 2003, however, the United States and China have managed to get the military relationship back on track—if slowly and unenthusiastically, particularly on the U.S. side. Recent trips to China by Joint Chiefs Chairman General Richard Myers and Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, as well as a visit to the United States by Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) Cao Gangchuan (中央軍委副主席曹剛川), are signs of a rehabilitation of the relationship. Yet the pace of military relations between the United States and China remains halting, and there is skepticism regarding the future durability of U.S.-China military relations. As September 11—which many, but not all,[1] viewed as a catalyst of U.S.-

[1]For example, David Shambaugh believes that the relationship improved before, and for

China cooperation—recedes farther into history, will the military relationship between the two countries be able to withstand future crises? Or, will it continue to bear the brunt of post-crisis punitive measures taken by one, or both, sides? This article will trace the trajectory of U.S.-China military relations over time and assess whether major factors/events such as the shared Soviet threat, Tiananmen, the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, and September 11 (to name a few) are principal drivers in the relationship. It will seek to examine the principles behind military relations during various periods in the relationship, with a discussion of both the political debates in the United States on the subject and the purpose of military relations as enunciated by U.S. officials. Accordingly, the article will consist of six sections, each describing a particular phase in the U.S.-China military relationship, and will conclude by addressing the durability of the relationship and the prospects for the future development of U.S.-China military relations.

If the past is any guide, one can surmise that the outlook for U.S.-China military relations is neither hopelessly dismal nor positively rosy. To be sure, there are a number of obstacles on the horizon. As this article hopes to show, however, both sides need to continue to recognize that the military relationship is but one component of a larger and more complex U.S.-China bilateral relationship, and that the promotion of the former should not come at the expense of the latter. For the time being, this may be the best prescription for a sound U.S.-China military relationship.

Setting the Stage: 1972-78

The U.S.-China military relationship has its origins in the Nixon-Kissinger move to establish relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Beginning in the late 1960s, both Washington and Beijing ex-

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other reasons than, September 11. See David Shambaugh, "Sino-American Relations since September 11: Can the New Stability Last?" *Current History* 101, no. 656 (September 2002): 243-49.

pressed interest in forming an alignment to counterbalance the threat from Moscow. After extending some preliminary "feelers,"[2] concrete steps were taken to hasten the rapprochement, beginning with Kissinger's secret trips to China in 1971. During both of his trips, Kissinger shared intelligence with the Chinese regarding Soviet troop movements along China's northern border. The sharing of intelligence continued well after Nixon's trip to China in February 1972.[3]

The Nixon breakthrough set the stage for a strategic relationship that would slowly blossom over the remainder of the decade. Export controls were gradually relaxed to allow the transfer of civilian technology to China, and in 1975, during his trip to China, President Gerald Ford gave his authorization for a US$200 million deal in which China would buy Spey jet engines from Britain's Rolls Royce.[4] These engines were used in Britain's F-4 Phantom jets, and China clearly desired to place them in their own fighter-bombers. By giving his approval for the transaction, Ford had effectively given the go-ahead for China's first purchase of military-related technology from the West.[5]

Technology transfers and intelligence-sharing were only part of the story, however. The subject of arms sales was also discussed and proved to be a particularly sensitive issue. Even though the United States and China were eager to use their relationship to offset the Soviet threat, neither side

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[2]Richard Nixon proposed opening up to China as early as 1967. See Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs* 46 (October 1967): 111-25. Mao's hosting of Edgar Snow in Beijing during the celebrations for the twenty-first anniversary of the founding of the PRC signaled China's interest in a rapprochement with the United States. See Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 629.

[3]See Department of State, "Memorandum of Conversation," November 10, 1973, National Security Archive Special Collection: *China and the United States: From Hostility to Engagement, 1960-1998*, (Washington, D.C.), Document 00277 [hereafter, citations from this collection will be listed as *NSA*, followed directly by document number]; and James Lilley, *China Hands: Nine Decades of Adventure, Espionage, and Diplomacy in Asia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 215.

[4]For more on this, see "China Set to Manufacture British Jet Fighter Engine," *Washington Post*, December 15, 1975, A12; and Fox Butterfield, "China Signs Rolls Contract for Building Jet Engines," *New York Times*, December 15, 1975, A1.

[5]James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 74.

wished to alarm the Soviets. The United States wanted to use its opening to China to goad the Soviet Union into détente, and selling arms to China, it was believed, would have harmed U.S. efforts to gain Soviet acceptance of arms-reduction initiatives. The Chinese, for their part, were using the relationship as a hedge against the Soviet threat, which, by the time of Nixon's trip in 1972, had become perilous. Indeed, the Chinese had already suffered serious losses in a 1969 skirmish with Soviet forces along the Ussuri River (烏蘇里江) which the Chinese side started by ambushing a Soviet patrol. However, while China was aware of the utility of a relationship with the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, they were also careful not to appear too close to the United States. China's leaders believed that an excessively cozy relationship with the United States might provoke the Soviets into launching a preemptive attack on China. Moreover, China had misgivings about America's relationship with Taiwan, and was unwilling to engage in a closer strategic relationship with the United States as long as this main strategic point of contention remained. Both sides were therefore reluctant to engage in a program of arms sales.

In fact, arms sales to China were considered within American circles as early as 1973, when a young China scholar and RAND analyst named Michael Pillsbury submitted a classified report in which he suggested that the United States open arms sales to China.[6] By 1975, Pillsbury had gone public with his ideas and published them in an article in *Foreign Policy*. According to Pillsbury, forging a closer military relationship with China would serve a number of important purposes. First, such a move would hearten those in China who were advocates of closer U.S.-China ties. Second, U.S. arms and technology transfers might deter a Soviet attack on China. And third, enhanced Chinese military capabilities could potentially draw more Soviet forces away from Western Europe and force the Soviets to confront the possibility of a two-front war.[7]

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[6]Ibid., 57-59.

[7]Michael Pillsbury, "U.S.-Chinese Military Ties?" *Foreign Policy*, no. 20 (Fall 1975): 58.

This was the genesis of the "China card" argument, which advocated siding with China in order to gain leverage over the Soviet Union. Pillsbury had his detractors, of course, including many within the defense and foreign policy establishments who were dubious about the long-term viability of such a military relationship. These individuals felt that China had been an implacable foe of the United States for more than two decades, and were fearful that China might re-align with the Soviets in the future.[8] In any event, consideration of arms sales was shelved, and for the rest of the 1970s intelligence-sharing and technology transfers made up the bulk of the security relationship between the United States and China. The modest strategic relationship that developed under Nixon and Ford continued, and grew, during Jimmy Carter's tenure as President. At first, Carter was reluctant to pursue closer relations with the Chinese, believing that pursuing détente with the Soviet Union was much more important and would be harmed by a tilt toward Beijing. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was a proponent of this approach, as well.

Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, took a different approach. Brzezinski, who had been interested in using the "China card" against the Soviets, worked hard behind the scenes (and behind the back of Secretary Vance) to convince Carter of the utility of a closer military relationship with China. Carter gradually signed on to Brzezinski's idea and in May 1978 sent Brzezinski to Beijing for talks with the Chinese leadership. Included in Brzezinski's delegation was Morton Abramowitz, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security. Abramowitz was the Pentagon's first representative to visit China. Like Brzezinski, Abramowitz had been a long-time supporter of increased security cooperation between the United States and China, and during their trip to Beijing Abramowitz gave very detailed intelligence briefings to the Chinese regarding Soviet troop deployments along the Sino-Soviet border.[9]

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[8]Mann, *About Face*, 59.
[9]Ibid., 87.

In addition to intelligence-sharing, Brzezinski informed the Chinese that, while President Carter was unwilling to sell arms to China, he would authorize the sale of certain technologies (such as Landsat infrared scanning equipment) that were prohibited to the Soviets and which had previously been off-limits to China. During Carter's first two and a half years in office, the United States continued—over the objections of Cyrus Vance and others within the Carter administration—to relax restrictions on exports of advanced technology to Beijing that had begun under Nixon and Ford, and had gone one step further by offering China the opportunity to purchase arms from Europe.[10]

These overtures aside, the U.S.-China military relationship remained modest at the close of 1978. Both sides were contending with domestic and foreign policy issues that, despite the shared Soviet threat, served to inhibit the development of deeper military ties between the two countries. On the U.S. side, Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter (during his first year) were not prepared to enter into a closer military relationship with China as long as détente with the Soviet Union remained on the agenda. Moreover, none were willing to expend the political capital needed to establish closer military ties with China prior to normalization. The Chinese, for their part, were frustrated by the pace of normalization, and were unwilling to sign on to a closer military relationship with the United States until their criteria for normalization, particularly with regard to Taiwan, were met. Furthermore, China's domestic politics was an inhibiting factor, as Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) was preoccupied with solidifying his position atop the Chinese leadership in the wake of the arrest of the Gang of Four (四人幫). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, China was mindful of Soviet sensitivities regarding a closer U.S.-China strategic relationship. The threat of a Soviet attack continued to figure prominently in China's reluctance to pursue a more substantial military relationship with the United States.

This reluctance soon dissipated, however. By the end of 1978, Vietnam had signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet

[10] Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1992), 89.

Union and invaded Cambodia, overthrowing the PRC-supported Khmer Rouge.[11] In order to stem the tide of these events which were occurring in China's own "backyard," China sought U.S. support for a military strike against Vietnam. The United States obliged and lent political support, and on February 17, 1979 the People's Liberation Army (PLA) invaded Vietnam. During the three-week incursion, the United States briefed Chinese officials on Soviet troop movements along China's northern border.[12]

Thus, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, as well as its partnership with the Soviet Union, had served as an impetus for the Chinese to seek a closer security relationship with the United States at the end of 1978. One year later, another invasion—this time in Central Asia—would lead to even more substantial ties, most notably in the military realm.

Too Close for Comfort: 1979-89

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on December 29, 1979 provoked a reassessment in the United States of the prospects for developing military ties between the United States and China. Just moments before his departure for Beijing in January 1980, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown received new instructions from Carter authorizing the sale of non-lethal military equipment to the Chinese.[13] In particular Carter approved the sale of a ground receiving station for the Landsat photo-reconnaissance system, which would essentially give the PLA the means to improve its satellite imagery.[14] In his subsequent meetings with Chinese Defense Minister Geng Biao (耿飚), Brown mostly discussed the events taking place in Af-

[11]For a good account of the Sino-Vietnamese border war, see Henry J. Kenny, "Vietnamese Perceptions of the 1979 War with China," in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience Since 1949*, ed. Mark A. Ryan, David Finkelstein, and Michael McDevitt (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 217-40.

[12]Mann, *About Face*, 100.

[13]In his original pre-departure instructions, Carter placed strict limitations on what Brown could offer: no arms sales and no formal military relations. See ibid., 110.

[14]Ibid., 111.

ghanistan.[15] In addition to conveying Carter's approval of the sale of the Landsat system, Brown proposed the establishment of special communications facilities for conveying messages between Beijing and Washington during crises and a private exploration of possibilities for U.S.-PRC cooperation in facilitating support for Afghan insurgents.[16] Brown also reiterated Carter's approval of technology transfers on a case-by-case basis, effectively putting an end to the "even-handedness" that had existed regarding U.S. technology transfers to the Soviet Union and China.

The Chinese were receptive to these offers. Not only was China disconcerted about events taking place in Afghanistan, but Deng and Defense Minister Geng were also concerned about the Vietnamese encroachment in Cambodia. Developing a closer military relationship with the United States would help offset these dangers, as well as give the PLA greater access to badly needed technology.

In the end, the most significant accomplishment of the Brown visit was that it initiated a regular exchange of Chinese and American military personnel. In September 1980, Undersecretary of Defense William Perry led a delegation to China to examine the state of China's defense industries. His trip was reciprocated by visits from Geng Biao and Liu Huaqing (劉華清). The placement of military attachés in the two countries' embassies, the exchange of working-level military delegations on functional issues such as health and logistics, and the increased contact between the U.S. and Chinese National Defense Universities were other tangible results of the Brown visit.[17]

By the end of Carter's term in office, the U.S.-China military relationship seemed to be expanding, albeit gradually. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan served notice to both the United States and China that the Soviet intentions remained antagonistic, offering both sides a reason to establish closer military relations.

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[15]"News Conference by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown," Beijing, China, Wednesday, January 9, 1980, *NSA* 00490; and "Talkers for Geng Biao—First Session," *NSA* 00478.

[16]"Afghanistan: Harold Brown's Trip to China," January 2, 1980, *NSA* 00041.

[17]Harding, *A Fragile Relationship*, 92.

Unfortunately, any momentum that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had given to the military relationship dissipated as a result of a row over Taiwan. During the 1980 campaign, Ronald Reagan had voiced his support of Taiwan and even hinted that he would enhance U.S. relations with the island if he were elected. After defeating Carter in the 1980 presidential election, the Reagan administration seemed to be following through on its promises by signaling its desire to sell FX fighters to Taiwan. These planes were less advanced than the ones Taiwan wanted, but more sophisticated than the fighters in the island's inventory.[18] Beijing, of course, was indignant and called for the FX sale to be scrapped. In an effort to make the sale more palatable to China, Secretary of State Alexander Haig traveled to Beijing in June 1981 and offered several inducements, including: informing the Chinese leadership that the United States would consider selling commercial arms to China on a case-by-case basis, stating that the United States would undertake a further relaxation of export controls, and inviting PLA Deputy Chief of Staff Liu Huaqing to the United States to discuss technology transfers.[19]

These blandishments were rebuffed, however, as the Chinese continued to maintain their disapproval of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. As a sign of its opposition, China repeatedly postponed Liu Huaqing's scheduled visit, and expressed no interest in purchasing arms from the United States. High-level military exchanges were also put on hold. The dispute dragged on for over a year until Haig suddenly resigned in June. Haig, who had been the Reagan administration's most enthusiastic proponent of closer ties with China, was now out of the picture. Finally, in January 1982, the Reagan administration decided not to sell the FX to Taiwan. China, realizing it had gained all it could from the United States, agreed to the terms of a communiqué that was released on August 17, 1982. In this document, China stated its "fundamental interest" in reaching a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue while the United States agreed to gradually diminish arms

[18]Ibid., 112.
[19]Ibid., 119.

sales to Taiwan.[20]

With the Taiwan arms sales issue sufficiently placed on the back burner, relations between the United States and China began to blossom in the military sphere. In September 1983, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger paid a visit to China and had discussions with several high-level officials, including Deng Xiaoping and Chinese Defense Minister Zhang Aiping (張愛萍).[21] The Chinese pressed the United States particularly hard for permission to approach American companies directly and negotiate on specific systems on China's own terms.[22] While Weinberger did not consent to this, he did announce that the administration had decided to approve export licenses for thirty-two specific items of military and dual-use technology that the Chinese had been trying to buy since 1981.[23] In the end, Weinberger labeled the trip a success, and invited Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang (趙紫陽) and Zhang Aiping to visit the United States in 1984.

Weinberger's visit ushered in a new era of cooperation in the U.S.-China military relationship. Despite having embarked on an "independent foreign policy" in 1982, Beijing continued to view Soviet actions warily, and looked to the United States to help offset the threat. The United States, for its part, jettisoned détente and was determined to combat Soviet expansionism whenever and wherever it emerged. Thus the perception by both countries of the Soviet threat grew sharper in the mid-1980s and provided the impetus for an increasingly active military relationship between the United States and China. What had been a largely symbolic military relationship had, by 1984, become much more substantial. Three "pillars" of the relationship subsequently emerged: high-level visits; working-level,

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[20]The United States did not set a deadline for the cessation of arms sales and also made the decrease in arms sales contingent upon Beijing's efforts to effect a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue.

[21]For an account regarding the trip, see Caspar Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York: Warner Books, 1990), 265-80.

[22]Ibid., 271.

[23]Mann, *About Face*, 140.

or functional, exchanges; and military technology cooperation.[24]

High-level visits were typified by three 1984 visits: Premier Zhao Ziyang's trip to the United States in January, President Reagan's visit to China in April, and Zhang Aiping's trip to the United States later in the year. The tempo of functional exchanges increased rapidly beginning that year as well,[25] and intelligence-sharing reached its peak during the 1980s as the United States and China collaborated in assisting the mujahadeen in their fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

More importantly, beginning in 1984, China became eligible for the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, which allowed Beijing to both buy weapons directly from the U.S. government and obtain American government financing.[26] By 1987 four FMS programs were signed: the US$22 million large-caliber artillery plant modernization program, the US$8 million MK 46 Mod 2 torpedo sale, the US$62 million AN/TPQ-37 artillery-locating radar sale, and the US$500 million F-8 interceptor avionics modernization program.[27] In addition, there were commercial sales, which included five marine gas turbines for use in China's Luhai destroyers and twenty-four Sikorsky helicopters.[28] The FMS program and the commercial sales were the most tangible evidence of a military relationship that had grown markedly throughout the 1980s.

To be sure, there were some who expressed apprehension about enhanced U.S.-China military ties. In his 1977 *Foreign Affairs* article, A. Doak Barnett cautioned against a more intimate U.S.-China military relationship, particularly with regard to arms sales. He was especially concerned about the impact of a closer U.S.-China military relationship on re-

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[24]Kenneth Allen and Eric McVadon, *China's Foreign Military Relations, Report* #32 (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1999), 72.

[25]For example, see the chronology of military exchanges during 1985 in "United States-China Military Relations, 1979-1985: Analysis and Chronology," January 2, 1986, *NSA* 00769.

[26]Mann, *About Face*, 141.

[27]Eden Y. Woon, "Chinese Arms Sales and U.S.-China Military Relations," *Asian Survey* 29, no. 6 (June 1989): 602-3.

[28]Interview with Rear Admiral Eric McVadon (retired), former Beijing defense attaché, March 24, 2004; and with a former Department of Defense official, September 7, 2004.

gional stability in East Asia.[29] Allen Whiting, then a professor of Chinese studies at the University of Michigan, warned that the line between "defensive" and "offensive" weapons was blurry, and that "the incremental transition from one category to the other can be anticipated, contrary to fact, by friend or foe with disturbing consequences in either case."[30] Others were more dubious about the growing intimacy between the military establishments of two erstwhile enemies, leading one observer familiar with the relationship during the late 1980s to describe expanding U.S.-China military relations as "unnatural."[31] In his book, *Arming the Dragon*, A. James Gregor criticized the anti-Soviet rationale for developing closer military ties with China and stated that "the idea that the People's Republic of China could provide a cost-free counterweight to Soviet military capabilities was fanciful."[32]

These criticisms gained currency as warning signs of a deteriorating strategic rationale for U.S.-China relations began to emerge toward the end of the 1980s. Shortly after his assumption of power, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev made overtures to the Chinese that signaled a desire for improved relations. Some of the gestures included unilaterally withdrawing a number of Soviet divisions from the Sino-Soviet border, and repositioning ballistic missiles west of the Urals. The implications of these moves did not bode well for a U.S.-China relationship that had been overwhelmingly based on a shared Soviet threat. In addition, U.S. concerns about China's proliferation of missiles to the Middle East began to

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[29] A. Doak Barnett, "Military-Security Relations Between China and the United States," *Foreign Affairs* 55, no. 3 (April 1977): 587. See also A. Doak Barnett's testimony in "The United States and the People's Republic of China: Issues for the 1980s," April 1, 1980, House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, 37-38 [hereafter referred to as "Issues for the 1980s]; and Edward N. Luttwak, "Against the China Card," *Commentary* 66, no. 4 (October 1978): 37-43.

[30] Allen S. Whiting, "Prepared Statement of Allen S. Whiting, Department of Political Science and Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan: Sino-American Military Relations," in "Issues for the 1980s."

[31] Interview with Eric McVadon, March 24, 2004.

[32] A. James Gregor, *Arming the Dragon: U.S. Security Ties with the People's Republic of China* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988), 38.

increase.[33] Specifically, China's alleged transfer of missiles to Syria rankled certain members of Congress.[34]

Nevertheless, despite the misgivings of some observers and the numerous warning signs that began to emerge, the U.S.-China military relationship reached its zenith toward the end of the 1980s. Enthusiasm for a China that seemed to be changing for the better—both politically and economically—overshadowed the circumspection and concern regarding the substance of China's reforms and the long-term consequences of a closer military relationship with China.

The Long Road Home: 1989-93

Beijing's crackdown on student-led protests in Tiananmen Square on the morning of June 4, 1989 shattered the notion that China was on a path toward greater political pluralism. The world looked on in horror as media footage showed PLA tanks and troops rumbling toward the Square, killing upwards of 1,000 people in the process.

The effect on U.S.-China military relations was immediate. On June 5, Carl Ford, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security, recommended that the military relationship bear the brunt of sanctions, citing the fact that the PLA was the main perpetrator in the Tiananmen Incident and thus should pay the requisite price for its actions. Moreover, Ford argued that the military relationship ought to be sacrificed so that other aspects of the relationship could be maintained.[35] President Bush concurred, and the following day he announced the suspension of military contacts and technology transfers worth approximately US$600

[33]For an account of China's arms sales to the Middle East, and the U.S. reaction, see Woon, "Chinese Arms Sales and U.S.-China Military Relations."

[34]See a letter signed by members of Congress and sent to Secretary of State George Shultz: "Alleged Chinese Sale of Ballistic Missiles to Syria," July 14, 1988, *NSA* 00958.

[35]Robert L. Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen: The Politics of U.S.-China Relations, 1989-2000* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 67.

million.[36] This was the beginning of a trend in the U.S.-China relationship: in the event of a crisis, military relations would be the first to be jettisoned as a signal of displeasure with, and a downturn in, the overall relationship. The general sense of revulsion in the United States at what had happened at Tiananmen combined with these sanctions to severely curtail U.S.-China military relations.

These restrictions did not completely preclude lower-level contacts, however. A portion of a cable sent from the Office of the Secretary of State to all diplomatic and consular posts in China makes this clear: "In order to emphasize our abhorrence of this action by units of the PLA, social contacts with PRC military attachés and other military personnel should be avoided or minimized at the present time. Working contacts with PRC military personnel can be continued if kept low-key and low-profile."[37]

Moreover, cooperation between the United States and China in the realm of intelligence-sharing appeared to continue. The Chinese assured their U.S. counterparts that they would continue to furnish unique information on Soviet nuclear tests and other seismic disturbances which were being recorded in more than nine stations built by the United States in China.[38]

Nevertheless, a palpable chill came over U.S.-China military relations in the wake of Tiananmen, and not least because of the incident's deleterious effect on the PLA. Many Chinese were horrified to witness the PLA firing upon their fellow countrymen, while many PLA soldiers were themselves distraught at having to shoot unarmed citizens. A few in fact refused to follow orders. The post-Tiananmen stigmatization of the PLA presented a serious dilemma to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). As Mao's famous dictum that "political power flows out of the barrel of a gun" asserted, the PLA was to be a loyal servant and protector of the CCP. Now,

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[36]Ibid.

[37]Department of State, "Contact with Chinese Diplomats and Attachés," telegram, June 8, 1989, *NSA* 01102.

[38]George Lardner, Jr. and Jeffrey Smith, "Intelligence Ties Endure Despite U.S.-China Strain; 'Investment' Is Substantial, Longstanding," *Washington Post*, June 25, 1989, A1.

in the wake of Tiananmen, however, PLA morale was low and its loyalty seriously questioned by the top leadership.

This prompted a political retrenchment within the Chinese military, during which the CCP leadership undertook a campaign of ideological indoctrination in the ranks aimed at ensuring "absolute Party control" over the gun.[39] Hundreds of insubordinate soldiers were relieved of command, thrown in jail, or both, while many more were subjected to intense political "re-education." The goal was to rid the Chinese military of elements of "bourgeois liberalism" and prevent the PLA from succumbing to outside (read: U.S.) pressures toward "peaceful evolution." As the PLA retreated into a cocoon of political rectification, contacts with the U.S. military ground to a halt.

Chinese indignation at American sanctions was also responsible for the freeze in post-Tiananmen U.S.-China military relations. Many in the top leadership were puzzled by what they felt were draconian measures taken by the United States in the wake of Tiananmen. After all, ever since the Nixon-Kissinger opening in 1972, China's leaders had witnessed the U.S. willingness to overlook Chinese repression of political dissidents. Indeed, President Carter, while loudly condemning Soviet policies, had been noticeably quiet about Chinese abuses (especially during the Democracy Wall period). Later, and perhaps more telling, during his return trip from China in 1984, President Reagan referred to China as a "so-called Communist country." Thus, the Chinese could not understand, and were perturbed by what they felt was a U.S. overreaction to Tiananmen.

Other issues came to the forefront in the aftermath of Tiananmen. In December 1991, the Soviet Union crumbled, taking along with it the strategic rationale that had underpinned U.S.-China relations for almost twenty years. In 1992, the Taiwan issue flared up when President Bush, responding to political pressure during the run-up to the presidential election, announced the sale of 150 F-16 fighters to Taiwan. The Chinese responded with anger, claiming that the sale violated the terms of the

[39]David Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State in China: The Political Work System in the People's Liberation Army," *The China Quarterly*, no. 127 (September 1991): 552.

1982 Communiqué.[40] More broadly, Taiwan's domestic politics were not developing in China's favor, especially since Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) announced the renunciation of Taiwan's claim of sovereignty over the mainland in 1991. Vexing issues pertaining to human rights, intellectual property, and proliferation sprang up shortly after Tiananmen, as well. All of these difficult issues made repair of the military relationship an especially cumbersome task.

By the end of 1993, however, the Clinton administration decided that the military relationship needed to be revived. There were a number of reasons for the decision.[41] First, Clinton's executive order linking China's most-favored-nation (MFN) status with the Beijing regime's human rights record placed a premium on getting the Chinese to make improvements in the human rights realm. Since the U.S. assumption was that the Chinese military was the most xenophobic and nationalist element of Chinese society, as well as a key player in Chinese politics, engaging the PLA was seen as a way of both tempering its hostile behavior and hastening China's progress on human rights. As one observer noted, "The sense of the administration at the time was that the PLA did not have a fixed destination; it could be influenced."[42] Second, by engaging the PLA, the United States believed that progress could be made on the North Korean nuclear issue which, by the end of 1993, was threatening to spiral into a full-blown crisis. Third, and more prosaically, the Defense Department was simply anxious to renew military contacts with the PLA. Many within the Defense Department believed that, regardless of whether China was deemed an adversary or a friend, some degree of contact between the two militaries was desirable. The phrase "don't lose contact with the enemy" certainly applied. Finally, there was genuine concern that the isolation of the Chinese military had bred PLA misperceptions of the United States, including with regard

[40]For a detailed description of the decision-making process leading to the F-16 sale, and the Chinese reaction to the sale, see Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen*, 138-43.

[41]The following is based on an interview with Charles Freeman Jr., former Assistant Secretary of Defense, April 15, 2004.

[42]Interview with Eric McVadon, March 23, 2004.

to U.S. capabilities and fortitude in the aftermath of Vietnam and Iraq. These misperceptions would prove especially dangerous if, as many in the Pentagon believed, the PLA played a major role in decision-making. Many within the Pentagon were eager to disabuse the PLA of the idea that "the United States military can only score victories in the desert, and cannot take casualties."[43] Re-establishing military relations was seen as a means of doing just that.

For the PLA, renewed military relations with the United States carried tremendous symbolic weight. More than four years had passed since the PLA had opened fire on unarmed Chinese citizens, and many of the soldiers involved in the suppression were anxious to re-engage in normal military activities. In the eyes of the Chinese leadership, therefore, restoring military relations with the United States served to legitimize the PLA.[44] In addition, re-igniting the military relationship would signal an end to China's pariah status, since many of the other post-Tiananmen sanctions had already been lifted by late 1993. Beijing also felt that military relations with the United States would allow the PLA access to badly needed technology. Finally, there were those within the PLA who thought it "bizarre" that there was no military contact with the United States.[45] Like some of their counterparts in the Pentagon, many PLA officers thought that restoring military relations between the world's most powerful nation and the world's most populous one was a natural step to take.

Mending Fences: 1993-96

The first sign of renewed military contact came with Clinton's dispatch of Assistant Secretary of Defense Chas Freeman to China in late

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[43]For more on Chinese misperceptions, see Michael Pillsbury, "Dangerous Chinese Intentions: The Implications for DoD," Prepared for the Office of Net Assessment, January 1998, *NSA* 02046; and e-mail correspondence with Derek Mitchell, former Department of Defense senior director for China, April 20, 2004.

[44]Interview with Eric McVadon, March 24, 2004.

[45]Interview with Charles Freeman Jr., April 15, 2004.

November 1993. Freeman carried with him a plan developed by Deputy Secretary of Defense William Perry to assist China in converting its defense industries to civilian use. According to some observers, Perry's idea for assisting the Chinese with defense conversion was simply an excuse to jump-start U.S.-China military relations.[46] While this was certainly one consideration, there were other, more practical reasons for assisting China's defense conversion. Perhaps most importantly, it was a chance for the U.S. and Chinese military establishments to cooperate, and the new venture gave the United States the opportunity to learn about defense conversion at a time when the U.S. military was itself being downsized.[47] Indeed, Freeman emphasized China's "pioneering role" in defense conversion.[48] In addition, the endeavor was seen was a good business opportunity for U.S. companies to assist China in its attempts to convert defense firms into companies that would produce goods for civilian use. Finally, since the United States would get a good look at China's defense industry, the initiative would serve as a good intelligence-gathering device.[49]

In terms of broader military exchanges, however, Freeman admitted that it was not his purpose in going to Beijing to "try to work out the details of a program of exchanges or other activities."[50] He noted that the four-and-a-half year hiatus in military relations had decreased mutual understanding, and that only a fairly modest program of reciprocal visits and discussions focused on professionalization and peacekeeping was being considered at this point.[51] Indeed, one observer suggested that the Chinese treated Freeman with cordiality, but were not overly enthusiastic about his visit.[52] Their frustration over the post-Tiananmen sanctions colored their

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[46]Interview with Eric McVadon, March 23, 2004; and with Charles Freeman Jr., April 15, 2004.

[47]Ibid.

[48]"Transcript of Beijing Press Conference of Assistant Secretary of Defense Chas Freeman on November 2, 1993," *NSA* 01638.

[49]Interview with Charles Freeman Jr., April 15, 2004.

[50]See note 48 above.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Telephone interview with Robert Suettinger, former National Security Council Director of Asian Affairs, April 2, 2004.

perception of U.S. intentions and contributed to their reluctance to begin a rapid development of military exchanges. Beijing was also smarting over not being paid back for avionics upgrades that were cancelled in 1989.

Nevertheless, military relations between the two sides picked up momentum over the next year. Initiatives to trace U.S. servicemen missing in action during World War II and a Joint Commission on Defense Conversion were begun.[53] Exchanges between the two National Defense Universities and some service staff colleges were resumed, and a series of high-level and service exchanges took place.[54] These exchanges laid the groundwork for Secretary of Defense William Perry's four-day visit to Beijing in October 1994.

Before his trip, Perry stated that he would "stress that the military relationship is bounded by the political context, which includes human rights, and that security problems caused by proliferation damage the mutual security interests and bilateral relationship."[55] In addition to stressing these issues, while in China Perry urged the Chinese to make their military budget and planning more transparent in order to avoid misunderstandings.[56] For their part, the Chinese welcomed Perry as an "old friend" and called the meetings a "good start."[57]

Not everyone was as sanguine about the rapprochement between the two militaries, however. The opening sentence in an article published in an October issue of *Newsweek* asked, "What in the world was Bill Perry doing with the butchers of Beijing?"[58] When writing about a series of exchanges that took place prior to Perry's visit in October, William Triplett, chief

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[53]David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 332.

[54]David Shambaugh, "Enhancing Sino-American Military Relations," *Sigur Center Asia Papers*, no. 4 (1998): 1.

[55]Steven Mufson, "Perry Visiting Beijing for Talks on Military; With Tiananmen in the Past, Tensions Ease," *Washington Post*, October 17, 1994, A1.

[56]Steven Mufson, "U.S. to Help China Retool Arms Plants; Perry Received as 'Old Friend' in Quest of Military Ties; Human Rights Discussed," ibid., October 18, 1994, A28.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Tom Post, "Prying Open a Secret Army," *Newsweek*, October 31, 1994, 34.

Republican counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1992-93, stated:

> As guests of the Pentagon, they [Chinese Army officers] are being briefed on the state of the art of U.S. military technology and strategy. This visit is the forerunner of a potentially dangerous program of military cooperation with China that the Clinton Administration has undertaken without informing Congress. It [Congress] should squash any coordination between the Pentagon and the unrepentant, anti-democratic Chinese military.[59]

These observers were disturbed by what appeared to be a complete disregard for the abuses that the PLA perpetrated at Tiananmen, as well as China's lackluster record on human rights and proliferation. These negative reactions to Perry's visit, and to Clinton's engagement policy more generally, set the tone for what would be a constant theme throughout the Clinton presidency—namely, that despite Perry's statements to the contrary, the United States was pursuing military relations with China irrespective of the status of the political context of the overall bilateral relationship. The pace and scope of military relations were overtaking the political relationship, and until China's record improved in the realm of human rights, proliferation, and other highly sensitive issue areas, military relations were bound to become intensely politicized. Moreover, since Tiananmen the field of PLA studies had grown rapidly, even to the point where one expert noted that "PLA-watching had become a spectator sport."[60] Some intellectuals and politicians were becoming intensely interested in China's military modernization, particularly its hardware acquisitions, and were looking for any evidence that the PLA was an implacable adversary. Not surprisingly, this "bean counting" exacerbated the political sensitivity of U.S.-China military relations.

The imbroglio over Taiwan, which began in 1995 and lasted through March 1996, added fuel to the fire of those who were criticizing the depth and breadth of U.S.-China military relations. Angered over Lee Teng-hui's trip to the United States in June 1995, Beijing chose to curtail a number of

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[59]William C. Triplett II, "Dangerous Embrace," *New York Times*, September 10, 1994, A19.

[60]Interview with David Finkelstein, U.S. Army foreign area officer for China (retired), March 26, 2004.

exchanges, including a trip to the United States by Defense Minister Chi Haotian (遲浩田) and a visit to Beijing by John Holum, the director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. The Chinese did receive a U.S. National Defense University Capstone delegation in late May, but no exchanges took place until late July.[61] China's most provocative response came on July 19, when the PLA began a week-long series of military exercises in the East China Sea north of Taiwan.

The relationship was put back on track briefly during the fall and winter of 1995-96, but tensions flared up again in March 1996 when the Chinese began a second round of military exercises opposite Taiwan in connection with Taiwan's first democratic presidential election. These exercises included the launching of missiles[62] that landed in the waters near Taiwan's two busiest ports—Kaohsiung (高雄) and Keelung (基隆). The United States, which had been taking small measures to respond to growing Chinese belligerence in the months leading up to the missile tests, responded by sending two aircraft carrier battle groups to areas near Taiwan. The crisis eventually died down, but not before both sides had sent clear signals regarding the political developments on the island. China successfully showed its displeasure over what Beijing viewed as Taiwan's creeping independence, while the United States evinced its willingness to defend Taiwan in the event of an attack by the PRC.

Despite the tensions involved, both sides were unwilling to completely suspend military-to-military contact. Indeed, shortly after the crisis was defused, military contacts gradually increased. Visits by defense educational delegations continued, but high-level exchanges were limited to Undersecretary of Defense Walter Slocombe's visit in June 1996. In addition, the new CINCPAC, Admiral Joseph Prueher, paid a visit to China in September, which was followed up by a visit from the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency and other Defense Department officials.[63] Chi Haotian's visit to the United States in December 1996 set in train a

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[61] Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 332-33.

[62] The missiles were unarmed.

[63] Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 333.

rapid expansion of military-to-military contact that would last for more than two years.

The development of military relations during this period notwithstanding, the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis signaled that Taiwan had become a much more potent (and more dangerous) factor in the U.S.-China military relationship. In the United States, the incident galvanized political support for Taiwan on both sides of the political spectrum, as Democrats and Republicans looked with disdain upon China's forceful attempts to influence Taiwan's first democratic presidential election. In China, many within the PLA were annoyed at what they viewed as a weak response on the part of the civilian leadership to the dispatch of U.S. aircraft carriers near Taiwan. For both China and the United States, the prospect of waging war over Taiwan loomed larger than at any other point since the Taiwan Strait crises of the 1950s.

The Not-So-Golden Years: 1997-2000

For the first time since normalization, the United States and China faced the possibility of waging war over Taiwan. Despite the heightened tensions on both sides, however, Washington and Beijing touted the imperative of establishing robust lines of communication to promote mutual understanding and prevent misperceptions. At the PLA National Defense University in May 1997, Joint Chiefs Chairman General John Shalikashvili noted, "Our two nations are pursuing military-to-military ties to improve communications, reduce potential misunderstandings, and carry out mutually beneficial activities."[64] For his part, Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian believed that Shalikashvili's visit to China would "further promote understanding and trust between the two armed forces."[65] Officially, in

[64]"Remarks as Delivered by General John M. Shalikashvili, PLA National Defense University" (May 14, 1997), *NSA* 02010.

[65]"Chinese Defense Minister Meets Shalikashvili," Xinhua, May 13, 1997, in *FBIS-CHI-97-133*.

1997, the Department of Defense listed six "broad objectives" for pursuing military relations:

1. to engage the PLA, a critical actor in the PRC's national security community, on a range of global and Asia-Pacific regional security issues;
2. to increase Chinese defense transparency;
3. to establish confidence-building measures designed to reduce the possibility of accidents or miscalculations between U.S. and Chinese operational forces;
4. to conduct professional exchanges that are of mutual benefit;
5. to encourage PLA participation in appropriate multinational military activities; and
6. to support the U.S. government's overall policy of engagement with China through selected functional programs.[66]

The following year, in a speech at the Academy of Military Sciences (軍事科學院) in Beijing, Secretary of Defense William Cohen proclaimed that "security is not a zero-sum game," and that "dealing with a partner requires openness and confidence."[67]

The visits by Cohen and Shalikashvili were only part of a flurry of exchanges that took place between the United States and China from 1997 to 1999.[68] A number of agreements were reached, including a Maritime Military Consultative Agreement (MMCA), humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, and the initiation of the Defense Consultative Talks (DCT), a high-level forum for dialogue on strategic security issues.

The exchanges did not last for long, however, as China abruptly suspended military relations in the wake of the accidental U.S. bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade on May 7, 1999. Later, during President

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[66]Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, *Report to Congress on Department of Defense Activities with China* (H.R. 104-563), February, 28, 1997.

[67]"Remarks Prepared for Delivery by Secretary of Defense William Cohen, Academy of Military Sciences, Beijing, China" (January 19, 1998), http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan1998/b01271998_btchina.html.

[68]For a good summary of the exchanges, see Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 334.

Clinton's meeting with Jiang Zemin (江澤民) at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in mid-September, the Chinese expressed no desire to renew military contacts, claiming that the United States had not done enough to redress their concerns over the bombing issue.[69] By mid-November, however, military relations advanced, albeit slowly, with a visit to Beijing by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Kurt Campbell. Following an agreement in December settling the issue of compensation for damage to the Chinese embassy, military contacts were revived completely, beginning with the resumption of the DCTs at the end of January 2000.[70] For the rest of 2000, U.S.-China military relations developed smoothly, with a visit by a PLA delegation led by Nanjing Military Region Commander Liang Guanglie (南京軍區司令員梁光烈) to both the headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Command and the Pentagon, and visits by the superintendent of West Point, Lieutenant General Daniel Christman, as well as Franklin Kramer, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, to China. These trips prepared the way for Cohen's visit in July. In a speech given at the Chinese National Defense University, Cohen stressed the importance of having face-to-face, candid discussions on issues of mutual importance. He claimed that the United States and China were relying too heavily on the media to convey messages, and that this was distorting the perceptions held by both sides:

> The characterizations of the United States as being a hegemon, as a country determined to dominate the world and to contain and dominate China are simply untrue. Yet, we see constant references such as this appearing in the Chinese media, which only provokes a negative reaction on the part of many in my own country. We have an absolute obligation to deal with you directly, honestly, and candidly. That is precisely the reason why I wanted to come to you today, to discuss this in this forum so that we could raise the issues without any filters of either hyperbole or criticism or negativity that, too often, characterize the nature of the U.S. position and policies.[71]

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[69]Bonnie S. Glaser, "Beginning to Thaw," *Comparative Connections*, 3rd Quarter, 1999, http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/993Qus_china.html.

[70]Bonnie S. Glaser, "Taiwan Tops the Bilateral Agenda," ibid., 1st Quarter, 2000, http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/001Qus_china.html.

[71]William Cohen, "Address to the Chinese National Defense University" (July 13, 2000), http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2000/s20000713-secdef.html.

Cohen's comment pointed to a reality that had come to dominate U.S.-China military relations ever since the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis: both sides viewed each other with intense suspicion. And indeed, this suspicion was evinced in the media of both countries. In the United States, the so-called "Blue Team" was putting forth a concerted effort to raise public awareness of the "China threat." Books with titles such as *Hegemon: China's Plan to Dominate Asia and the World*, and *The China Threat: How the People's Republic Targets America* were gaining in popularity throughout 2000.[72] Moreover, the "Blue Team" was instrumental in Congress, attaching riders to legislation that restricted the scope of Chinese-American military relations.[73] Section 1201 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2000 contained a number of provisions that restricted U.S.-China military contacts.[74]

For its part, China had grown deeply suspicious of U.S. intentions, especially in the wake of the Belgrade bombing in May 1999. In fact, serious debate emerged in China before the Belgrade bombing. NATO's intervention in Kosovo beginning in March 1999 set off what David Finkelstein termed "The Great Peace and Development Debate of 1999."[75] In it, Chinese intellectuals, PLA officers, and government officials discussed the implications of a number of disturbing developments taking place in China's security environment:[76] in May 1999, the Japanese Diet ratified the Revised

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[72]Steven W. Mosher, *Hegemon: China's Plan to Dominate Asia and the World* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000); and Bill Gertz, *The China Threat: How the People's Republic Targets America* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2000).

[73]For more on the "Blue Team," see Robert Kaiser and Steven Mufson, "'Blue Team' Draws a Hard Line on Beijing," *Washington Post*, February 22, 2000, A1.

[74]Some observers noted that this section was consistent with the way the Department of Defense was carrying out military exchanges with the PLA at the time. The law gave Congress the political tool to suggest that the Department of Defense was "giving away the store" and that Congress was "coming to the rescue." E-mail correspondence with Derek Mitchell, April 20, 2004; and interview with a former Department of Defense official, April 9, 2004. The law also gave the Department of Defense the political cover to refuse certain Chinese requests. E-mail correspondence with Derek Mitchell, April 20, 2004.

[75]David M. Finkelstein, *China Reconsiders Its National Security: "The Great Peace and Development Debate of 1999,"* Regional Assessment, December 2000 (Alexandria, Va.: CNA Corporation, 2000).

[76]The following is taken from ibid., 12-13.

Guidelines for Defense Cooperation with the United States, and refused to specify for Beijing whether Taiwan was included in the ambiguous phrase "areas surrounding Japan"; Japan signed on to U.S. plans to develop Theater Missile Defense (TMD); then-President Lee Teng-hui issued his "two-state" theory in early July, causing a mini-crisis in cross-Strait relations; the Clinton administration announced its decision to move forward on National Missile Defense (NMD); the U.S. Congress was growing increasingly "anti-China," as evinced by the Cox Committee Report,[77] the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, and the Defense Department's plans to develop TMD and NMD architectures; and, finally, NATO had intervened in Kosovo, leading to the accidental U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.[78] In short, just as the "Blue Team" in the United States viewed China as an adversary, many observers in China held an ambivalent, and oftentimes hostile, view of U.S. intentions for China.

One of the chief concerns of critics in the United States was that military exchanges were largely perfunctory and were not serving any constructive purpose. These critics cited China's lack of transparency and reciprocity as particularly troublesome. For example, whereas the United States received PLA delegations at the Pentagon, critics contended that China refused to reciprocate by inviting U.S. officers to the Chinese equivalent of the Pentagon. As one observer sardonically noted, "It would be as though we said to the Chinese visitors, you can't come to the White House or the Pentagon, we will meet you at Dulles Airport or at the Hilton

[77]The Cox Committee of the U.S. Congress was established in June 1998 to investigate concerns over Chinese acquisition of sensitive U.S. missile and space technology in connection with the launching of U.S. civilian satellites using Chinese launchers on Chinese territory. The investigations were broadened in October 1998 to include alleged security problems and possible espionage at the U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories. Some conclusions were released in January 1999 by the White House together with the administration's response. The full declassified (redacted) version of the report of the Cox Committee was released on May 25, 1999. See Alistair Iain Johnston, W.K.H. Panofsky, Marco DiCapua, and Lewis R. Franklin, *The Cox Committee Report: An Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), 9, http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/pdf/coxfinal3.pdf.

[78]Beijing was also concerned about the U.S. (U.S.-led NATO) willingness to impinge on another country's sovereignty.

Hotel."[79] Critics were also dismayed at what they viewed as an undue level of enthusiasm on the part of the United States for military exchanges. They claimed that there were no benchmarks for assessing the value of the military relationship. In fact, some observers who were involved in the exchanges recalled that the exchanges had principles and a purpose, but came to lack a strategic focus and control. Thus, given the lack of strategic focus, there were no measures of success.[80] "The United States was an ardent suitor; the United States came to want the defense relationship more than the Chinese did," remarked a former Defense Department China Desk Officer.[81] And while the United States was pressing for more exchanges with the PLA, many of the thorny political issues like non-proliferation, human rights, and, more recently, allegations of nuclear espionage remained unresolved. In fact, focus on the political context of the bilateral relationship was sometimes lost, to the detriment of military contacts. One observer recalled the Pentagon's invitation to the PLA to visit Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), even though it was a well-known fact that the PLA had been working to enhance its joint war-fighting capability. The gesture became fodder for critics who believed that the United States was aiding China's military modernization. The episode was a clear example of how enthusiasm for military exchanges overshadowed the politics of the

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[79]Michael Pillsbury, "China's Strategic Intentions and Goals," Testimony at Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, June 21, 2000. In fact, U.S. Defense Department delegations were taken to China's Ministry of National Defense and received appropriate protocol reception. The problem lay in the fact that civil-military relations and command and control in China differ from the U.S. system. China's Minister of Defense, a serving senior General, has far less power than a U.S. Secretary of Defense. The CCP Central Military Commission (CMC) Chairman is the closest Chinese equivalent to the U.S. Secretary of Defense, but this position has often been held by the CCP General Secretary. The CCP General Secretary is far more important than a U.S. Secretary of Defense. Consequently, reciprocity between the two differing systems has been a problematic issue. For more on organizational asymmetries between the U.S. and Chinese defense establishments, see Alfred D. Wilhelm, Jr., "The Military Component of the U.S.-China Relationship," in *The People's Liberation Army and China in Transition*, ed. Stephen J. Flanagan and Micheal E. Marti (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2003), 294-96.

[80]Interview with Derek Mitchell, April 7, 2004; and with a former Department of Defense official, April 9, 2004.

[81]Interview with Derek Mitchell, April 7, 2004.

bilateral relationship.[82]

Why was the United States such an "ardent suitor"? The United States' alacrity for military exchanges grew out of the belief that by engaging the PLA at lower levels, it could entice the Chinese to become more transparent, and that this would in turn lead to greater trust and understanding with respect to broader strategic issues.[83] It was critical, therefore, for the Chinese to be as transparent as possible, and to show the United States most, if not all, of the military "things" that it wanted to see, as well as more information on doctrine, training, and procurement.

For the Chinese, their concerns about a hostile United States seemed real, if not wholly justified. Many did indeed see a looming U.S. military threat on the horizon,[84] and this contributed in no small part to China's reluctance to match the U.S. enthusiasm for military exchanges. Another important factor in China's lack of transparency and reciprocity was the legacy of secrecy when it came to military-security matters. It was far more important, and useful, to the Chinese to first have discussions at higher levels about broad strategic issues. Once China was able to reach an understanding with respect to U.S. intentions for China and East Asia more generally, it would be more appropriate to address one of the primary U.S. concerns with regard to military contacts—namely, transparency.[85] Thus, for China, symbolism was highly important; who they saw was much more important than what they saw.

These diametrically opposed views of the means and goals of the military relationship served to dampen the efficacy of ties and heighten

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[82]Ibid. According to Mitchell, "The briefing at JFCOM was inherently not a big deal. It was nothing more than what anybody could get from going on the JFCOM website. The problem lay with the fact that the optics were bad in a toxic political environment in Washington at the time."

[83]David M. Finkelstein and Jonathan Unangst, *Engaging DoD: Chinese Perspectives on Military Relations with the United States*, Report no. CRM 99-0046.90 (Alexandria, Va.: CNA Corporation, 1999), iv-vi.

[84]For more on the PLA's concerns, see David Shambaugh, "China's Military Views the World: Ambivalent Security," in *The Rise of China*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 105-32.

[85]See note 82 above.

frustrations on both sides.[86] Critics in the United States grew increasingly irked at China's unwillingness to be more transparent, while China became ever more concerned about the effects of broader U.S. designs—which the Chinese viewed as threatening—for its interests in East Asia, particularly with respect to Taiwan.

In sum, despite the flurry of exchanges that took place in 1997-99, latent problems began to bubble to the surface toward the end of the Clinton administration that made for a very fragile military relationship. Proponents of the engagement policy seemed to focus on the military relationship as being an end in itself, claiming that the very fact that the two militaries were communicating was reason to keep up the pace of relations. However, critics judged the relationship to be largely lacking in strategy and overly accommodating to the Chinese, to the point where the United States was actually hastening China's military modernization without reaping any significant gains in return.

A Changing of the Guard—and Policy? 2000-2004

The Bush administration came into office determined to take a different approach with respect to the U.S.-China relationship. In line with criticisms that Clinton's engagement policy had been too "China-centric," it opted for a policy that essentially downgraded China's importance in America's dealings with East Asia. The Bush administration sought to strengthen ties with traditional allies such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia—allies that critics believed Clinton had ignored throughout his presidency—while maintaining a stable, productive, and competitive[87]

[86]For a good discussion of the divergent interests and objectives of the United States and China pertaining to the military relationship, see Jing-Dong Yuan, "Sino-U.S. Military Relations Since Tiananmen: Restoration, Progress, and Pitfalls," *Parameters* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 56-61.

[87]During his campaign, Bush departed from Clinton's approach of "working toward a con-

relationship with China.[88]

Accordingly, upon entering office in January 2001, the Bush administration placed the overall military relationship under review. Although military visits in the first three months of the year proceeded according to the plan agreed to the previous November between then-Undersecretary of Defense Walter Slocombe and Deputy Chief of the PLA General Staff Xiong Guangkai (熊光楷) at the DCTs, it was clear that a change was coming in the military relationship between the United States and China.

That change came rapidly in the wake of the collision between a U.S. EP-3 surveillance plane and a Chinese fighter jet over the South China Sea in April 2001. In the immediate aftermath of the incident, initial U.S. attempts to contact the Chinese leadership were unsuccessful, and once the United States finally did manage to get through, it was met with indignation and hostility.[89] To critics of the military exchanges that were taking place, that incident, and the events that transpired in the ten days that it took to secure the release of the American crew, discredited one of the professed aims of Clinton's engagement of the PLA—that is, that the United States needed to have channels of communication open with the Chinese in the event of a crisis. In the words of one observer, "We called, and they didn't pick up."[90] Moreover, the idea that U.S. interaction with the Chinese military was serving to mold the PLA into a more benign entity was, in the eyes of some critics, proven to be fanciful. As one observer noted, "The 10-day detention and coercive questioning of the 24 crew members of the downed U.S. Navy EP-3 aircraft ... demonstrates that China is embarking on a path of intimidation and coercion aimed at forcing America and other countries

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structive strategic partnership" with China by referring to China as a "strategic competitor." See George W. Bush, "A Distinctly American Internationalism" (Speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California, November 19, 1999), http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/wspeech.htm.

[88]This line of thinking was advanced by two of Bush's closest advisors, Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Armitage. See note 1 above.

[89]For an interesting analysis of the EP-3 incident, see James Mulvenon, "Civil-Military Relations and the EP-3 Crisis: A Content Analysis," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 1 (Winter 2002), http://www.chinaleadershipmonitor.org/20011/CLM20011JM1.pdf.

[90]Interview with Derek Mitchell, April 7, 2004.

to meet its demands."[91]

In a mid-April meeting with his national security team, Bush decided to subject military exchanges to tighter scrutiny, stating that future contacts would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told officers attending a multinational seminar on relief operations (to which Chinese officers were also invited) to "minimize contact" with their Chinese counterparts.[92] Bush's stance on military contacts was clear: "We're going to review all opportunities to interface with the Chinese. And if it enhances our relationship, it might make sense. If it's a useless exercise and it doesn't make the relationship any better, then we won't do that."[93] Bush's words set the tone for the way military relations would develop over the next three years. From the EP-3 incident onward, military relations were slow to resume, as both sides hunkered down and dealt with sensitive issues such as national missile defense, proliferation, and Taiwan.

It would be a mistake, however, to view the slowed tempo of military exchanges under the Bush administration as part of a carefully defined strategy. In fact, the story was much more complex. Bureaucratic inertia played, and continues to play, a large role in the slow pace of military exchanges between the two sides during the Bush administration. "The ineptitude and dysfunctional nature of the Pentagon bureaucracy are such that paperwork to meet a member of the PLA often takes so long to get through the system that the deadline for doing the activity passes without a decision," said one observer, "and our [Defense Department] people can't even meet with their Chinese counterparts at an event without permission."[94] Another official closely involved with the exchanges commented on how every type of visit requires intensive authorization and scrutiny, and how "rigid standards" are in place governing the pace and scope of military

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[91]Larry M. Wortzel, "How to Respond to China's Coercive Behavior," *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, no. 1431 (April 18, 2001).

[92]Bonnie S. Glaser, "Mid-Air Collision Cripples Sino-U.S. Relations," *Comparative Connections*, 2nd Quarter, 2001, http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0102Qus_china.html.

[93]Quoted by Glaser, ibid.

[94]Interview with Derek Mitchell, April 7, 2004.

exchanges.[95] This bureaucratic inefficiency was a practical, if inadvertent, element of the so-called "freeze" in military relations that took place after the EP-3 incident, and it is one of the major differences between the manner in which the Clinton and Bush administrations conducted military exchanges. For all its putative faults, the process of conducting military relations under the Clinton administration was much more streamlined, which in turn enabled readier access to PLA officials.

Bureaucratic inertia was only part of the story, however. In addition, bureaucratic rivalry between the State Department and Pentagon hindered the resumption of military ties. Despite the setbacks that the EP-3 incident dealt to the military relationship, shortly afterward the State Department concluded that it was better to have some degree of military contact with the PLA rather than none at all. According to one observer, however, the State Department had a difficult time convincing the Pentagon of the merits of increased military exchanges with the PLA.[96] After several abortive attempts to convince the Defense Department to resume military exchanges, State Department officials sought the assistance of President Bush's longtime friend and current Ambassador to China, Clark Randt, in persuading President Bush to implement resumption of the exchanges.[97]

These efforts apparently found a receptive audience in President Bush, especially following the 9/11 attacks. If nothing else, the resumption of military contacts would signal to China that the United States desired a good relationship with the PRC—one that would enable Bush to focus more intently on the war on terrorism. Thus, in conversations with Jiang Zemin at the annual APEC meeting in October 2001, Bush expressed his desire to resume military exchanges. Bush's comments took everyone by surprise, including his own staff, as this possibility was not included in his original talking points.[98] This did not lead to a quick resumption of military

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[95]Interview with former Department of Defense official, April 9, 2004.

[96]Interview with senior State Department official, November 18, 2004.

[97]Ibid.

[98]Telephone interview with David Shambaugh, May 14, 2004. See also David Shambaugh's discussion with Seiichiro Takagi, *Gaiko Forum* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 51-52.

ties, however. One observer speculated that Bush had to re-visit the issue with the Pentagon several times after the APEC meeting before the Defense Department finally acted to restart military exchanges.[99] Indeed, high-level military exchanges did not resume until December 2002—over one year after the APEC meeting—when Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith met with General Xiong Guangkai at the fifth round of DCTs.

Yet even after the December 2002 DCTs, the military relationship continued to lag until Bush reportedly sent a memo to the Pentagon in 2003 that led eventually to Cao Gangchuan's visit to the United States in October 2003, as well as General Myers' and Douglas Feith's trips to China in January and February 2004, respectively.[100] Thus, in addition to the cumbersome protocol governing U.S. military contacts with the PLA, it is clear that the policy battle between the State Department and the Defense Department—with President Bush seemingly adjudicating—contributed greatly to the snail's pace of resurrecting military exchanges from 2001 to 2004.

These events notwithstanding, the resumption of the DCTs in December 2002 was notable for a number of reasons. Interestingly, resumption of these exchanges came in conjunction with reported progress made on proliferation and human rights, lending credence to the Bush administration's goal of keeping the pace and scope of military contacts well within the confines of the broader political relationship.[101] Feith reiterated the Bush administration's policy of handling military contacts on a case-by-case basis and the U.S. desire to conduct military relations in a manner that

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[99]Ibid.

[100]Ibid.

[101]China issued new export control regulations in August and October 2002. See Philip Pan, "China Issues Rules on Missile Exports," *Washington Post*, August 25, 2002, A11; and Philip Pan, "China Embraces More Moderate Foreign Policy; Analysts Say Moves Show New Confidence," ibid., October 23, 2002, A23. China also reportedly invited UN investigators to China to explore issues related to prison abuse and religious freedom. See Philip Pan, "China Again Agrees to Let UN Investigate Rights Allegations," ibid., December 17, 2002, A23, http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0104Qus_china.html.

serves U.S. interests.[102] At the conclusion of the talks, Xiong Guangkai emphasized that China "has all along adopted a positive attitude toward developing Sino-U.S. bilateral state and military relations and will continue to conduct exchanges with the U.S. military on the principle of mutual respect, mutual benefit, increased understanding, and making external military exchanges subordinate to bilateral relations and serve bilateral relations."[103] He continued by stating his desire to work jointly with the U.S. side "to remove various kinds of interference and obstacles in the course of developing bilateral military relations, promote improvement and development of bilateral military relations, and contribute toward further deepening the constructive cooperative relationship."[104] Xiong's statements represented an interesting role reversal in the U.S.-China military relationship: now it appeared as though China was the more enthusiastic party in the relationship, while the United States was noticeably more circumspect. This was in marked contrast to the military relationship that took place during the Clinton administration, when much of the initiative and alacrity for military relations arose from the U.S. side, only to be met with caution by China. To be sure, China had always viewed military relations as an important component and symbol of a healthy bilateral relationship with the United States. However, during those periods when the United States was the more "ardent suitor," China could afford to demur and choose when to engage. With the new, seemingly more hesitant, tack taken by the George W. Bush administration, it was China that was forced to go on the diplomatic offensive. Indeed an important part of China's "proactive diplomacy" that emerged shortly before September 11 involved disabusing the world of the notion that the PRC was a "strategic competitor" of the United States. Pushing for better military relations was seen as a means of achieving that goal.

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[102]Department of Defense, "Undersecretary Feith Media Roundtable on U.S. China Defense Consultative Talks" (December 9, 2002), http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2002/t12092002_t1209feith.html.

[103]Bonnie Glaser, "Sustaining Cooperation: Security Matters Take Center Stage," *Comparative Connections*, 4th Quarter, 2002, http://www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/0204Qus_china.html.

[104]Ibid.

During 2003, a number of serious issues affected the overall U.S.-China relationship, including the North Korean nuclear problem, Taiwan's upcoming presidential election, and trade issues. Despite these issues, U.S.-China military relations took a couple of steps forward with the above-mentioned visit to the United States by Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan in October 2003[105] and visits to China by General Richard Myers and Douglas Feith in January and February 2004, respectively. Myers' trip was notable for his visit to the mission control facility of China's manned space program. It was the first time any foreign delegation was allowed access to the site.[106] A similar achievement was absent from Feith's visit, as much of his conversations with Chinese officials centered on the impending Taiwan election and other strategic issues.[107] Nevertheless, these trips symbolized a gradual improvement in U.S.-China military ties.

Conclusion:
Future Prospects for U.S.-China Military Relations

One of the central questions that this article has sought to address is whether major factors/events are the principal drivers in the U.S.-China military relationship. For instance, does the presence of a common strategic adversary make for a more stable military relationship? The answer appears to be no. Although the military relationship grew markedly throughout the 1980s in response to the Soviet threat, the Tiananmen massacre exposed the fragility of the strategic rationale underpinning U.S.-

[105]Although Cao visited, he was socially rebuffed by Rumsfeld.

[106]John J. Lumpkin, "U.S. Military Officials Report Progress with Chinese, But No Breakthroughs," Associated Press, January 17, 2004. Incidentally, one week later a group of Taiwanese middle school students visited the center. E-mail correspondence with Defense Department official, April 20, 2004.

[107]Joseph Kahn, "U.S. Asks China to Trim Threat to Taiwan," *New York Times*, February 11, 2004, A12; and Edward Cody and Philip P. Pan, "China Rejects Taiwan's Proposal for DMZ; Island's Government Told Planned Referendum Would 'Endanger Peace'," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2004, A26.

China relations and led to a rapid and significant downgrade in military relations. In fact, the Soviet threat disappeared the same week as Tiananmen. Gorbachev was in Beijing during the demonstrations. He had to be welcomed at the airport, and had to enter the Great Hall of the People by the back door. The Sino-Soviet relationship changed profoundly as a result, and that would have affected Sino-U.S. military relations even if Tiananmen had never happened. Even today, military relations between the two sides have not measured up to the broader cooperation that the United States and China have achieved in the wake of September 11. The threat of international terrorism is perceived in both countries (albeit to varying degrees). Unlike the halcyon days of the 1980s, however, the United States and China have accepted that, despite facing a common threat, a modest military relationship is for the best.

However, just as factors such as the common Soviet threat and September 11 did not provide a solid foundation on which to build the military relationship, neither did events such as Tiananmen, the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis, the Belgrade bombing, and the EP-3 incident lead to a cessation of military relations. The United States and China have both recognized the importance of keeping the lines of communication open between their respective militaries as a normal aspect of bilateral relations between most countries not at war. Of course, military relations were always the first realm to suffer and slowest to resume in the wake of those crises, and there was legitimate concern (especially on the U.S. side) as to whether or not military relations were in fact serving the purpose of enhancing understanding and reducing misperceptions. Nevertheless, after lengthy periods of dormancy, the military relationship always managed to regain some momentum.

There is no doubt, however, that one of the main challenges confronting both militaries has been in establishing an "endearing and enduring" mechanism for communication.[108] The Maritime Military Consultative

[108] Interview with Brigadier General Neal Sealock, former Beijing defense attaché, March 29, 2004.

Agreement has perhaps been the most consistent and robust forum in which the U.S. and Chinese militaries have been able to voice their opinions on matters of mutual importance, but even this venue is beginning to disappoint.[109] Cooperation in confidence-building measures (CBMs) is another arena in which strides can be made between the two militaries. Although little progress has been made recently in areas such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and medical assistance, General Myers did sign an environment protocol during his recent trip to China. These efforts may, to some observers, appear to be non-military in scope, but they nevertheless provide an opportunity for the U.S. military and the PLA to cooperate, exchange ideas, and gain mutual understanding. Whether or not these or other mechanisms will prove durable enough to withstand a future crisis in U.S.-China relations remains to be seen.

What is clear, though, is that military relations are not going to obviate the primary role of the political relationship—nor should they. The military relationship should not be oversold—neither positively with respect to the benefits nor negatively with regard to the risks; instead, it should be kept in the proper perspective as one element in the overall bilateral relationship. As mentioned, the United States and China seem to have reached an agreement that the present state of the military relationship is as it should be: modest. In fact, over the past four months, the Chinese have repeatedly stated their satisfaction with the pace and scope of the military relationship.[110] China more clearly recognizes the constraints put on the United States by domestic politics, as well as by legislation such as the National Defense Authorization Act FY/2000. The United States is content with keeping the military relationship in check while broader political issues get hammered out between the two sides. As was mentioned above, however, this is not necessarily part of a carefully defined strategy.

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[109] Great frustration is mounting on the U.S. side as China continues to show little interest in anything other than statements of "principle" regarding U.S. actions on the high seas. One observer sees this as an example of the lack of seriousness with which China holds critical and practical CBMs with the United States. E-mail correspondence with Derek Mitchell, April 20, 2004.

[110] Telephone interview with current Defense Department official, April 14, 2004.

Bureaucratic inefficiency and competition have served to encumber the military relationship, and there have been limited gains from the military relationship as a result.

A sound U.S. military-to-military strategy would combine the best aspects of the military relationship during the Clinton and Bush administrations, while jettisoning the worst. For example, the enthusiasm for, and efficiency of, military relations that were present during Clinton's tenure, coupled with the circumspection of the current administration, could make for a highly productive and durable U.S.-China military relationship. At a minimum, however, it is vital for military relations between the United States and China to be tucked under the overall relationship, and for neither the benefits nor the drawbacks of a military relationship with China to be oversold. This will make for a stronger program of military-to-military ties—one that may be able to withstand future crises.

To be sure, there are difficulties looming on the horizon, the most serious of these being Taiwan. The Taiwan factor has always been an integral part of the U.S.-China military relationship. Indeed, Taiwan was a primary reason for Beijing's reluctance to engage in closer security cooperation with the United States during the 1970s, and the Taiwan issue proved especially vexatious during the early part of the 1980s when, despite having opened formal military contacts as a result of Harold Brown's 1980 visit, the two sides partook in a serious disagreement over the issue of U.S. arms sales to the island. Later, the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis cast a dark cloud over the military relationship, leading the defense establishments of both countries to begin to view one another as adversaries. Ever since, the Taiwan issue has arisen periodically and has provoked a great deal of mutual suspicion and apprehension. Taiwan remains the most serious point of contention between the United States and China,[111] and given that the two sides could go to war over the island, the implications for U.S.-China mili-

[111]The Pentagon's recent announced sale of advanced radar equipment to Taiwan rankled with Beijing. See "China Scolds U.S. over Radar Sale," CNN.com, http://edition.cnn.com/2204/WORLD/asiapcf/04/01/taiwan.us.china/index.html; and Joseph Kahn, "In Beijing, Cheney Is Urged to Reduce Taiwan Military Support," *Washington Post*, April 14, 2004, A5.

tary relations are clear. It is therefore imperative for both sides to manage the Taiwan issue effectively in order to prevent a military confrontation.

Yet, even if the Taiwan issue is managed successfully, Beijing's suspicions with regard to U.S. intentions for the island are likely to remain. Beijing's apprehension about U.S. plans for NMD/TMD[112] and the U.S. forward military presence in East Asia is likely to persist, regardless of efforts on the U.S. side to assuage China's concerns. Simply put, China is unclear with regard to, and hence uncomfortable with, U.S. designs for East Asia. Until China gains a clearer understanding of U.S. strategic intentions, the military relationship will likely remain modest at best.[113]

Moreover, the culture of secrecy and the persistence of the Leninist legacy of tightly controlled politics in China will continue to prevent closer military relations with the United States. These characteristics of the PRC state tend to block the innovation of nimble approaches to dealing with the U.S. military and significantly hamper decision-making in times of crisis—both of which in turn arouse disappointment and frustration on the U.S. side. This is not to suggest, of course, that a more democratic China will necessarily grow less suspicious of U.S. motives for East Asia. However, a more open and predictable PRC foreign policy decision-making apparatus would likely reduce miscalculation and open up new channels of communication.

For the time being, therefore, it appears as though the military rela-

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[112]For a good discussion of China's concerns about NMD/TMD, see Alan D. Romberg and Michael McDevitt, eds., *China and Missile Defense: Managing U.S.-PRC Strategic Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003); and Paul H.B. Godwin and Evan S. Medeiros, "China, America, and Missile Defense: Conflicting National Interests," *Current History* 99, no. 638 (September 2000): 285-89.

[113]Interestingly, during a recent speech in College Station, Texas, former Chinese Vice Premier Qian Qichen (錢其琛) said, "We welcome a positive role of the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific region for regional peace and development." See "China-U.S. Relations Can Be Even Better," Xinhua News Agency, November 5, 2003. This, of course, does not mean that Chinese suspicions have abated. According to one observer, the statement may only be a signal of China's willingness to be patient while it focuses on economic development. These words could, however, be a sign that China has accepted reality, including the fact that its previous statements were only serving to isolate itself, and were raising more concerns among East Asian nations about China's—as opposed to America's—intentions for the region. E-mail correspondence with Derek Mitchell, April 20, 2004.

tionship will continue to be modest in pace and scope, with both sides making a careful effort to exact as much from the relationship as they can without overstepping the political boundaries of the overall relationship. Significant obstacles remain, however. In the final analysis, whether or not U.S.-China military relations will grow more robust over the coming years will depend largely on the willingness of both sides to work out differences regarding the goal of military exchanges, reconcile what are oftentimes conflicting strategic aims (particularly with respect to Taiwan), and overcome a latent sense of mutual mistrust that has been an integral, if unwelcome, aspect of U.S.-China relations for over fifty years. All of these difficult challenges make the future prospects of U.S.-China military relations seem, at best, uncertain.

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