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China-United States relations: The new superpower politics

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China-United States relations: The new superpower politics

Abstract

Extract:

Two events in 1999 dramatise a clear potential for the People's Republic of China and the United States of America to enter a relationship of superpower contention. The first event of note was the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade on 7 May. The second, also in May, concerns allegations of nuclear espionage levelled against China by a US congressional report. These two episodes, remarkable as they are on their own terms, are even more meaningful when viewed within a wider context of Sino-US relations on the eve of the 21st century.

Keywords

East Asia, United States, 21st century, globalisation, European Union

China-United States Relations: The New Superpower Politics

by Rosita Dellios (1)

Two events in 1999 dramatise a clear potential for the People's Republic of China and the United States of America to enter a relationship of superpower contention. The first event of note was the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade on 7 May. The second, also in May, concerns allegations of nuclear espionage levelled against China by a US congressional report. These two episodes, remarkable as they are on their own terms, are even more meaningful when viewed within a wider context of Sino-US relations on the eve of the 21st century.

Turn-of-Century Expectations

Beginning with the context before examining the particulars, it may be observed that much has been said in the remaining years of the 20th century about who will 'own' the 21st century.(2) Where will the gravity of global power reside? This speculation was not an idle one, but tempered by past, present and future orientations. First, with regard to *the past*, there has been the demonstrable rise and fall of great empires throughout the course of world history.(3) We have known in the West, for example, Pax Romana of antiquity; more recently, Pax Britannica 'ruled the waves'. In many respects, Pax Americana still does. Second, the question of who will 'own' or lead the 21st century is also informed by *contemporary developments*. With the rise of East Asia, the consolidation of Europe as a political region and the tenacity of American wealth and dominance, no one could say with confidence which region might distinguish itself above all others. The need to ascertain this is determined by a range of motives, primarily those concerned with survival, thereby leading to the third consideration behind speculations about the politics of 21st century power - that of *future orientation*. This means that governments, businesses and ordinary people feel the need to position themselves advantageously in the prevailing order. If that cannot be done, some will work to transform it. And, of course, there will always be those who seek to 'colonise' the future.(4) For speculators, the media, informational technology, and other domains of enterprise, knowledge of the temporal terrain is vital for success; the more that terrain can be 'occupied' (predetermined), the better. The future, in short, is big business.(5) The future is also of vital ethical import, where values - not only expedience - determine an interest in divining it. As one critic of the current passion for futurology - an activity engaged in by think-tanks, futurists and a myriad of consultants - put it:

. . . we have developed an ethic of forecasting that is often self-serving but ethically indifferent. . . in following our prophets we are always adaptive and exploitative creatures rather than morally purposive ones. Therefore we are not so much concerned about what the future will be because on the basis of our values we want it to be a certain way, rather we want to know what the future will be because we think this is the only way we can protect ourselves and perhaps take advantage of it. . . Instead of the ethic of responsibility which used to be integral to prophesy, we have substituted the ethic of inevitability.(6)

This passage about perceptions of the future, and our relationship to it, is also illustrative of the foreign policy dilemma faced by many states. In its quest for *survival in an anarchic world*, as the international system is traditionally depicted,(7) can the state afford to be a moral actor? This question will be revisited in view of it being a quintessentially American dilemma, with the spotlight falling most mercilessly in Washington's relations with Beijing.

Candidates for Pre-eminent Power

The need to anticipate future leadership is naturally accompanied by scenarios of varying plausibility. Possible candidates for excellence in this planetary domain of leadership need not be confined to states. There could be a world government (global problems such as population pressure and the environment need global solutions) or non-government candidates such as the ill-defined but deeply felt 'forces of globalisation'. While neither a world government nor 'global forces' are easily imagined as superpowers, a distinction hitherto conferred on states, they are potential ordering principles in an integrated world. Having acknowledged this, the indications thus far are that the state - the European Union notwithstanding - shows no symptoms of serious decline. Despite the industrious institution-building of international society - the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, international courts, various regional organisations - and its 'regime creation' (from arms control to trade liberalisation), and despite the borderless world of globalisation, the state rules supreme. Still sovereignty rests with the territorial state, with its responsibility for law and order, its right to maintain standing armies and levy taxes, its international recognition as an authoritative actor, and over which no institution has overarching power (unless freely volunteered through treaty-making or institutional agreements). States still structure our world. Strong states can determine its ethos. Globalisation might be a threat to state survival, as demonstrated by the Asian Crisis of 1997-1999 when financial deregulation stood out as the key variable which allowed crippling attacks on national currencies. However, globalisation also presents an immense opportunity for the adaptive, even avaricious, state. Diffusion of cultural products, acquisition of economic rewards through trade and investment, and universalising one's national interest are among the rewards. With the collapse of the Soviet Union on Christmas Day, 1991, the United States emerged as the solo superpower of world politics. Human rights, democracy and liberal market economics (the now widely accepted euphemism for capitalism) are its banners. As the incumbent world leader, the **United States** stands a strong chance of retaining its position as superpower, sharing its status with none.

This unchallenged position was, of course, not always the case. Quite apart from their Soviet rivals, the Americans were becoming concerned over an ally's rise to the position of economic superpower at the US's expense. Not only was **Japan** largely spared the cost of its own defence (expending a mere one percent of GNP), thanks to the pledge of American military protection, but in matters of trade, 'friction' became the epithet of US-Japan relations. The televised image of American workers smashing Japanese products captured the mood of the era. It was also a time for reflection as to the winning formula in economic competitiveness. The Confucian work ethic, which encouraged high domestic savings rates and loyalty to the state, was seen as a major contributing factor.(8) This realisation gave rise to Western interest in 'Oriental' strategic practices as an avenue of competing with the popularly termed *Japan Inc.* on its own terms of engagement. Among the more widely publicised of the 'how-to-win' manuals was a classical Chinese one, Sunzi's *Art of War*.(9) Thanks to Hollywood, the appropriation of Sunzi was to promote the stereotyping of Eastern cultures as manipulative and unethical.(10) Consequently, for most the 1980s, Japan captured the limelight as an up-and-coming global force. Because this judgement rested primarily on economic performance, with some expectation of political and military clout to follow,(11) it was the economy which was to unravel the Japanese candidacy. Japan's economic travails and lack of leadership in the 1990s, ruled out - for the foreseeable future at least - the emergence of a Japanese Century with a Confucian bent.

Retaining the Western tradition but with a Continental outlook is an old candidate with a new vision. The **European Union** burst upon the global scene with much fanfare in the early 1990s and its promise of an international system of *pooled* or *shared* sovereignty. European nation-states agreed through the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 to unite within a politically empowered regional body which also represented a borderless economic unit. The initials 'EU' came to stand for the equivalent of one country - representing a substantial population of 370 million among 15 nations - thanks to its status as a single political unit. With the introduction of a common European currency, the *euro*, in January 1999, there were expectations it would rival the US dollar as the currency for denominating international trade. Despite mid-year expectations that it would fall to parity with the US dollar, it is still too early to judge the performance of the *euro*; but in other areas the EU has appeared decidedly

lacklustre. Thus in the same year that the *euro* was launched, the entire European Commission resigned over charges of corruption and the European parliamentary elections were marred by voter apathy. Most serious of all since the Treaty of Maastricht officially united Europe was the genocidal warfare in Europe's southeast - first Bosnia, then Kosovo. The fighting could only be curbed through external (transatlantic) assistance. Here the EU failed as an enlarged 'state' and reverted to its remnant reality of a region of states. Control over defence and foreign affairs as indicators of functioning sovereignty remained unconvincing. Just as Japan was reinforcing its security links with the United States, including the promise of a theatre-missile defence (TMD) umbrella, Europe resumed its status as an American theatre of diplomacy and war. Shared sovereignty, it seems, is a condition not confined to the remodelling of Europe's political house. It is enough to be a plank in the postwar American security architecture.

There are other candidates which could qualify as global powers in the 21st century, but their current circumstances preclude consideration. Among them is Russia, which had known greatness under its Soviet guise and which still controls vast territory and Siberian resources. However, it is financially beholden to the West and militarily overshadowed by an enlarged NATO - the postwar American security architecture was extended by a post-Cold War 'east wing'.(12)

Another candidate, perhaps in the longer term, is **India**. A declared nuclear-armed state, a billion people under democratic rule, it nonetheless lacks global credentials in the key institutions, especially the UN Security Council. Moreover, India is not well understood by the rest of the world. Its preoccupations are not the world's preoccupations. Neither rivalry with Pakistan in foreign relations nor the complexity of Indian socio-political affairs internally are international staples.

This leaves **China** as a possible superpower contender. China is also not generally well understood, but the world is acutely aware of it. Indeed China itself ranks as a global preoccupation. Its external dealings are traditionally with the great and powerful. Quite apart from recent, highly publicised, dealings with Britain over the transfer of Hong Kong back to Chinese sovereignty, China's 'significant others' have always been great powers. In the nuclear era, they have been the two superpowers, the United States and the former Soviet Union. Both were friend and foe at various stages. China's emergence in 1964 as an independent nuclear power meant that all three formed the legendary strategic triangle of Cold War politics.(13) China has retained a high level of international interest, across many sectors: its economy of unrivalled promise, human rights, Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, corruption, communist rule, athletes on steroids, the one-child policy and forced abortions.(14) Beyond global consciousness of China, plus China's vigilant awareness of the world, there are facts of international clout. The PRC contributes to the International Monetary Fund - that same financial institution upon which Russia sustains itself; it sits as a permanent member on the Security Council which, besides NATO, presides over issues of war and peace; it is not beholden to the United States for promised or actual military assistance. By not being entangled in the American web of strategic alliances while occupying seats of international influence, China's freedom of action is such as to suggest a new contender for the leadership of the 21st century.

China-United States Relations

The Bilateral Dimension: Ties that Bind - Economic and Social

Herein, however, the problem of prediction begins. China, as it stands poised to occupy its centrality in global life, does not relate to the existing superpower in the usual way. Quite apart from systemic global changes (such as enhanced financial and information flows that characterise globalisation), bilateral economic as well as social factors preclude a repetition of the Cold War rivalry experienced with the Soviet Union. China's economic system is increasingly more attuned to capitalism than Communism, and there is a higher degree of social and cultural interchange between the US and China than there was between the US and the USSR. That China cannot readily be demonised as the

Communist 'other' is evident in the unwavering support it receives from American business. It is to the business lobby that annual renewal of China's Normal Trade Relations (NTR), formerly known as Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status, owes its strongest advocacy. In the decade 1989 to 1999, investment by US companies in China rose from US\$1.7 billion to US\$21 billion,(15) with large commercial agreements including the US\$3 billion Boeing contract. The American business lobby would not easily let China fall out of their reach into the forbidden fruit basket. China, too, would not readily subscribe to a new Cold War for the same rationale of economic priorities. As Peter Grier and James N. Thurnman point out: 'From its desire to enter the World Trade Organization to its need for American products and export markets, China has at least some incentives to deal positively with the world's only superpower.'(16) Another commentary remarks:

. . . extensive economic and social ties . . . have created powerful lobbies for good relations in both the U.S. and China. . . Both sides rank the other among their top trade partners. Tens of thousands of Chinese engineers . . . help keep the U.S. hi-tech sector humming, while hundreds of American non-governmental organizations work in China on projects ranging from legal reform to wetlands preservation.(17)

Indeed, the Chinese diaspora is long renowned for its ease of adapting to foreign environments, especially the United States, and for regarding this as a natural and unremarkable development. The great Chinese patriarch, Deng Xiaoping, who cheerfully wore a cowboy hat during his historic visit to the United States, thought nothing of even being related to an American - his grandchild being an American citizen. The same could not have been said of the Soviets, despite sharing with the Americans a common European cultural heritage.(18)

The Domestic Dimension: Policy by the Polls

It is in these people-to-people relationships that China's lasting global credentials are imperceptibly being developed. The key difference with the American and Chinese people-to-people strategies, be they deliberate or inadvertent, lies with the American system of lobby or political interest groups. These 'regularized channels of articulation and participation'(19) affect policy-making while the Chinese socio-cultural system does not; at least not in any instrumental fashion. As in dynastic times, foreign policy is the province of bureaucrats and high levels of government. Therefore, Chinese 'people power' has traditionally been understood as a vast creative reservoir of humanity within and beyond China. It has long been networking the world in business and trade, its material culture and social practices, but has also been available to the state for political purposes. This was evident in the Maoist era when mass mobilisation meant, among other things, 'every man a soldier'. In the present era the campaign is to modernise China's techno-economic structure, a task readily adopted by Chinese who wish to improve their quality of life. Hence officially approved programs for popular adoption harness politics to society. China is still at the stage where its government feels it cannot unleash interest group lobbying into mainstream politics. While this retards the evolution of civil society, it does bolster the effectiveness of the state in the conduct of foreign policy.

The debilitating effect of domestic interest groups may be seen in recent failures in American foreign relations. Thus in April 1999, President Bill Clinton did not appear effective as a world leader when he rejected Zhu Rongji's trade concessions in exchange for American support for China's entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Nor did he impress his Australian allies in July 1999 when he introduced punitive tariffs on lamb imports. In the first case he was fearful of an anti-China mood in Congress; in the second he wanted to appease the American lamb industry. This is a minor lobby but with a strong advocate in Senator Tom Daschle, who has been described as a 'key [Clinton] ally in the Lewinsky-scandal impeachment battle'.(20) Neither of these decisions advances the free trade proposition which the US formally espouses. China, among the world's largest economies, is prevented from partaking in the premier multilateral economic institution for 'rules-based' trade; Australia, a junior alliance partner to the US, can be forgiven for feeling like an economic enemy. 'Nothing will win an argument with Clinton when the other side of the argument is opinion polls and domestic politics,'(21) remarked one Australian press commentary. Another observed that:

. . . having a relationship with the US is now a complicated affair. It can only succeed as a multilayered exercise - involving the President, the administration, the Congress, the media, the Washington elites and the people.

. . . The US is the only superpower today and indulges itself. American unilateralism, Hollywood extravagance and congressional assertion are features of its polity. Dealing with this challenge needs lots of money and effort - and a recognition that you can't always win.(22)

Such are the perceptions forming about American unipolar power by those on the periphery. Other nations affected by US barriers to imports at this time were New Zealand, also a major lamb exporter, and Brazil whose steel exports were restricted because of lobbying by American unions. US appeasement of farmers and unionists was justified, paradoxically, as 'an essential step to win local support for future international trade agreements'.(23) Such contradictory behaviour from the champion of global free trade cannot be regarded as a mere aberration of the current leadership. From the Australian perspective, the most irksome post-Cold War feature of the Australia-US relationship has been US trade hypocrisy in that subsidised US farm exports have competed for Australia's markets overseas. As for China's bid for entry into the GATT/WTO (24) system since 1986, it has consistently been blocked despite extensive foreign trade reforms on China's part. The reasons are only superficially economic. As Yongjin Yang remarks:

For China, membership in the so-called 'Economic United Nations', either the GATT or the WTO, is a matter of prestige for an increasingly powerful nation. The waxing and waning of Sino-US relations has further exacerbated the politicisation of China's bid for GATT/WTO membership [politicised because of Western disapproval of China's domestic policies - e.g. human rights, Tibet, the Tiananmen tragedy of 1989]. While the United States negotiators manifested recalcitrance to compromise, a popular perception in China is that the United States is constantly moving the goal posts so as to block China's entry, and that such recalcitrance is a component of American containment strategy against China.(25)

No Friends or Enemies in a Unipolar World, Only Behaviour Modification

Thus the pressures of domestic politics in the US provide some explanation for peculiarities in foreign policy thinking. But beyond degrees of domestic excitation on individual presidencies, as well as historical-cultural dispositions (discussed below), the law of the jungle in international relations - that quest for *survival in an anarchic world* - also rates consideration. Thus the maxim that *there are no permanent friends or enemies, only interests* can be relied upon to shape Sino-US relations. If it is in the USA's interest to retain a preponderance of power globally - a unipolar system with itself as the solitary pole star - then containment of competitors is the order of the day. Disciplinary action against defiant players might normally be expected to be masked as the socialisation process needed for rectifying deviance. By the same token, reliable lieutenants are also required in maintaining the unipolar system; hence a certain degree of encouragement must be provided to great but largely obedient powers. They must be convinced of having a stake in the system, that it is in their national interests to support the US-guaranteed Western international order. In East Asia, Japan falls into this category; China is problematic. One might be regarded as the lieutenant, the other as the deviant - its defiance never far from the surface.

Thus if American business interests and a certain diplomatic duplicity about 'containing' China mean that China fails as a traditional enemy, equally it disqualifies as a traditional ally. A proud cultural nation with a population almost six times larger than the USA and representing a fifth of the world's entire population, China is not easily enticed or sheltered by anyone's strategic umbrella. So if it cannot be an ally - a lieutenant - in that it does not need or want American protection, and it has not reverted to enemy status as it had been when the US treated China as part of the Soviet Communist monolith, then how contained or engaged is the PRC? This is difficult to fathom, though the patterns of the past offer some guidance in revealing a fluctuating mixture of both. Today's disharmony was also yesterday's; only its contents have changed.

The Historical-Cultural Dimension: Herding Sheep with Wolves

As enumerated by Helle Bering, Sino-American relations appear predictable in their unpredictability:

Under the Clinton administration . . . this difficult and delicate [US-China] relationship has experienced threatening turmoil. At various times, the White House has: hectoring China on human rights; placed trade with China above all; exported sensitive satellite technology and super computers to China; taken money for the president's 1996 re-election campaign; almost gone to war with China over Taiwan; denied Taiwan the right to self-determination publicly; prevented the FBI from uncovering Chinese theft of American nuclear secrets; bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.(26)

Harvey Sicherman wryly adds his judgement of the Sino-US summit in April 1999:

. . . the China that at last could say yes to American demands encountered an America that at last could say no to Chinese deals. . . Having signalled for months what was needed for a deal, the President then abruptly turned it down. To the Chinese, the Americans had become inscrutable.(27)

Is there a paradox? Despite keeping it out of the 'Economic United Nations' (i.e. WTO), Washington's declaratory China policy is *engagement*. This position of bringing China into the Western-mediated world rather than locking it out or leaving it alone, has its historical inception in the USA's China policy of the 19th century. At the same time that Britain was successfully prosecuting its Opium Wars against China, divesting it of Hong Kong and much of its pride, American diplomatic policy began to exhibit the familiar symptoms of vacillation, sometimes known as a love-hate affair. It swung between conciliation (today's *engagement*) and coercion (now known as *containment*). To quote David L. Anderson on this historic period:

Anson Burlingame, . . . the first American diplomat to reside in Peking, respected China as a sovereign nation and a venerable civilization, and he advocated a policy of patient, peaceful dealings with the Chinese. J. Ross Browne, who followed Burlingame, considered the Chinese backward and stubborn; he favored forceful and united foreign pressure for change in China. The methods of these two ministers - conciliation and coercion - represented the extremes in the American options in China. The policies of their successors generally fell somewhere between the two.

. . . Overall, the efforts of these envoys gave American policy in China . . . an obvious ambivalence that reflected a basic dilemma: Should the United States follow the other Western nations in forcing its will upon China or instead pursue a different course premised on respect for Chinese sovereignty? This quandary originated in the competing forces of Western imperialism and American idealism - the two impulses that shaped United States China policy in the nineteenth century.(28)

Anderson goes on to show Americans to be a 'people of paradox', because of their ability to survive and tame the frontier (the survivalist-imperialist strain), as well as contribute to 'civilisation' through the establishment of their democratic republic (American idealism). Indeed, 'Many Americans considered it their duty to share their superior creation with others.'(29)

At the end of the 20th century, the United States portrayed its idealism through the waging of high-tech 'just wars'. For many, including the Chinese Government concerned that its own restive regions might attract similar interventions, these wars were as demonstrative of American military technology as of the pursuit of moral principles. Moreover, the technology meant that the responsibilities of global moral guardian did not entail expenditure of American blood. The 1999 Kosovo war had shown that casualties were mostly foreign civilians. Under such circumstances of 'machine-over-man' (to employ an inversion of Mao's 'man-over-machine' dictum), enemy soldiers and leaders have fared better. This has been the 'cutting edge' of *American idealism* at the cusp of the new millennium. Its *imperialism* has revealed itself in the same circumstances: the pursuit of 'just causes' in foreign theatres of war, and the above-mentioned indulgence of a self-satisfied power - deploying foreign affairs in the service of domestic triumphs. In this way, Clinton sacrifices Zhu, American sheep have precedence over Australian lambs. Both Zhu Rongji with his trade deal for China's WTO entry, and Australian lamb imports, to use diverse examples, fell victim to the domestic imperative in US politics. In broader terms of the American dilemma, imperial wolves still parade as sheep (unilateralism masquerading as global moral guardianship) while some sheep despair they might be wolves (idealists suspect their causes have been hijacked by less noble policy minds). The duality is

by no means easily resolved.

The New Superpower Politics

However, neither idealism nor imperialism, engagement or containment, is up to the task in the new superpower politics with China. The United States might not always realise it but China is well past the *containment* category as a political option. As already noted, China is capitalistic in economic orientation. Additionally, its diplomatic relations are well entrenched globally, and the transnational socio-cultural-business nexus, particularly as expressed by the business links with overseas Chinese (who are China's biggest category of investor), has never been healthier. The time is ripe for accepting China on its own terms, not only as a country worthy of American *engagement* but as an engaging partner.

Thus the next move which beckons is still to be taken: *being engaged or partnered by China*. After all, it is not only China that needs to be 'socialised' (or 'disciplined'); so does the United States in view of its alienating behaviour towards various nations in varying degrees - China and Russia being the foremost great powers to feel the impact. While Washington is still reluctant to even think about a more equalised partnership of power, it cannot afford to manoeuvre in the narrow band of engagement-containment strategy either. As one American academic cautioned: "We don't have a strategic partnership or alliance with China. But we have to have constructive relations, there needs to be a continuing dialogue."(30)

There was a time, of unrequited idealism perhaps, when China thought it could be a 'partner'; finding its equilibrium, neither too much *yang* (overbearing) nor too much *yin* (appearing weak). It happened during the 1950s with the Soviet Union (a failed enterprise in that Moscow became 'overbearing' as elder communist brother) and during the late 1990s with the United States (another failed enterprise in that Washington, with its preponderance of power, does not need a partner). **The key to the new superpower politics, which reflect United States-China relations at this turn of the new century, rests with a Chinese desire to transform the existing relationships of power, where alliances are pledged, to more egalitarian relationships of loose partnerships based on multipolar (rather than uni- or bipolar) relations.** It is in the thwarting of this endeavour that we are seeing a strengthening of *contention*, rather than *cooperation*, between the established and sole superpower, the USA, and the emergent superpower of the 21st century, the People's Republic of China. This *contention* is not a Cold War revisited, but a subtle play for world order legitimacy. How the world might best be run is an issue of governance. In the new superpower politics the central objective is not the accumulation of preponderant power, but the ability to cultivate 'good governance' in the prevailing or evolving socio-political structures like the United Nations. A superpower in the 21st century does not patrol the world, projecting its power hither and thither. It commands from the rear, in a *wu-wei* fashion. 'The way [*dao*] never acts yet nothing is left undone.'(31) The superpower of the 20th century becomes the metapower of the 21st.(32) It is a *laissez-faire* philosophy with a Daoist-Confucian ethic.(33) In other words, as an exemplar and facilitator, a metapower leaves the world alone to improve itself, not destroy itself. The capitalist *laissez-faire* idea regards non-intervention by governments in markets as beneficial to the economy; similarly the Daoist-Confucian view warns against imposing one's politics and morality on others. Rather, it is better to set an example by one's own behaviour and to facilitate/cultivate that which is beneficial in the world. This is old wisdom, but also in light of the ideological feuds of the 20th century, it is new thinking.

Where does the new superpower politics begin? Appropriately enough, it began, as before, in Moscow. The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution armed Russia for ideological combat with the United States in the decades after the Second World War. This relationship of *contention* proved counter-productive. People feared all-out nuclear war; the Soviet economy was crushed by attempts to match American military expenditure. Thus from *contention*, the Soviet Union switched in the 1980s to a superpower relationship of *cooperation*. This came from the inspiration of its last president, Mikhail Gorbachev, who through his New Thinking brought the Cold War with its 'balance of terror' to an end. The price was a cruel one; the country he led disintegrated. Nonetheless, Gorbachev's New

Thinking did result, for a brief period, in cooperative relations between the world's two superpowers; the finest example being that the two were diplomatic allies once more, as they had been in World War II, during the 1991 Gulf War. Both the Bolshevik Revolution and Gorbachev's New Thinking were attempts to transform the prevailing paradigm of political relations. Their failure was in no small way related to their idealism. This reading is beginning to show in the third attempt at *a new superpower politics*, this time prosecuted by China but through relations with Russia. It began in Moscow in April 1997, when a Sino-Russian declaration endorsed 'a new multipolar world'. The decision to do so on Moscow's part was understandable in view of NATO's eastward expansion unto the old Soviet frontier. The new Sino-Russian relationship which resulted was termed a 'strategic partnership'.

The rhetoric of 'strategic partnership' was notable again in Sino-American summitry in October 1997 (Jiang in the US), June 1998 (Clinton in China) and was reinforced by Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to the United States in April 1999. But Washington was not interested in a 'strategic partnership' with China, real or symbolic, only in its rhetorical value in American-Chinese relations and as a parallel to China's 'strategic partnership' with Russia. Indeed, the American offer in 1994 of another type of partnership - a 'partnership for peace' - in an effort to mollify Russia which objected to NATO's expansion, was also of limited value: 'window-dressing', as appraised by one critic.⁽³⁴⁾ As the Russians argued at the time: '. . . if "partnership" is to mean anything it must include cooperation, consultation and the banning of unilateral actions.'⁽³⁵⁾ Five years later in Kosovo, Russia matched its words with unscheduled independence of action in the NATO-led peacekeeping operation. It also engaged in a military readiness exercise of unprecedented proportions since the Cold War. The object of these July 1999 'war games' appeared to be defence against an invasion of Russia by NATO. Thus in the Kosovo theatre, Russia was determined not to be seen as a junior partner of the reinvigorated *pax Americana*. In the broader European theatre of air-land combat readiness, it was baring its defensive teeth.

China's 'strategic partnership' concept also sought to evade American collusive structures. Evasion from superpower dominance through a strategy of cooperative and equal relations in a multipolar setting was soon to turn to antagonism.⁽³⁶⁾ Nonetheless, there was merit in the partnership idea while it lasted. This was because a 'partnership', as China saw it, was not as formal as an alliance with its Cold War connotations; and hence it was 'not aimed at third parties' but encouraged 'a new world'. To quote a recent commentary on China's concept of security:

China's growing collection of "strategic partnerships" with key nations and political-economic organizations such as the European Union and ASEAN . . . apparently are China's alternative to bilateral alliances. According to Chinese spokesmen these partnerships are not formal alliances and are "not aimed at third parties." While some are more symbolic than real, they are the bilateral vehicles the Chinese use to settle disagreements or reach agreement on common interests. The Chinese claim their "strategic partnership" with Russia is the model.⁽³⁷⁾

The demise of the American 'strategic partnership', however, was clearly seen in the much remarked upon incident of Premier Zhu failing to gain US backing for China's admission to the WTO despite concessions for 'US priority products'. The final straw for China came the following month with the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

Bombing of Chinese Embassy in Belgrade

The US government explained the destruction of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade on 7 May 1999 (which was 8 May, Beijing time) during a NATO bombing sortie as an accident. The intended target was said to be not the Chinese embassy but the headquarters of the Yugoslav Federal Supply and Procurement Directorate. The resultant error, in which three Chinese journalists were killed and 20 Chinese nationals injured, was blamed on an out-of-date map used for target selection. Coming from the country with the world's most sophisticated spy organisation the mistake is difficult to comprehend. It may well have been an accident, but its demands on credibility are enormous. So much so that China did not accept this explanation. Nor did it appreciate Washington's mealy-

mouthed acknowledgement of wrong-doing. As a Shanghai source put it, President Bill Clinton's written apology comprised 'five paragraphs on how great America is and two paragraphs to say sorry to the Chinese people'.(38) Emotionally-charged demonstrations occurred in China, with the American embassy in Beijing being stoned and besieged by the demonstrators. Sino-US relations suffered a suspension of trade negotiations (including China's potential entry into WTO). Also suspended were military linkages including landing rights for US military aircraft in Hong Kong and port calls by US warships. The conditions set by China for restoring relations were fourfold: an apology for the bombing; a thorough investigation of the bombing incident; publication of the investigation's findings; and punishment of those responsible.

Washington was not prepared to engage in a full 'kowtow',(39) but did select a delegation to travel to Beijing under the leadership of Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering, the third highest official in the State Department. China did not agree to receive the Pickering delegation immediately but imposed a three-week delay. An apology and an explanation based on a 14-page public report were proffered.

Backed by officials from the Pentagon, the CIA and the National Security Council, Pickering tried to explain the bombing as a "tragic accident." Using slides and diagrams, they outlined the mistakes that led an American B-2 bomber to drop five 2,000-pound bombs on the Chinese Embassy. First outdated maps failed to show the new address of the Chinese Embassy, or the intended target, the Yugoslav military procurement agency. Then a U.S. intelligence officer located the agency address, incorrectly, by extrapolating from the numbering system on parallel streets. Faulty U.S. databases and NATO's normal targeting review failed to catch the mistake, and the bomber crew, flying at night, did not see telltale markings on the Chinese Embassy.(40)

China rejected the explanation as 'illogical' and 'unacceptable',(41) complained that those responsible for the bombing were not identified and punished, and added a fifth demand to its list of requirements for resumption of normal working relations: compensation for the loss of lives, injuries and damage to the embassy.

In analysing the Chinese response, Joseph Fewsmith, has observed:

Chinese officials seem particularly frustrated by two points: the old map explanation and the fact that the unorthodox field method, which was used to select the target that turned out to be the Chinese embassy, was apparently not used to select any other target. Chinese contrast the relative vagueness of Pickering's report with the excruciating detail in the Starr investigation of President Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky. If such an unimportant thing as a sexual affair could be revealed in such detail, it is asked, why couldn't there be an equal level of detail in dealing with such a serious matter as the embassy bombing?(42)

Even non-Chinese commentary regarded the bombing as 'bizarre and still unexplained'.(43) If it was an accident, it was an extremely meaningful one. Like Russia, China suspects the US of hegemonic designs. Hence it was opposed to the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia. As the *China Daily* puts it, the US wants to become 'Lord of the Earth'.(44) In its position of sole superpower, it has the capacity to hegemonise as it pleases, particularly given 'just cause'. The embassy and associated loss of life was the casualty of NATO's military awakening after half a century of dormant readiness. It was deployed in Europe, a theatre for which it was originally intended, though not against a superpower. Despite the absence of a military superpower as opponent, American power - not European - was dominant in the alliance. Of the nearly 1100 aircraft deployed for the airwar, 769 were American,(45) while the entire Chinese embassy bombing fiasco was an American affair - from target selection to the B-2 bomber used.

Thus the lesson here is that a separate European military response was not brought to bear on an opponent whose capability was well within Europe's capabilities. The purpose of the airwar was also within European sensibilities of response. After all, the EU took exception to dealing with the ruling military regime of Burma on the basis of its human rights violations and anti-democratic orientation. This stance against Burma impacted on relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

(ASEAN) which had accepted Burma as a member in 1997, the Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM) meeting and attendance of an anti-narcotics conference in Burma. Presumably action closer to home would be in order, particularly in terms of degree of moral outrage it might be expected to invoke. The brutality exhibited by the regime of the Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic, against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, should be within the EU's moral response range. It is well within geostrategic range. American help, military and moral, was theoretically superfluous. In practice, however, NATO - like the UN endorsement of the Gulf War eight years earlier - functioned perhaps most strategically as a fig-leaf for American military action abroad.

Accidental or not, the US attack on China's embassy was the incident which captured for a tragic moment in history the enormous rift of incomprehension between the two sides, American and Chinese. It occurred in Europe, in the midst of a medieval war of atrocities forced to a close by modern interventionary weapons. The target selection was clearly not sophisticated enough to avoid human error in the 11-week airwar. Targeting errors, assuming for the moment that they were genuine errors, were not confined to the Chinese embassy. The Albanian side of the border was bombed, for example, as were fleeing refugees within Kosovo. These errors rested uneasily not only with the most advanced military technology at humankind's disposal but also with the sense of omnipotence that accompanied the strikes. To quote British commentator Beatrix Campbell: 'NATO bombed Serbia from 15,000 feet as if we were God, and it created an interregnum between the sky and earth.'(46)

It is in the nature of things omnipotent, when viewed at close range, to refract doubt and suspicion. Did the US have other than humanitarian motives in going to war in Europe? Was the embassy bombing accidental? Why the fuss? The *Washington Post* in a trite response typifying many American commentaries seized on Beijing's 'cynical manipulation' of events.(47) The *Turkish Daily News* takes a more global view: 'China is on the way to becoming the next pillar of power and is trying to end America's unipolar global supremacy.'(48) If so, can China succeed?

The Cox Report

Here the second notable incident in May 1999 bears relevance: allegations of nuclear espionage by China. Though the leaked findings of the congressional committee, comprising both Democrats and Republicans and headed by Representative Christopher Cox (California Republican), had been the subject of controversy for three months, it was on 25 May that the three-volume document was officially released. The entire report was not released, as a third of it remains classified. Entitled 'U.S. Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China', it painted a worst-case scenario of Chinese theft of US nuclear secrets.(49) Its key assertions are that the alleged theft of nuclear secrets is said to have been happening for at least two decades, that China has information on the entire American arsenal plus knowledge of the neutron bomb, and China's nuclear weapons modernisation will benefit from this information - all of which the Chinese government has denied exhaustively.

The Cox Report does not stop at drawing up an inventory of theft based on circumstantial evidence, nor at the assumption that these secrets will be used to upgrade China's nuclear forces. It speculates beyond the more straightforward confines of capability into the evaluative domain of intentions. It warns that China's long-term intentions are not honourable and could result in 'confrontation' between the US and China. It is here that the Cox Report betrays its threat perceptions of China as a future adversary. It states:

The PRC seeks foreign military technology as part of its efforts to place the PRC at the forefront of nations and to enable the PRC to fulfill its international agenda. The PRC's long-run geopolitical goals include incorporating Taiwan into the PRC and becoming the primary power in Asia.

The PRC has not ruled out using force against Taiwan, and its thefts of U.S. technology have enhanced its military capabilities for such a force.

The PRC has also asserted territorial claims against other Southeast Asian nations and Japan, and has

used its military forces as leverage in asserting these claims.

The PRC goals conflict with current U.S. interests in Asia and the Pacific, and the possibility of a U.S.-PRC confrontation cannot be dismissed.(50)

By comparison, a report by the CIA was less alarmist. Its assessment of 21 April 1999 concluded:

China's technical advances have been made on the basis of classified and unclassified information derived from espionage, contact with U.S. and other countries' scientists, conferences and publications, unauthored media disclosures, declassified weapons information and Chinese indigenous development. The relative contribution of each cannot be determined.(51)

Clearly, the acquisition of scientific knowledge is not dependent on espionage alone, particularly in this information-rich society. Moreover, there is an element of arrogance in denying others their own capabilities in advanced nuclear research. The Chinese have already claimed credit for their own scientific research, including mastery of the neutron bomb.(52) Finally, is nuclear research an American monopoly? After all, scientific research secrets are 'neither absolute nor one nation's property'.(53)

As an afterthought, one might reflect on the implications of the Cox Report if it were true. The feared 'confrontation' between the US and China may never occur. If China's ability to steal every meaningful nuclear secret from the Americans is any indication, the United States has already been defeated - not in some futuristic nuclear battlefield in the Pacific but by an inability to conceal its sources of superiority domestically. Erosion of the scientific base is matched by the USA's questionable ability to protect its highest political office from election funds bribery. China figured prominently in this field of endeavour as well, when it was accused of making donations for the president's 1996 re-election campaign. Wars, hot and cold, are won by many means and not just through superior military technology. This is a standard strategic observation. That China actually has a nuclear arsenal, which it is modernising, should serve as some consolation for United States. In some senses, it means that China is not practising the extremities of Sunzi's philosophy that all warfare is deception; rather, it is clear in communicating its possession of a nuclear deterrent. Nuclear weapons are emblems of power which the US can relate to. China having so few of them - only an estimated 17 to 20 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) compared to more than 7,000 American ICBMs - suggests that it is still able to unnerve the US. Thus Sunzi's advice retains some relevance. To disrupt the opponent's psychological equilibrium is not 'deception' as such, but it may be regarded as manipulation - a standard injunction of strategists the world over, not only of the classical Chinese.

Herein lies intimations of the new superpower politics. It is not necessary to have 10,000 nuclear weapons (the USA's total), or the best bomber fleet, or even aircraft carriers to be a challenge to a superpower - thereby being equated to one. It is not even necessary to be an economically developed country. It is enough to have a psychological hold on that superpower, to be able to influence it sufficiently that it shapes its decisions in accordance with your dispositions. When the USA bases its policies on China's dispositions - be they political, economic, military-strategic, cultural, social or psychological - it may be said that China is a superpower. If China uses this 'power' toward productive partnership, in an expanding circle of partnerships, with countries large and small, then we have the new metapower politics (see discussion above). No longer would one partner shape its policies in accordance with the dispositions of another. The learning curve would overtake this inherently unequal relationship of power - even if that power, paradoxically, rests with the weaker, 'manipulative', side. When arrogance and fear pass, manipulation becomes redundant. If the present indications of contention can be overtaken by the dynamics of cooperative partnerships in a multipolar world, then the new superpower politics is to be welcomed not feared.

Where does this leave us - governments and of less powerful nations and people the world over (including those in the US and China) - who are watching the proceedings from the sidelines? Acts of international impact begin with whispers of encouragement. Audience reaction/participation still matter for the big players on the global stage. If it did not, then there would be no need for noble

pretexts to go to war. An American *laissez-fair* and a Chinese *wu-wei* superpower needs to be encouraged in its *dao*. By non-doing - or doing nothing unnatural - everything will fall into its rightful place under Heaven. This means that every time untoward events transpire in foreign lands, as occurred for example during pro-reform demonstrations in Iran in July 1999, it is not necessary for the US to sound a warning to the authorities to behave. Concerns are best raised indirectly through a third party or the United Nations. In being a *laissez-faire* power, the US needs to be less of a vocal 'busy-body' and more of an indirect (helpful) influence. Similarly, China's *dao* of *wu-wei* diplomacy might mean less of the rhetorically hot, 'Peking Opera', approach to perceived slights (such as attacks on its 'one China' policy), and more attention to the cool logic of making itself an attractive focus, in investment and ideas, for Chinese and foreigners alike. This is based on the traditional notion of *laihua* ('come and be transformed'), which refers to the magnetic appeal of civilisational virtue over barbarism.

Conclusion

Both the bombing of the Chinese embassy (if accidental) and the theft of American nuclear secrets (if true) may ultimately reflect American incompetence. Such carelessness is compounded by an arrogant inability to take the initiative to repair US-China relations, rather than allowing the relationship to continue to be events-driven. Alternatively, if the embassy bombing was deliberate - even if unknown to President Clinton and his advisers - and the revelation of nuclear espionage by China was overstated for political impact, the US demonstrates irrational, self-defeating, tendencies. China, feeling the heat of American hostility, would in all probability seek to defend itself through a range of measures, including an arms buildup. After all, as has been remarked: 'NATO's use of force in Kosovo demonstrated that in the final analysis "military force is the sole criterion of truth".'⁽⁵⁴⁾ US inflexibility over China's accession to WTO, followed by the tragic bombing of the PRC embassy, occurred within an atmosphere of distrust generated by nuclear spy charges. Such episodes may seem transitory, yet their effects could be devastating. One effect of considerable concern is that Chinese domestic politics could take a more conservative turn, away from the deep economic reforms which would have resulted (and hopefully may yet result) if the Jiang-Zhu leadership were given its head to continue, through WTO membership, and had its face been saved by better American management of the relationship. This attitude is unlikely to be rectified in the near-term, given the intervening concerns of US presidential elections in 2000. As matters stand, it is now largely up to China to show the magnanimity needed to correct potentially dangerous deviations in international relations. It is a leadership role which China, by setting an example, may be increasingly called upon to perform. If so, the new superpower politics is off to a promising start.

Footnotes

1. Rosita Dellios is Associate Professor of International Relations at Bond University. Her email address is rosita_dellios@bond.edu.au

2. For example: Lester Thurow, *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe and America*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1993; Robert Elegant, *Pacific Destiny: The Rise of the East*, Headline, London, 1991; and Daniel Burstein, *Yen: The Threat of Japan's Financial Empire*, Bantam/Schwartz, Sydney, 1988. There is also the literature of defiance from Japan and China. Foremost examples include: Shintaro Ishihara, *The Japan That Can Say No: Why Japan will be First Amongst Equals*, (trans. Frank Baldwin), Simon & Schuster, NY, 1991; Song Qiong, Zhang Zangzang, Qiao Bian, et al., *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu - lengzhang hou shidaide zhengzhi yu qinggan jueze (China Just Say No: Political and Emotional Choices in the Post-Cold War World)*, Zhonghua gongshang lianhe chubanshe, Beijing, 1996; Sun Geqin and Cui Hongjian (eds), *Erzhi Zhongguo: Shenghua yu Xianshi (Containing China: Myth and Reality)*, Yanshi Press, Beijing, 1996; and Liu Xiguang and Liu Kang, *Yaomohua Zhongguode beihou (Behind the Demonisation of China)*, Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, Beijing, 1997. That there are non-English works, pitched to a domestic market, shows the subject is not confined to Western intellectuals.

3. Besides such classic works as those of historian Arnold Toynbee, among the better contemporary publications is Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, Random House, New York, 1987.
4. An expression used in Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Polity Press, Oxford, 1991, pp. 111, 129.
5. See *New Internationalist*, No. 269, July 1995.
6. Max Dublin, *Futurehype*, Viking, Markham, Ontario, 1989, p. 14.
7. The seminal work on this is: Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Macmillan, London, 1977.
8. Better known among the studies conducted into Confucian culture as an explanation of East Asian economic success is: Reg Little and Warren Reed, *The Confucian Renaissance*, Federation Press, Sydney, 1989.
9. Sun, Tzu [Zi] (1988) *The Art of War* (trans. Lionel Giles), Graham Brash, Singapore, 1988. Other such 'manuals' are: *The Wiles of War: 36 Military Strategies from Ancient China* (comp. and trans. Sun Haichen), Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1991; and Takuan Soho, *Immovable Wisdom: The Art of Zen Strategy* (comp. and trans. Nobuko Hirose), Element Books, Shaftesbury, Dorset, 1992. Representative of numerous books capitalising on this interest is: Chin-Ning Chu, *The Asian Mind Game*, Stealth Productions, Crows Nest, Australia, 1995. It is described on the cover as, 'A Westerner's Survival Manual'.
10. The movie *Wall Street* depicted the star villain, a corporate raider, as enacting Sunzi's advice.
11. For instance, it was thought that Japan should be invited as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and that article 9 of its postwar constitution should be amended to allow unimpeded defence force development. Hence Japan would then be a 'normal' country, rather than one constitutionally tethered to its wartime defeat. Given the region's historical memories and suspicions of Japan's militarist past, plus opposition from concerned sections of its own population, this was not to transpire.
12. This was based on the first round of NATO expansion, and further indirect cooperation through the 'partnership for peace'.
13. This meant no one player could do anything decisive against another without the third player gaining. There was also the two against one strategy, often referred to by Washington as the 'China card' in its dealings with Moscow. The pattern changed in the mid-1980s. As David Shambaugh puts it: 'During the mid-late 1980s, Beijing instead played a high-stakes strategic game by advancing its relations with both superpowers simultaneously while Washington and Moscow pursued their own *detente*' ('Sino-American Relations', in Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (eds), *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 205). See also: Yongjin Zhang, *China in International Society Since 1949: Alienation and Beyond*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1998, pp. 67, 99.
14. Former foreign correspondents are especially adept at presenting a wide array of issues pertaining to China. See Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising China*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London, 1994; and Jan Wong, *Red China Blues: My Long March from Mao to Now*, Doubleday/Anchor, Toronto, 1997. Travel writers also display a flair for feeding the Western appetite for understanding China through contemporary concerns. See Paul Theroux, *Riding the Iron Rooster: By Train Through China*, Penguin Books, London, 1988; and Christopher West, *Journey to the Middle Kingdom*, Simon & Schuster, London, 1991.
15. Bruce Gilley, Trish Saywell and Lorien Holland, 'Uneasy Together', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 June 1999.
16. Peter Grier and James N. Thurnman, 'US-China Spy Spat: Why It's Not Cold War', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 26 May 1999.
17. Gilley, Saywell and Holland, *op. cit.*
18. Though interestingly enough, the son of former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev became an American citizen in 1999 claiming now that the Cold War was over it did not matter. (BBC World News, 13 July 1999).
19. Shambaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

20. Cameron Forbes, 'No Help for the Mouse that Roared', *The Australian*, 12 July 1999, p. 4.
21. Greg Sheridan, 'US has No Business to be So Rash', *The Australian*, 9 July 1999, p. 15.
22. Paul Kelly, 'We'll be Losers in a Lamb War', *The Australian*, 14 July 1999, p. 13.
23. Richard McGregor, 'Lamb Ban Threat to Free Trade', *The Australian*, 12 July 1999, p. 1.
24. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was incorporated into a the newly created WTO.
25. Yongjin Zhang, *op. cit.*, p. 238. See also Sun Geqin and Cui Hongjian (eds), *Erzhi Zhongguo: Shenghua yu Xianshi (Containing China: Myth and Reality)*, Yanshi Press, Beijing, 1996, pp. 687-734.
26. Helle Bering, 'No Romantic Engagement', *Washington Times*, 29 May 1999.
27. Harvey Sicherman, 'The Inscrutable Americans, Zhu Rongji, and The Deal That Wasn't', Foreign Policy Research Institute, 30 April 1999 (<http://www.apsanet.org/Related/fpri.html>).
28. David L. Anderson, *Imperialism and Idealism: American Diplomats in China, 1861-1898*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1985, pp. 1-2.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
30. Nancy Bernkkopf of Georgetown University, quoted in Grier and Thurman, *op. cit.*
31. Lao Tzu (Laozi), *Tao Te Ching (Daodejing)*, (trans. D. C. Lau), Penguin, London, 1963, Book 1, 37:81.
32. To understand better the notion of metapower, here is how I have depicted it elsewhere (Rosita Dellios, "'How May the World be at Peace?': Idealism as Realism in Chinese Strategic Culture', in Valerie M. Hudson (ed.), *Culture and Foreign Policy*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, Colorado, 1997, pp. 215-216.):

Metapower (*wu-wei*, *de*, indirect power). A nation which exhibits a preponderance of Western realist *wu* [martial]-backed power is popularly termed a superpower. This term describes capability and a willingness to flaunt it (status-wise) or mobilize it (for punitive measures) in the interests of system maintenance. In doing so a superpower exercises hegemonic leadership by (1) setting the standard of international norms and rules of behaviour, and (2) acting as the guarantor of international stability. Such hegemony may have imperial implications, depending on the prevailing international political fashion. Given all these characteristics of superpower capability, international will, and hegemonic implications, how does it register in terms of *de* [the power of virtue and character]? . . . Is its hegemony morally sanctioned? Without a moral center . . . it cannot be described as a *de*-superpower.

A *de*-superpower is better expressed as metapower. It is more comfortable with the power of *wu-wei* (non-doing) than the power of *wu* [martial] diplomacy. This understanding distinguishes the secular Western realist superpower and its implied hegemony, from the Daoist-Confucian superpower with *its* implied hegemony - that is, by the pursuit of international *li* [rules of proper conduct] for the purpose of international peace . . . through the spiritual aspiration for international unity . . . Like *yin* and *yang*, the Western realist's superpower is shadowed by the Daoist-Confucian metapower. The latter (*yin*) force must contain elements of the former (essentially *yang*) force if it is to survive. Hence in the exercise of *wen* [civilisational] politics, *wu* power is held in reserve. When its use is called upon, then it acts decisively. To use . . . the analogy of the Chinese martial arts, fighting is avoided; but if it must be engaged in, the blow has to be decisive. The current international system of secular "balanced" power is dysfunctional in that it does not address the question of how the world may be at peace, but how it may preserve itself. This individualism is characteristic of the Western philosophical tradition, but represents its corruption in the absence of moral cultivation. Within the Chinese humanism of *jen* [human-heartedness], however, how one can relate harmoniously to others is the appropriate consideration. Contemporary China is now faced with restoring its own *jen* after flirting with extremist groupism and materialism.

33. On the links between the French *laissez-faire* and the Chinese *wu-wei* philosophies, see Michael Vatikiotis, 'Capital

Idea', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 10 June 1999.

34. P. J. Keating, 'A Prospect for Europe', Robert Schuman Lecture, University of New South Wales, 4 September 1997 (information@unsw.edu.au).

35. Ian Mather, 'A Partnership that Wasn't', *The European*, 22-28 April 1994.

36. The Chinese studied multipolarity - the logical setting for strategic partnerships - and decided to keep their strategic distance from the Americans as early as 1982. See Shambaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 204. See also Yongjin Zhang, *op. cit.*, p. 69, describing multipolarity as 'an expression of the emerging international system which is more accommodating of diverse interests and more inclusive of opposing values'.

37. David Finkelstein and Michael McDevitt, 'Competition and Consensus: China's "New Concept of Security" and the United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region', Pacific Forum, CSIS (<http://www.csis.org/>), Washington, PacNet, No. 1, 8 January 1999.

38. Quoted in Lynne O'Donnell, 'China Demands an Apology in Person', *The Australian*, 31 May 1999, p. 11.

39. See Melinda Liu and Leslie Pappas, 'How Low Would He Bow?', *Newsweek International*, 28 June 1999.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Xinhua, 17 June 1999, cited in Joseph Fewsmith, 'The Impact of the Kosovo Conflict on China's Political Leaders and Prospects for WTO Accession', *NBR Briefing*, The National Bureau of Asian Research, July 1999 (<http://www.nbr.org/publications/briefing/fewsmith99/index.html>).

42. Fewsmith, *ibid.*

43. Sheridan, *op. cit.*

44. Quoted in 'China Says U.S. Wants To Become "Lord of the Earth"', *Reuters*, 22 June 1999. This view by China is not new - see, for example, Tan Tarn How, 'US Wants No Challengers to Its Power: Chinese Official', *The Straits Times*, 20 April 1996.

45. *Reuters*, AP, 'US Turns Up Heat on Wavering Milosevic', *The Australian*, 31 May 1999, p. 11.

46. Beatrix Campbell, 'I'm Right or Am I Right?', panel session, Adelaide Festival of Ideas, July 1999, quoted in Andrew McGarry, 'The Idea is for Evil to Know Its Place', *The Australian*, 12 July 1999, p. 5.

47. Cited in John Gittings, 'China's Fears Need to be Taken Seriously', *Guardian Weekly*, 23 May 1999, p. 12. See also, Carine Defoort (ed.), 'Demonizing China: A Critical Analysis of the U.S. Press', *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Winter 1998-99, Vol. 30, No. 2.

48. Huseyin Bagci, 'China as NATO's New Rival?', *Turkish Daily News*, 14 May 1999 (<http://www.turkishdailynews.com>).

49. *Report of the Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China*, known as the Cox Report, is available on the internet: <http://www.house.gov/hunter/CoxReport.htm>. Commentaries on the Cox Report include: Juliet Eilperin and Vernon Loeb, 'Panel Says Chinese Arms Used U.S. Data - House Committee To Release Report On Spying's Effects', *Washington Post*, 25 May 1999; Tabassum Zakaria, 'China Has U.S. Secrets, But What Next?', *Reuters*, 25 May 1999; Grier and Thurman, *op. cit.*; Bering, *op. cit.*, and Robert S. Norris, 'A Habit of Distrust: Playing Catch-up, But Far Behind', *LA Times*, 30 May 1999.

50. The Cox Report, *Ibid.*

51. Quoted in Norris, *op. cit.*

52. Lynne O'Donnell, 'China's Neutron Bomb Ignites Muted Reaction', *The Australian*, 16 July 1999, p. 1.

53. Norris, *op. cit.*

54. Fewsmith, op. cit., paraphrasing the 1978 slogan for reform in China: 'Practice is the sole criterion of truth'.

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In the United States, hope reigns: 54 percent of Americans doubt China will win out. Most experts on the topic range from unsure to very skeptical that China is ready to climb the podium. Yet there are clear signs of serious progress. A superpower "is a country that has the capacity to project dominating power and influence anywhere in the world, and sometimes, in more than one region of the globe at a time," according to Alice Lyman Miller, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and an associate professor in National Security Affairs at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. Four components of influence mark a superpower, Miller says: military, economic, political, and cultural. The United States continues to see China as its primary rival. The fact that China, contrary to the expectations of many, managed to take control of the epidemic quickly, only increases the fears of Beijing among the American ruling class. China's struggle against coronavirus has demonstrated the effectiveness of its party-government system, its society's ability to mobilize amid crises, and its technological potential. The outcome of the US presidential election is unlikely to have a significant impact on the trajectory of these relations: a trend of increasing contradictions will dominate it. Anti-Chinese sentiment is not unique to Donald Trump's administration. Such notions are held by a significant proportion of the country's establishment and reflect the consensus of both parties.