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Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy

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An authoritative text published by China's National Defense University defines international strategy as "a sovereign state's relatively long-term, comprehensive stratagems within the realm of its foreign relations, namely, the plans and guidelines for a sovereign state to use its capabilities to pursue national interests in the international struggle. . . . [By necessity, the strategy becomes] "the fundamental guidelines and principles for the state's foreign relations." A state's power position in the international system defines its strategic situation and is in itself an integral part of the state's strategic thinking.[1] Chinese analysts believe that U.S. China policy follows and serves U.S. global strategy. Thus interpretations of U.S. global strategy provide the framework through which Chinese analysts interpret Sino-American relations.

U.S. hegemony invokes amazingly variegated emotions, images, and perceptions across the world depending on the individual state's perspective.[2] This article examines Chinese perceptions and responses to U.S. global strategy after the cold war. To highlight the perceptual gap separating the two countries, Chinese views are preceded with a brief sampling of American analysts' debate over their own country's global position and strategy. The findings here belie any pretense of strategic partnership between China and the United States. On the contrary, strategic conflict has been on the rise. Since the cold war, assessments by Chinese analysts and officials have shifted from a prediction of immi-

[1] Gao Jindian, ed., *Guoji Zhanluexue Gailun* [Introduction to International Strategy] (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 1995), 7–9.

[2] Francois Heisbourg, "American Hegemony? Perceptions of the U.S. Abroad," *Survival* 41 (Winter 1999–2000): 5–19.

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nent U.S. hegemonic decline to a view that U.S.-dominated unipolarity will likely last well into the twenty-first century. Except for a brief period when China's mainstream strategy analysts, with some wishful thinking, contended U.S. hegemonic intentions could not be matched with its capability, they have overall perceived a consistent and malign U.S. strategy of global domination. The views on the enduring and predatory nature of the U.S. hegemony were reinforced after the NATO military intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 1999.

In response, China has tried to balance against U.S. power through developing a strategic partnership with Russia, building new ties with its neighbors and beyond, and increasing its comprehensive national power. Beijing's countermeasures do not amount to a robust balancing strategy explicitly designed to dislodge the U.S. hegemonic position. So far, Beijing's balancing has been overall hesitant, low-key, and inconsistent. China has not completely succumbed to the structural pressure to balance. Prevailing bandwagoning by other powers, acute domestic insecurity, and perceived high costs of open confrontation with the United States combine to explain Beijing's hesitancy. But if strategic conflict continues to escalate, China will be more tempted to step up its balancing against the United States. To dissuade China from embarking on such a path, a mechanism of peaceful change through enhanced strategic dialogue and necessary adjustments for mutual accommodation must and can be found. The U.S. unipolar international order cannot afford to be oblivious to China's concerns and discontent. The first step is to dispel any illusions about "strategic partnership" and the wishful thinking that economic and institutional engagement will automatically bring about a democratic and peaceful China.

U.S. Power and China's Utopian Multipolar World

After the cold war, the United States became the sole superpower. But how preponderant is the U.S. power? To what extent do capabilities translate into control? How long can the United States stay on top? American analysts, using traditional and mostly realist criteria for measurement, conclude that the post-cold war world is a U.S.-dominated unipolar system.[3] But others, who are more aware of the changing nature of power, argue that power is actually more dispersed beyond the military level. Globalization and the growing web of subnational and transnational relations are eroding the power of traditional sovereign states, making the U.S. position much more complex and uncertain than the notion of unipolarity would suggest.[4] Analysts, who are skeptical of the tra-

[3] See, for example, Michael Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *International Security* 21 (Spring 1997): 49–88; William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* 24 (Summer 1999): 5–41.

[4] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Redefining the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* 78 (July/August 1999): 22–35; Richard Haass, "What to Do with American Primacy," *Foreign Affairs* 78 (September/October 1999): 37–49.

ditional definition of power in terms of polarity, also note that U.S. power preponderance does not always translate into U.S.-dominated outcomes, especially when it concerns second-tier major powers.[5]

Realism predicts balancing from other states to counter the concentration of power in an anarchic, self-help international system.[6] However, by the late 1990s, many American scholars and strategic thinkers alike were surprised that the U.S. preponderance of power had confronted no counter-balancing from other secondary powers. None of the second-tier powers has vigorously tried to undermine U.S. power by internal balancing (through domestic armament and force restructuring) or external balancing (through alliance formation) explicitly directed against the sole polar state. For some American scholars, this simply proves that U.S. unipolarity can be both enduring and peaceful.[7] Clearly by the late 1990s, the view that U.S. power preponderance is unquestionable and can last has gained important ground among scholarly circles.[8]

In the first half of the 1990s, views that suggest that the U.S.-dominated unipolar moment would be of short duration were widespread in China. Such a view was nearly universally held in China except for a brief interval, while it was more contested in America. By the late 1990s, both countries witnessed a growing acceptance of the view that U.S. unipolar status could endure. But China's official protestations still insist that multipolarization continues, even though they admit that it will be a drawn-out process.

Starting with the mid-1980s, Chinese policy elites began to believe that the evolution toward multipolarity had accelerated.[9] This view was interrupted during the period of 1989–1991, as the Tiananmen incident and the collapse of communist regimes in East Europe heightened Chinese fear of strategic isolation. All other powers, including Russia, seemed to have joined the United States to gang up against China. Only after late 1991 and early 1992 did Chinese analysts breathe a sigh of relief as they witnessed President George Bush, Sr. abandon his attempt to translate the vision of a "new world order" into reality. China officially declared the end of its post-Tiananmen diplomatic isolation in 1993.[10] Chinese analysts now argued that having won the cold war, the United

[5] See, for example, David Wilkinson, "Unipolarity Without Hegemony," *International Studies Review* 1 (Summer 1999): 141–172.

[6] For the classic formulation, see Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979), esp. chap. 6.

[7] Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World."

[8] Even Kenneth Waltz, while insisting balance of power will occur "tomorrow," has to concede that full-scale balancing is not happening "today." And he admits his inability to say when that "tomorrow" will be. See Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 25 (Summer 2000): 5–41.

[9] Michael Pillsbury attributes the conception of multipolarity to Deng Xiaoping's top security adviser Huan Xiang, who put forth this characterization in 1986. See Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2000), 9–12.

[10] "1993: China Established Advantageous Position in the Current World," *Liaowang* [Outlook] 52 (1993): 33.

States had also been badly weakened by years of overextension and exhaustion. Rampant global turbulence and America's growing rifts with allies and Russia, persistent U.S. economic woes, debilitating social problems, and rising isolationist domestic public opinion all imposed important constraints on U.S. power. Chinese analysts began again to emphasize the irreversible decline of the U.S. relative influence and the inevitable trends of multipolarization.[11]

From the Chinese perspective, concentrated power without counterbalancing is both dangerous and unnatural. A balance of power underpinned by the five principles of peaceful coexistence (mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, mutual noninterference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence) should represent the basis for a new world order. While American international relations literature posits that traditional sovereignty is responsible for competitive power politics, Chinese views hold that a more rigid adherence to sovereignty actually constitutes the key ingredient for a truly new world order of equality, peace, and justice. They contend, unlike the Western concept of balance of power that presupposes monopoly among great powers, the Chinese notion of multipolarity entails an equally determining role of the Third World countries. It also means that China constitutes a pole with much freedom to act internationally.

It had become clear by the mid-1990s that the world was not marching quickly toward multipolarity as the Chinese analysts had hoped for. Other great powers had not narrowed their power disparity with the United States. Nor had they acted independently in the world arena. Chinese analysts now characterized the world power configuration as "one superpower (the United States), many great powers" (Europe, Japan, China, and Russia). In 1996–1997, they concluded, according to Wang Jisi, director of the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, "the superpower is more super, and the many great powers are less great."[12] The United States had established firmly its power superiority over other second-tier powers. The resultant uncertainties and anxieties concerning the new reality of U.S. power prompted a quiet but unprecedentedly forceful debate among China's policy analysts "about the pace of the decline of the United States and the rate of the rise of 'multipolarity.'"[13] There was some disagreement over the staying power of the U.S. hegemony, the nature of the competition among Europe, Japan, and the United

[11] Jin Canrong, "The U.S. Global Strategy in the Post-Cold War Era and Its Implications for Sino-U.S. Relations: The Chinese Perspective" (paper presented at the conference, "New Generation, New Voices: Debating China's International Future," sponsored by the Stanley Foundation, San Francisco, 13–15 August 1999); Zhang Yebai, "An Overview of Studies on Sino-American Relations in the 1990s" in Zi Zhongyun and Tao Wenzhao, eds., *Jiaqi Lijie De Xin Qiaoliang* [Building a New Bridge of Understanding] (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 1996), 196–98.

[12] Wang Jisi, "Building a Constructive Relationship" in Morton Abramowitz, Funabashi Yoichi, and Wang Jisi, *China-Japan-U.S.: Managing the Trilateral Relationship* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1998), 22.

[13] Pillsbury, *China Debates*, 14.

States, and the extent of the U.S. relative decline. But mainstream Chinese analysts still believed the contradictions between the United States and its allies could intensify.[14] Like some of their realist counterparts in America, they envisioned a prevalence of balancing behavior from other major powers. They believed that from the confusion and disorder a multipolar world would somehow emerge. The official line still maintained that the world was evolving toward multipolarity.

The apparent gains in U.S. power at the expense of Japan, Russia, and Europe in the mid-1990s might have sown doubt in the Chinese policy elite's belief in a precipitous U.S. decline, but it had not fundamentally dampened their enthusiasm for the trend toward multipolarity. Toward the late 1990s, however, both the description and prognosis about imminent multipolarity became increasingly untenable. Neither Europe nor Japan had made a credible attempt to become independent poles. Instead, Chinese analysts noted that the U.S. "comprehensive national power" had surged. Yao Youzhi, head of the Department of Strategic Research in the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences (the most important research arm of the People's Liberation Army [PLA]) writes that to maintain its unipolar dominance, the United States has pursued varying strategies to "contain, control, incorporate, and suppress those countries and regions that might become one of the multiple poles." It "has controlled and incorporated Europe and Japan, and suppressed and contained Russia and China." Yao's colleague at the same academy, Hong Bing, concurs by acknowledging the vast disparity between the United States and other "weak poles," some of which have joined the U.S. strong pole.[15] Chinese analysts concluded, "The forces on the international arena were out of balance, and the process of multipolarization was seriously challenged."[16] China's call for multipolarization sounds increasingly hollow and has become, according to reported Chinese leaders' own private concession, "out of touch with reality."[17]

After the Kosovo war in 1999, reflecting a pent-up frustration with the official protestation of multipolarization, an outspoken Chinese commentator asked: Why maintain the charade of the "many great powers" if none of them can do anything to check U.S. behavior? China would be better off simply to recognize the reality of the U.S. unipolar dominance.[18] Mainstream official ana-

[14] Ibid., chap. 2.

[15] Yao Youzhi, "U.S. Strategic Orientation in the 21st Century as Viewed from the Kosovo War," *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue* (Beijing), 20 May 1999, 11–14 in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter cited as FBIS)-China, 5 August 1999, 2; Zhao Yiping, "World Security and U.S. Global Strategy," *Guangming Ribao*, 16 February 2000 in FBIS, 23 February 2000.

[16] Xu Hongzhi and Huang Qing, "Advancing Toward Multipolarization Amid Turbulence," *Renmin ribao*, 16 December 1999, 7 in FBIS-China, 16 January 2000, 2.

[17] Wei Ming, "Jiang Zemin's Pragmatic Diplomacy," Hong Kong *Kuang Chiao Ching,* 16 October 1999, 16–19, in FBIS-China, 20 November 1999, 2. This Hong Kong source on the Chinese leadership's rethinking is validated by my own discussions with over a dozen Chinese scholars and think-tankers based in Beijing and Shanghai that took place in San Francisco, August 1999 and Seattle, July 2000.

[18] Fang Ning, Wang Xiaodong, Song Qiang, et al., *Quanqiuhua Yinying Xia De Zhongguo Zhilu* [China's Road Under the Shadow of Globalization] (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1999),

lysts concede "the complexity, twists and turns and protracted nature" of the process of multipolarization. And the formulation of multipolarity itself may have much less practical relevance to present reality than was previously believed. But Beijing still claims that multipolarization continues, as promoting multipolarization now means opposing a single country "acting unilaterally" and dictating international affairs.[19]

The Hegemon on the Offensive

American analysts disagree over whether there is a grand strategy guiding U.S. foreign policy after the cold war. While most American scholars agree that tendencies toward a strategy of primacy exist, they tend not to believe that the Clinton administration had a clearly defined grand strategy.[20] Instead, they argue that U.S. foreign policy overall has been characterized by contradictions, ambiguities, and inconsistencies. For example, Barry Posen and Andrew Ross contend that the Clinton administration adopted a hybrid strategy that combined elements of power aggrandizement, opportunistic maneuvers, and liberal impulse. Stephen Walt characterizes Clinton's strategy as that of a "half-hearted hegemon," "hegemony on the cheap," based on realpolitik calculation but under the rhetoric of global public good.[21] Inconsistencies in the U.S. strategic vision have prompted attempts to prioritize the U.S. national interest in the post-cold war era. But even those who try have to concede the extreme difficulty in sustaining a foreign policy based on a pre-determined priority of interests.[22]

Prescriptive analyses too reflect a wide range of views that fall in the whole spectrum between neoisolationism and unmitigated pursuit of global primacy.[23] Robert Art lists seven alternative strategies open for the United States—"dominion, global collective security, regional collective security, cooperative security, containment, isolationism, and selective engagement." He rejects ei-

20. The author, Wang Xiaodong, was an editor of the influential *Zhanlue yu Guanli* [Strategy and Management], a journal with backing from high-ranking Chinese civilian and military officials. First appearing in 1993, it became a major forum for nationalist views and bold strategic analyses. For more information, see Suisheng Zhao, "Chinese Intellectuals' Quest for National Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990s," *China Quarterly* 152 (December 1997): 725–45.

[19] Xiao Feng, "Views on Some Hot-Spot Issues in International Situation" in *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, 20 December 1999, 1–5 in FBIS-China, 12 February 2000.

[20] There are, of course, exceptions. For example, Michael Mastanduno argues that the United States has "followed a consistent strategy in pursuit of a clear objective—the preservation of the United States' preeminent global position." Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment," 51.

[21] Stephen M. Walt, "Two Cheers for Clinton's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 79 (March/April 2000): 63–79.

[22] See, for example, Ashton B. Carter, "Adapting U.S. Defense to Future Needs," *Survival* 41 (Winter 1999/2000): 101–123; Nye, "Redefining the National Interest."

[23] See Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21 (Winter 1996/97): 5–53.

ther global domination or withdrawal, but prefers a strategy of selective engagement, by which the United States determines its international commitment based clearly on its priority of interests.[24] Barry Posen and Andrew Ross list four strategies—"neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy," but express no preference as to which strategy best suits the United States.[25]

The foregoing sampling of views suffices to demonstrate the diversity in strategic descriptions and prescriptions in the United States. Strategic debate is to be expected in a democracy that wields such overwhelming power as the sole superpower sitting atop of the world. While the United States gropes for a coherent strategy, Chinese analysts attribute to it a highly cohesive master plan designed to strengthen and expand its global domination. By the mid-1990s, emerging consensus on the preponderance of U.S. power allowed and compelled Chinese analysts to pay closer attention to U.S. global strategy than ever before.[26] They took notice of the fact that the United States had experienced significant growth in its comprehensive national power in economic, scientific, technological, and military arenas. By contrast, throughout the 1990s, Japan, Russia, and to a lesser extent the European Union were mired in economic stagnation and had shown no determination to challenge the U.S. global position. This presents the United States with what Chinese analysts call a period of "strategic opportunity" to further enhance its international primacy. The Chinese commentators pointed to the continued increase in U.S. military spending, exceeding $305.4 billion in the 2001 fiscal year (FY), an increase of $16.5 billion over the previous year. In FY 1999, U.S. defense expenditure amounted to $276.2 billion, which was 1.67 times the combined military expenditures of the second-tier powers—Britain, Japan, France, Germany, Russia, and China. For Chinese observers, the U.S. intention in maintaining such a spectacularly high military expenditure was to ensure U.S. superiority over its potential competitors by a vast margin.[27]

From the Chinese perspective, the United States has taken advantage of this rare window of strategic opportunity "to step up its global strategic deployment," "to complete a global strategic layout" before other powers are prepared to balance the U.S. power. In the words of one Chinese analyst, "The United States will contain, besiege, and even launch preemptive military strikes

[24] Robert J. Art, "Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement," *International Security* 23 (Winter 1998/99): 79–113.

[25] Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions." For the isolationist strand of thinking, see Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security* 21 (Spring 1997): 5–48; Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security* 22 (Summer 1997): 86–124.

[26] Jin Canrong, "The U.S. Global Strategy."

[27] Editorial, "Hegemonism Can Hardly Last Long After All," *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong) (Internet version-WWW), 10 February 2000, A2 in FBIS-China, 10 February 2000. These figures on the U.S. defense budget were reported by the Chinese news media.

against any country which dares to defy the U.S. world hegemony or which has constituted a latent challenge to the United States. Among its main targets are a number of countries in Eurasia, including Russia, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Iran, Libya, North Korea, and China."[28] Chinese analysts invariably see the NATO expansion and its air war in Kosovo as designed to weaken and encircle Russia. The Kosovo war was to defeat the defiant Milosevic regime, remove an obstacle for NATO enlargement, and further encroach upon Russia's traditional sphere of influence. On the Asian front, the United States revitalized its security alliance with Japan, proceeded with the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) program, and maintained large forwardly deployed troops in the west Pacific to keep an eye on China.

After Kosovo, many Chinese commentators conclude that the United States has adopted an offensive-oriented, "neo-imperialist," "neo-interventionist" strategy geared toward expanding, perpetuating, and imposing its worldwide hegemony.[29] To them, this means that the United States has been highly inclined to interfere in other countries' domestic affairs, to use force if necessary, and to cynically manipulate international rules or institutions—at times flouting them outright, at other times seeking self-interest under the pretext of upholding world order. Missile defense would further abet U.S. unilateralism and offensive use of force.

According to Chinese analysts, the United States has advocated a view of "limited sovereignty" and human rights over-riding sovereignty. The ulterior motive is to justify its aggressive interference in other countries' domestic affairs, to demonize certain countries that defy its will, and ultimately to provide a pretext for power politics. In search for reasons to oppose U.S. hegemony, one Chinese scholar contends that the U.S.-dominated unipolarity by necessity threatens freedom. Just like domestic totalitarianism, an unchecked unipolar hegemony is prone to abusive power.[30] From Beijing's perspective, U.S. human rights policy toward China and its so-called humanitarian intervention over Kosovo in 1999 proved the danger of dictatorship by the U.S. democracy in the international arena.

Strategy analysts in China maintain that to pursue absolute supremacy, the United States has acted unilaterally and disregarded the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and Missile Technology Control Regimes in an attempt to de-

[28] Wang Jincun, "New Changes in International Situations as Viewed from NATO's Aggressive War against Yugoslavia," *Qian Xian* (Beijing), 5 July 1999, 21–23 in FBIS-China, 9 August 1999, 2.

[29] Shi Yukun, "An Analysis of New Interventionism: Interviews with Researchers of the Academy of Military Sciences," *Zhong guo junshi kexue*, 20 May 1999 in FBIS-China, 2 August 1999; Peng Guangqian and Shen Fangwu, "'Humanitarian Intervention' Is Inhumane," *Zhongguo Guofang Bao*, 29 May 2000 in FBIS-China, 29 May 2000.

[30] Fang Ning, et al., *China's Road*; Wang Xiaodong, "On Liberalism and Hegemony," *Jianchuan Zhishi* (Internet version), 14 June 1999 in FBIS-China, 17 July 1999. American realist theorists seem to share this view with their Chinese counterparts. For example, Kenneth Waltz asks, "Is unbalanced power less of a danger in international than in national politics?" His answer is: no. See his "Evaluating Theories," *American Political Science Review* 91 (December 1997): 915.

velop its own national and theater missile defense. Ostensibly the U.S. missile defense is directed against "rogue countries," but the primary motive is to ensure absolute security against potential adversaries such as Russia and China, thereby to "acquire an absolute freedom of actions in the international affairs and to firmly establish its overlordship in the world."[31] As the United States now can act with impunity, it is more tempted to use coercive measures against other states. It has pursued a comprehensive, offensive neointerventionism that utilizes all means available, including the use of force to strengthen U.S. global domination. Suffering from a "Gulf War syndrome," the United States has lowered the threshold for the use of violence, launching high-tech wars against small countries that would incur few casualties to its own troops.[32]

Chinese commentators often use two ancient Chinese idioms to illustrate what they believe is U.S. cynicism toward international institutions. The first is *Xie Tianzi Yiling Zhuhou* (Hijack the emperor to order the dukes about in his name), which refers to the U.S. control of international organizations to legitimize its aggressive acts against other countries. The other phrase is *Zhi Xu Zhouguan Fanghuo, Buxu Baixing Diandeng* (The magistrates are free to burn down houses, while the common people are forbidden even to light lamps), which attacks the double standards in the U.S. approach to international principles. Chinese writers maintain that the United States has leveraged its normative power to set the agenda, weaken and isolate its adversaries, and mobilize international support for its policy of hegemonic control. All of U.S. hegemonic behavior is now undertaken in the name of achieving some global public good. Since the Kosovo war, even Chinese international relations scholars known for their previous liberal inclinations have pointed out that U.S. hegemony takes the traditional form of "gunboat policy," but also is manifested in its manipulation of international regulations, rules, and norms.[33]

In sum, Chinese commentators point to the American spectacularly high defense spending, strong tendency to use coercive measures in its foreign pol-

[31] Qian Ton, Li Mingjiang, "Sha Zukang Says ABM Treaty is Cornerstone for Global Strategic Balance and Stability," Beijing Xinhua Hong Kong Service, 8 June 2000 in FBIS-China, 8 June 2000; Zheng Yuan, "Egoism and Overbearing Attitude," *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily] (overseas edition), 7 July 2000, 7; "U.S. Nuclear Proliferation Threatens Global Security—Sha Zukang on Ways China Should Handle It, Stressing Needs to Ensure the Effectiveness of Retaliatory Capacity" in *Wen Wei Po*, (Hong Kong) 11 July 2000, A5 in FBIS-China, 11 July 2000.

[32] Pillsbury, *China Debates*, 45.

[33] Wang Yizhou, "A Warning Issued at the end of the Century," *Shijie Zhishi* (Beijing) 16 May 1999, 7–10 in FBIS-China, 23 June 1999; Wang Yizhou, "Warning at the End of the Century: Hegemonism Characterized by 'Human Rights Exceeding Sovereignty,'" *Liaowang*, no. 21, 24 May 1999, 3–6 in FBIS-China, 14 June 1999. Wang is vice-director, Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. His earlier writings presumably represented the most respectable, albeit nascent liberal voice in the first half of the 1990s. His retreat from an earlier liberal orientation is illustrative of the collateral damage of the Kosovo war on China's overall liberal strain of international thinking. For a discussion of liberal-oriented ideas in China, see Yong Deng, "The Chinese Conception of National Interests in International Relations," *China Quarterly* 154 (June 1998): 308–29.

icy, wanton disregard of international institutions and rules when deemed inconvenient, aggressive liberal agenda in promoting Western values, unilateral decisions to build a shield and spear through national and theater missile defense, growing control over high-tech information in the age of globalization, arrogant violations of other countries' sovereignty, unprovoked expansion of traditional alliances in Europe and Asia, determined containment of emerging powers, etc. The list adds up to a U.S. strategy of global domination similar to "the strategy of primacy" outlined by Posen and Ross and "a strategy of dominion" explained by Art. Few American analysts would argue that the United States is actually pursuing such a "maximal realist strategy."[34] But Chinese assessment sees the United States as a hegemon on the offensive for power aggrandizement.

Beijing's predilection to attribute to the United States a highly coherent global strategy bent on power expansion defines how Beijing perceives American China policy. Such a perception breeds a conspiratorial view, which in turn predisposes China to see ill intentions and sinister motives in every U.S. act. That's why it is almost universally believed in China that the NATO bombing of Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999 was a deliberate, calculated attack to punish China's opposition to the war, to destabilize and humiliate China, and to probe Beijing's external reaction and domestic response to the outburst of nationalism that the bombing was bound to ignite.[35] Conspiratorial views explain why Chinese commentators believe the U.S. human rights concerns and humanitarianism in its foreign policy are nothing but camouflage for hegemony and brute power politics. Some Chinese analysts even warn that globalization itself is a "trap" set by the United States to keep China weak and to reinforce U.S. primacy.

The United States and China: Structural Conflict

Does the United States have a global strategy? After the cold war, American debate over U.S. global strategy is unsettled. Rather than guided by a coherent strategy, American China policy is often a result of domestic politics involving many actors, including Congress, interest groups, public opinion, Taiwan lobbies, and key personalities. The *Economist* flatly declared, after Tiananmen, "every American household seemed to have a China policy."[36] However, Chi-

[34] Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions."

[35] Fang Ning, et al., *China's Road*, 6; Li Xiguang, Liu Kang, et al., *Yaomo Hua Yu Meiti Hongzha* [Demonization and Media Bombardment] (Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Press, 1999), 82–4.

[36] *Economist*, 22 May 1999, 95. For new dynamics in America's China policy after the cold war, see Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1992); David Lampton, "America's China Policy in the Age of the Finance Minister," *China Quarterly* 139 (September 1994): 597–621; James Mann, *About Face* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000); Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall* (New York: A Century Foundation Book, 1999); Robert Sutter, *U.S. Policy Toward China: An Introduction to the Role of Interest Groups* (Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

nese analysts clearly attribute a highly coherent, largely malign strategy to the United States. As the United States seeks to maintain its superior power position, it logically wants to contain a rising power like China. Seen in this light, the revitalization of the U.S.–Japan security alliance is evidently targeted primarily against China.[37] During the short period prior to the Taiwan crisis in 1995–1996, having survived the negative fallout of Tiananmen, China, with some trepidation acquiesced to the U.S. military presence in west Pacific. The United States appeared to be playing a stabilizing role to maintain regional peace, check Japanese power, and prohibit an arms race in East Asia.

But after the Taiwan crisis, China's strategic planners began to have second thoughts about their earlier assessment of the U.S. regional role. They feared that their worst nightmare could come true and that China might become the target of containment through a U.S.–led security alignment in Pacific Asia. Beijing has become increasingly worried about signs that the United States now may be abetting rather than checking Japanese remilitarization to limit rising Chinese power.[38] Beijing is particularly wary of TMD's impact on its national security, as such a regional missile defense umbrella would undermine its minimum nuclear deterrent capability and effectively encourage Japanese militarism.[39] Chinese strategists also worry that, even if Taiwan is presently not included in TMD, once the missile defense is in place, it can be easily extended to the island, effectively restoring a political and military alignment between the United States, Japan, and Taiwan.[40]

What is life like under U.S. hegemony? For Chinese strategy analysts, it is not pleasant, to say the least. They complain that Americans do not bother to appreciate China's concerns over domestic stability, economic growth, and national reunification. They are particularly frustrated by the apparent unfairness in American media reports on China, bordering on deliberate distortion, slandering or even demonizing of China.[41] For many Chinese analysts, the record shows that America does not respect China's vital security interest, particularly on Taiwan. Chinese commentators believe that one critical consideration behind the growing U.S. support for Taiwan is the strategic importance that the

[37] Chinese perception on this may be correct. Yoichi Funabashi has shown that the revision of U.S.–Japan security treaty in 1995–1996 clearly had China in mind. See his *Alliance Adrift* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999).

[38] Thomas Christensen, "China, the U.S.–Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security* 23 (Spring 1999): 49–80.

[39] Shi Yukun, "An Analysis of Neo-interventionism"; Xu Xingci, "Theater Missile Defense Causes Trouble in East Asia," *Xiandai Bingqi*, 2 February 2000, 10–12 in FBIS-China, 17 April 2000.

[40] Thomas Christensen has argued against the inclusion of Taiwan under TMD for the "wrong" message that it would send to both Taipei and Beijing. See his "Theater Missile Defense and Taiwan's Security," *Orbis* 44 (Winter 2000): 79–90.

[41] Qingguo Jia, "Frustrations and Hopes: Chinese Perceptions of the Engagement Policy Debate in the U.S.," *Journal of Contemporary China* 10 (June 2001): 321–330. See also, Li Xiguang, Liu Kang, et al., eds., *Yaomohua Zhongguo de Beihou* [Behind the Demonization of China] (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1996); Li Xiguang, et al., *Demonization and Media.*

United States attaches to it in containing China. The United States has played and will continue to play "the Taiwan card."[42] From the Chinese perspective, China has not challenged any U.S. critical interest, but this is not reciprocated with American sensitivity to China's vital security interests. At the international level, through its treatments of Iraq and Yugoslavia, the United States has demonstrated a strong tendency to use force to impose its will on other sovereign countries. Based on their experiences, many Chinese analysts ask: How can they expect a benevolent peace under U.S. hegemony?

Between 1992–1995, Chinese policy elites shared a view that their country's security environment was the best since the Opium War (1839–1842). But since 1995, sober assessment of its security environment started to set in. Frustration with a perceived U.S. containment strategy to deny China's entry into the great power club fueled anti-American nationalism. In May-June 1995, the influential *Chinese Youth Newspaper* conducted an unprecedentedly large-scale, truly nationwide readers' survey on how "Chinese Youth View the World." Among the over one-hundred thousand young respondents, 87.1 percent thought of America as the least friendly country to China; 57.2 percent rated America as their most disliked country; and at the same time, 74.1 percent deemed America as wielding the greatest influence on China.[43]

Popular anti-Americanism prevailed, effectively silencing and sidelining more objective analyses. Professional America watchers now emphasized that U.S.–China policy had an important element of containment.[44] Those anti-American sentiments reflected the public's emotional reactions at the time to the perceived American heavy-handedness on human rights, attempts aimed at obstructing China's national unification with Taiwan, rejection of China's membership in the World Trade Organization, denial of China's right to host the 2000 Olympic Games, and growing arrogance in its treatment of China. These perceptions fueled a public fear that, despite its avowed engagement policy, the United States was maliciously containing China. The leading architects

[42] This is a common view with little dissent in Chinese writings. See, for example, Li Jiaquan, "Cross-Strait Relations from the Perspective of Clinton's Visit to China," *Taisheng* [Taiwan Voices], August 1998, 10–11; Su Ge, "Sino-American Summits and the 'Strategic Partnership,'" *Shijie Zhengzhi Yu Jingji* [World Politics and Economics], August 1998, 20–23; Wang Haihan, "Thoughts on Present Developments and Prospects of Sino-American Relations," *Guoji Guancha* [International Survey] 4 (1998), 7–11; Chen Qimao, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis: Causes, Scenarios, and Solutions" in Suisheng Zhao, ed., *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 143.

[43] Yang Yusheng, *Zhongguoren De Meiguo Guan: Yige Lishi De Kaocha* [Chinese Views on America: A Historical Perspective] (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 1996), 301–302. For a comprehensive discussion of the negative turn in the 1990s in Chinese popular perceptions of America from a largely positive image in the 1980s, see Ming Zhang, "Public Images of the United States" in Yong Deng and Feiling Wang, eds., *In the Eyes of the Dragon: China Views the World* (Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), chap. 7.

[44] Philip C. Saunders, "China's America Watchers: Changing Attitudes Towards the United States," *China Quarterly* 161 (March 2000): 41–65.

of this survey, Wang Xiaodong and Fang Ning, interpreted these anti-American feelings as a result of "U.S. pressures toward China–not just on the Chinese government, but on the Chinese nation as a collectivity."[45]

Has China defined its place under U.S. hegemony? The answer is no. That's why official media still insist that the trend in the world power configuration is multipolarization. For China's strategy analysts, the United States has attempted to build a post-cold war world order to exclude China at the expense of China's security interests. According to one authoritative account, China's own international strategy consists of the following: first, create a peaceful international environment so that China can concentrate on its economic development; second, bring about national reunification with Taiwan; third, "strengthen China's comprehensive national power to enhance the Chinese pole in a future multipolar world"; finally, build a new international political and economic order with less inequity of power and wealth between the rich and poor and a more rigid adherence to the principle of sovereignty.[46] Clearly, American and Chinese strategic interests do not always coincide; they conflict over Taiwan, over the vision of global order, and over views on the desirability of the existing international structure.

Both China and the United States support peace in the Asia-Pacific region. But they differ on what "peace" means and what a regional order in East Asia should look like. From Beijing's perspective, American's belief that regional security can only be maintained under U.S. unrivaled hegemony over East Asia—as manifested in its antagonism toward the rising China, forward military presence in the west Pacific, and traditional security bilateral alliances—conflicts with China's vital interests. Since the mid-1990s, China has increasingly seen U.S. military presence as less of a stabilizer and more as a threat to "China's [own] independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national security," especially over Taiwan.[47] China's power aspiration in East Asia and its current territorial claims over Taiwan, the South China Sea, and the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands are fundamentally at odds with the U.S.–led regional security structure.

After the Kosovo crisis, China's strategic analysts have become even more pessimistic about U.S.–China relations. Wang Weiguang of Beijing University recently argued that the success of China's economic reform and opening up to the outside world has moved China's critical national interests eastward toward its Pacific coastal regions. As a result, China is ever more vulnerable to threats in the forms of economic sanctions, naval blockade, and military challenge along China's coasts from "the United States and its military alliances in

[45] Fang Ning, et al., *China's Road*, 94.

[46] Gao Jindian, *Introduction to International Strategy*, 321–23.

[47] Chu Shulong, "Bilateral and Regional Strategic and Security Relationship between China and the United States after the Cold War," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, 20 May 2000, No. 5, 7–14 in FBIS-China, 1 June 2000.

the Asia-Pacific."[48] Chu Shulong, chair of the Division of North American Studies at one of China's leading think tanks, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), argues that the two countries fundamentally differ over issues concerning the architecture of the post-cold war global order, the continued relevance of sovereignty, the emerging role of the UN and NATO, the legitimate use of force, and the place of humanitarian interventionism in world politics.[49]

Strategic rivalry will likely increase with the ascension of Chinese power. Yan Xuetong, former director of CICIR's Center for Foreign Policy Studies, contends that after incorporating and coopting Japan and Europe and weakening Russia, by the mid-1990s the United States had begun to view China as a primary potential strategic adversary. If "the U.S. strategic pressure on China in the 1990s was mainly political, in the next ten years, the United States may possibly exert more military pressure on China. . . . Regardless of who is in power in the United States, the strategic element of encircling and containing China will not diminish." Sino-American conflict is "structural," as China is on the rise and the United States wants to maintain its unipolar dominance. China and the United States clash on virtually every level—strategic, political, and economic, as well as over global institutional designs. Among all the great power relationships, the U.S.–China one is by far the most conflictual, twice as much as the next most tension-ridden U.S.–Russia relations.[50]

These Chinese perceptions underscore the structural conflict driving the U.S.–China relationship, which is characterized by competitive power politics wherein the logic of security dilemma and relative gains still prevails. The vital security interests defined by the two sides are fundamentally at odds with each other at bilateral, regional, and global levels. None of these conflicts is amenable to an easy solution; all have a tendency to escalate as the power distribution shifts in China's favor. Such strategic antagonism imposes significant limitations on functional cooperation between China and the United States. The countries may share some interest in "certain specific issues or in certain realms such as trade, environmental protection, cracking down on terrorists' activities and international crimes, and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."[51] But without relatively stable mutual strategic understandings, differences in these issue areas, where high cooperative potential exists, can easily escalate.

[48] Wang Weiguang, "Predicament and Options—China's Post-Cold War Foreign Policy toward the United States," *Zhanlue yu Guanli*, 1 June 2000 in FBIS-China, 23 June 2000.

[49] See Huangpu Pinglun, "Sino-U.S. Relations: Today and Tomorrow," *Liaowang*, 8 May 2000, 54–55 in FBIS-China, 15 May 2000.

[50] Ibid.; Yan Xuetong, "China's Strategic Security Environment," *Shijie Zhishi*, 1 February 2000, No. 3, 8–9, 10 in FBIS-China, 16 February 2000; "Post-Cold War Continuity," *Zhanlue yu Guanli*, 1 June 2000, 58–66 in FBIS-China, 23 June 2000. After carefully reviewing Chinese military analysts' assessment of China's security environment, David Shambaugh also concludes that there is rising "strategic competition" between China and the United States. See his "China's Military Views the World: Ambivalent Security," *International Security* 24 (Winter 1999/2000): 52–79.

[51] Wang Weiguang, "Predicament and Options."

HESITANT BALANCER: BEIJING'S RESPONSE TO U.S. HEGEMONY

In American international relations literature, balancing is understood to be a state's attempt, either by relying on its own capabilities or alliance with others, to dislodge the position of the preponderant power. Bandwagoning refers to a state joining the most powerful side. For Kenneth Waltz, balance of power is certain to recur so long as international relations remain an anarchic, self-help system wherein rational nation-states regard survival as the highest value.[52] Consequently, "in international politics, overwhelming power repels and leads others to balance against it."[53] Many critics of the Waltzian structural realism take issue with its exclusive focus on the distribution of power as the sole independent structural variable to explain states' behavior and its law-like statement that states always balance predominant power. They argue that diplomacy, policy elites' perceptions and calculations, and domestic factors drive the state's response to predominant power, sometimes more than does the structural pressure to balance.[54]

Some critics may have gone too far in discounting the structural pressure. Waltz insightfully calls our attention to the tendency that "structures shape and shove" driving states to balance predominant power.[55] But nonstructural factors do lessen or strengthen, sharpen or modify structural pressure. Structural forces alone cannot explain the vastly different reactions of Europe, Russia, Japan, and China to U.S. power after the cold war. In assessing Chinese response to U.S. hegemony, one must recognize the potency of structural pressures for China to balance. One must also consider how Chinese strategists' and leadership's calculation and assessment of their policy options, their domestic concerns, and the U.S. threat shaped China's response to U.S. unipolarity.

According to conventional alliance theories, China could opt to join the U.S. side to bandwagon with the predominant power. But Chinese strategists and policy makers have long rejected this option as unrealistic and unpalatable. Apart from the intractable conflict in interest and lack of strategic foundation in Sino-American relations, another explanation has to do with the novel post-cold war distribution of power. From the Chinese perspective, North America, the European powers, and Japan have coalesced into a grand alliance underpinned by common political values and foreign policy outlook as well as

[52] See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, "Evaluating Theories," and "Structural Realism." See also Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment." For a summary of realist views on why balance of power recurs, see Michael Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), chap. 5.

[53] Waltz, "Evaluating Theories," 916.

[54] For a critique of structural realism and review of literature along this line, see John A. Vasquez, "The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz's Balancing Proposition," *American Political Science Review* 91 (December 1997): 899–912.

[55] Waltz, "Evaluating Theories," 915.

shared interests.[56] Jin Junhui, for example, writes, the United States has led the way to "build up a new world order guided by the Western values with the alliance formed with the United States and other developed nations in the West at the core."[57] There is now a rough congruence of economic, political, military, and normative frameworks shared by a cluster of Western powers. Consequently, aligning with the United States does not seem just to entail a shift of alliance policy, but a sea change in China's foreign policy outlook, state character, and national self-identity, which China is not ready to embrace. Moreover, from the Chinese perspective, judgment of such in-group identity is as uncertain as it is arbitrary.

Given China's growing objection to U.S. hegemony, conventional balance-of-power theories would expect vigorous balancing from Beijing. Indeed, China's latest defense white paper, "China's National Defense in 2000," declares that in response to U.S. "neo-interventionist," "neo-gunboat policy" and the fact that the prospect of peaceful reunification with Taiwan "is seriously imperiled, China will have to enhance its capability to defend its sovereignty and security by military means."[58] After the cold war, China has not just rolled over in face of what is perceived as step-by-step U.S. encroachment upon China's strategic breathing space. Rather, it has made attempts to balance against the United States. Beijing has taken omnidirectional initiatives to cultivate new ties in Asia and beyond to improve its security environment, to ward off threats, and to protect its critical interests. It hopes that other powers—Japan, Europe, Russia, and even Third World countries—would rise to help curb U.S. power and move the world toward greater multipolarization. Since the Gulf War in 1991, internal balancing has taken the form of higher priority being given to defense modernization than in the 1980s through foreign acquisitions and indigenous production. Beijing is also preoccupied with improvement of its domestic institutions and economy essential to shore up sagging legitimacy of the party-state and to strengthen its comprehensive national power.

Forging strategic ties with Russia represents Beijing's most important step directly aimed at balancing against the United States. According to Yan Xuetong,

[56] See Wang Yizhou, "Rethinking the Kosovo Crisis," *Renmin Ribao* (Internet version-WWW), 23 May 2000 in FBIS-China, 23 March 2000; Li Bin, "China's Security Environment in the Early 2000s," *Beijing Review* (Internet version-WWW), No. 2, 10 January 2000 in FBIS-China, 13 January 2000. Western scholars have similarly argued that since the cold war, power is determined by material and ideational factors. For a vision of post-cold war international power redistribution based on values, see John Goldgeir and Michael McFaul, "A Tale of Two Worlds: Core and Periphery in the Post-Cold War Era," *International Organization* 46 (Spring 1992): 467–91. In the context of Chinese foreign policy, see Alastair Iain Johnston, "International Structures and Chinese Foreign Policy" in Samuel S. Kim, ed., *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Policy Faces the New Millennium* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

[57] Jin Junhui, "Overcome Obstructions and Constantly Push Forward Sino-U.S. Relations," *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu* No. 3 (July 1999), 26-29, 30 in FBIS-China, 5 August 1999, 5.

[58] The Information Office of China's State Council, "China's National Defense in 2000," Beijing Xinhua in English, 16 October 2000 in FBIS-China, 16 October 2000.

"Chinese and Russian leaders reached a consensus in 1994 on opposing U.S. hegemony" through a "strategic cooperative partnership," which was officially started two years later.[59] Russia has been the most important source of Beijing's high-tech arms acquisitions. Both China and Russia are opposed to NATO expansion, U.S. national and theater missile defense programs, and the NATO air war in Kosovo. They both advocate "multipolarization of world politics," support each other's policy in defending territorial integrity (Chechnya for Russia, Taiwan for China), and share a commitment to crack down on "ethnic separatism, international terrorism, religious radicalism, and transnational crimes" in central Asia.[60]

Up to the mid-1990s, Beijing's multipolar diplomacy had focused on the "great powers" (the European Union, Russia, and Japan) to bring about a more dispersed distribution of power. Beijing has since realized the limitations of its great power diplomacy and the impracticability of swift multipolarization in terms of the distribution of material, hard power. Now Beijing quietly but determinedly expends more diplomatic resources on building ties in the Third World to promote greater pluralism and relativism in terms of nonmaterial, soft power. In Beijing's calculations, its solidarity with some of the smaller countries would help curb the U.S. neoimperialist unilateralism and the U.S. attempt to impose its own values and standards on other countries.

These initiatives notwithstanding, Beijing has not opted for an all-out, comprehensive balancing strategy against the United States. Its balancing has been hesitant, low-key, and inconsistent. In the aftermath of Tiananmen, the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping put forth a *Taoguang Yanghui* strategy, which roughly means that China must lie low, "conceal capacities and bide our time."[61] In the early 1990s, the Chinese leadership put in place a nonconfrontational guideline regarding China's America policy. In that spirit, post-cold war Chinese foreign relations, pattern of military expenditures, and policies toward the United States do not indicate a determined Beijing aiming to comprehensively balance against U.S. hegemony. Even the generally more aggressive PLA has not actually matched its rhetorical attack against U.S. hegemony with actual arms buildups or belligerent foreign behavior.[62]

Since the mid-1990s, China has publicly identified itself to be a cooperative, peaceful, and responsible power, and Beijing has taken such an image quite

[59] Yan, "Post-Cold War Continuity," 6.

[60] *Renmin Ribao* [*People's Daily*, overseas edition], 19 July 2000.

[61] Deng Xiaoping personally intervened to rein in hardliners' advocacy of an aggressive nationalist foreign policy in the aftermath of Tiananmen. See Allen S. Whiting, "Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy After Deng," *China Quarterly* 142 (June 1995): 295–316. For an interpretation of Deng Xiaoping's lie-low strategy, see Wang Taiping, ed., *Deng Xiaoping Waijiao Shixiang Yanjiu Lunwenji* [An Anthology of Papers on Deng Xiaoping's Thinking on Diplomacy] (Beijing: World Affairs Press, 1996).

[62] Johnston, "International Structures," 60–65; Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Shambaugh, "China's Military Views the World."

seriously in its foreign policy.[63] The main reason for the shift is that the United States had insisted that China could be treated as a great power only if and when it acted responsibly. Moreover, the earlier lie-low strategy seemed overly defensive, while a self-identity as a responsible power sounds more assertive and proactive in constructively safeguarding China's national interests. Chinese policy elites never specify what "responsibility" means. Clearly, China and the United States differ vastly over the meaning of international responsibility. For example, the United States disputes the Chinese belief that it is both its right and responsibility to reunify with Taiwan even with the use of force and to maintain domestic stability even by resorting to a political iron fist if necessary. China no doubt questions the U.S. claim that the war against Yugoslavia and continued coercion against Iraq were for the global public good of humanitarianism and nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In any case, these differences do not matter for Beijing, as rhetorical identification as a responsible power constitutes a scheme to defuse the "China threat" so that China does not become the target. Like its lie-low strategy, protestations of responsibility represent Beijing's nonconfrontational approach to U.S. hegemony.

No serious analysts in China advocate a confrontational policy toward, or "edging away from," the United States.[64] In fact, they believe "avoiding military confrontation with the United States conforms with China's long-term strategic security interests."[65] Even on the most sensitive Taiwan issue, Beijing has not sought a military confrontation. The 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait crisis did not reflect Beijing's attempt to provoke the United States. The war game was intended to send a strong message to deter Taiwan independence. Chinese military and civilian leaders did not anticipate such a potent U.S. naval presence in response to Beijing's missile firings.[66] China has since focused its military strategy on Taiwan, which Beijing considers as an internal affair, a rightful self-defense of territorial integrity. Its goal is to prevent the United States from abandoning the one-China principle and Taiwan from establishing de jure independence.

As Randall Schweller reminds us, "Balancing is an extremely costly activity that most states would rather not engage in, but sometimes must to survive and protect their values."[67] Given the overwhelming U.S. power, one would expect

[63] Elizabeth Economy and Michel Oksenberg, eds., *China Joins the World: Progress and Prospects* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999).

[64] According to conventional, realist understanding, "edging away" from the hegemon is an important part of balancing. The quoted term is Kenneth Waltz's and is discussed thoroughly in Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment."

[65] Yan Xuetong, *Zhongguo Guojia Liyi Fengxi* [Analysis of China's National Interests] (Tianjin: People's Press, 1996), 158.

[66] For Beijing's calculations, see Suisheng Zhao, *Across the Strait.* For Beijing's surprise at U.S. response, see Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift*, 370–73.

[67] Randall L. Schweller, "New Realist Research on Alliances," *American Political Science Review* 91 (December 1997): 929.

that China would be more tempted to balance only if the costs and dangers of doing so can be shared by reliable and strong allies. Thus Beijing's assessment of its potential allies impinges on its strategic choice vis-à-vis the United States.

From the Chinese perspective, Beijing's alliance options are much more limited after the cold war than under the previous bipolar system under which it could ally with one superpower against the other. China is well aware of the limitations of its ties with Russia. For one, strategic cooperation rests on a shaky economic foundation: despite political attempt to solidify economic ties, Sino-Russian trade through the rest of the 1990s hovered below the level of U.S.$7.7-billion registered in 1993. Even though trade picked up in 2000, reaching the record volume of U.S.$8billion, it still fell well short of the target U.S.$20billion by the year 2000 set in the mid-1990s by Presidents Jiang Zemin and Boris Yeltsin. During 1993–1995, Beijing tried to play its market card to pit the European Union against the United States in a few high-profile business deals, particularly involving the purchase of Airbuses from European companies. It soon became clear that China could do little to undermine the overwhelming concentration of power with the U.S.–led global center. None of the secondary powers could be counted on to robustly balance U.S. power.

After the cold war, while having to contend with the U.S. hegemonic threat, the Chinese Communist party-state confronts probably even more dire threats that stem from domestic difficulties in maintaining economic reform, political legitimacy, and social stability. Besides, in Beijing's views, China's external security and international status ultimately rely on a secure domestic base and a more developed economy. China's ability to play its market card to compensate for its political-military vulnerabilities hinges upon a healthy economy. Thus "the Chinese government insists that economic development be taken as the center, while defense work be subordinate to and in the service of the nation's overall economic construction." Through an integrated approach, China's defense industries and technologies strengthen its economy, which in turn enhances national defense.[68] In the post-cold war era, not to lose out on the international competition, China must enhance its comprehensive national power in which economic and technical prowess take the center stage.

The 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis and 1999 Kosovo war further underscored the importance to its security of keeping its own house in order. Several Chinese analysts have noted that the financial disaster in Indonesia was no less destructive than the NATO war against FRY. The Kosovo war heightened Chinese fear of a U.S. threat. But it also strengthened Beijing's commitment to reform its economy, maintain domestic stability, prevent ethnic, religious, and human rights problems from becoming an excuse for external intervention, and enhance comprehensive national power that includes greater loyalty to the party-state. These are daunting, if not impossible tasks, for the communist party-state.[69]

[68] The Information Office of China's State Council, "China's National Defense in 2000."

[69] For discussions of Beijing's challenge in balancing these conflictual domestic agenda, see Merle Goldman and Roderick MacFarquhar, eds., *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms* (Cambridge,

According to Beijing's calculations, confrontational balancing against the United States would be counterproductive and would only isolate China. Thus U.S. unquestioned dominance in maritime power has persuaded Beijing to stay away from an aggressive armament program in augmenting its blue-water naval power.[70] Similarly, despite fear of superpower nuclear blackmail that the U.S. theater and national missile defense could incur on China,[71] Beijing has so far forsworn engaging in a full-scale arms race with the United States. Chinese strategy analysts have warned not to fall into the trap of an arms race set by some hostile forces in America to destroy China.[72]

To avoid an outright containment policy pursued by the United States and its allies, China could pursue its own policy that eschews confrontation. For most Chinese analysts, the United States has made strategic readjustments directed against Russia and China, but has also sought engagement to assure the two countries. Although China must be alert to the ominous trends of U.S. hegemony, the U.S. strategy is still somewhat in evolution. An "all-round confrontation" of cold war-style containment against China is unlikely and is not at all inevitable.[73] After all, the United States still opposes Taiwan unilaterally pushing for de jure independence.

In sum, China has not engaged in vigorous and consistent balancing intended to dethrone the U.S. hegemonic power, thanks to the lack of strong allies, inadequate capacities, preoccupation with domestic improvement, and the immeasurable costs of confrontation with the United States. As one Chinese scholar puts it, its limited capacity means that China only poses "a challenge to the U.S. ability to administer hegemonism, not to its hegemonic position."[74] China's internal and external balancing is geared to protecting its core security interests, while refraining from unduly antagonizing the United States. Beijing has engaged in nonconfrontational balancing by forging a strategic partnership with Russia, in diffuse balancing by cultivating new ties in Asia and beyond, and in long-term balancing by enhancing comprehensive national power.

MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Minxin Pei, "Will China Become Another Indonesia?" *Foreign Policy* 116 (Fall 1999): 94–109.

[70] Robert S. Ross, "The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century," *International Security* 23 (Spring 1999): 81–118.

[71] For Beijing's fear of nuclear blackmail by the superpowers during the cold war, see John Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 70–74; John W. Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). For Beijing's fear in the context of the latest U.S. missile defense, see Michael McDevitt, "Beijing's Bind," *Washington Quarterly* 23 (Summer 2000): 177–86.

[72] Lu Ren, "Can China Be Dragged Down into Collapse by $60 Billion?" *Jiefangjun Bao* (Internet version-WWW), 28 June 2000, 9 in FBIS-China, 28 June 2000. Some Chinese analysts argue that the downfall of the former Soviet Union was due to the U.S. "strategic misdirection," by which Moscow was "tricked" into an arms race that ultimately bankrupted its economy. Similarly, in order to find an excuse to attack Iraq, the United States "lured Sadam into invading Kuwait" by signaling to Iraq that its invasion would not incur U.S. intervention. See Pillsbury, *China Debates*, xlv, xlvi.

[73] Xiao Feng, "Views on Some Hot-Spot Issues"; Yang Chenxu, "It Is Possible to Keep the Peaceful Environment for the Next Ten Years," *Liaowang*, 22 May 2000, no. 21, 22, 23 in FBIS-China, 31 May 2000.

[74] Wang Weiguang, "Predicament and Options," 11.

Conclusion: Negative Strategic Cooperation and Peaceful Change

China has not engaged in a sustained, all-out balancing against the United States despite Beijing's growing discontent with the U.S. global strategy. Balancing may escalate when China attains enough material strength to rival that of the United States or when strong allies become available. Neither seems likely to happen any time soon. Of immediate concern is that if Beijing is convinced that the United States has adopted a systematic containment strategy against China by explicitly supporting Taiwan independence, completely neutralizing China's minimum nuclear deterrent, or unambiguously rearming Japan, structural pressure will be reinforced for China to balance. Beijing vows to go to war to prevent the "loss" of Taiwan. Although Beijing has stated that it won't form an alliance with any other country and has no intention to engage in a nuclear arms race to counter the U.S. missle defense, it also makes it clear that it won't "sit idle" (*zuo shi*) to allow its nuclear deterrent to be threatened. Despite hesitation, China may be compelled to embark on an arms race to counter U.S. missile defense programs, particularly if TMD mutates into a pretext for Japanese remilitarization or for the creation of a de facto U.S.–Japan–Taiwan security alliance.

As the foregoing analysis shows, fear that the United States is increasingly leaning toward containing China has been on the rise after the cold war, particularly since Kosovo. Within China's policy and scholarly circles, the credibility of the nonconfrontational approach is increasingly being questioned, as it has apparently failed to improve China's overall security and reduce tensions in Sino-American relations. From the Chinese perspective, the Russian case is illustrative. One Chinese analyst writes: "Although Russia has attempted to pursue a strategy of joining the Western world, it failed to win the latter's confidence. Instead, it has been treated as a potential opponent of the Western world."[75] Even if China continues to behave responsibly, the U.S. sense of cultural superiority and "potential racial exclusionism" may have predisposed the United States to view China, "a non-Western power," as a threat.[76]

There are growing signs that Chinese commentators are contemplating various approaches deviant from the nonconfrontational policy toward the United States. After the Kosovo war, many strategy analysts have questioned Deng Xiaoping's theory enunciated in the 1980s that peace and development are the twin dominant themes of contemporary international politics. They argue that war may not be as remote a possibility as was previously believed.[77] Extreme

[75] Yao Youzhi, "U.S. Strategic Orientation."

[76] Niu Jun, "China and the United States—A Very Particular Bilateral Relationship" in *Shijie Zhishi*, 1 February 2000, 30–32 in FBIS-China, 16 February 2000; Wang Xiaodong and Fang Ning express similar views in their *China's Road*; Shan Min, "What Is the United States Intending to Do with Its China Security Strategy," *Liaowang*, 30 April 2001, no. 18, 31 in FBIS-China, 30 April 2001.

[77] He Fang, "Revisiting the Theory on the Era of Peace and Development," *Taipingyang Xuebao* [Pacific Journal], June 2000, 3–9.

views have advocated a more offensive-oriented Chinese response on military and political fronts rejecting international rules, laws, and norms, which are controlled by and serve the strong.[78]

For mainstream realist theory, states balance predominant power because unchecked power is prone to abuse and overextention; and secondary states by necessity feel threatened by any concentration of power in a state-of-war, anarchic world.[79] This logically leads to a belief in the inevitability of conflict accompanying major shifts in the distribution of power, a view undergirding containment policy prescriptions against China in the United States. Neorealist perspectives usefully highlight the danger of escalating hostility driven by the structural pressure for balancing and counter-balancing. They rightly reject simplistic liberal beliefs that engaging China through international institutions and economic ties will automatically bring about a democratic and peaceful China.

But neither does this mean we should embrace a doomsday view of the China threat. E. H. Carr, who was widely credited as one of the first and foremost theorists in the academic discipline of international relations to treat power as the centerpiece of inquiry, also believed that "changes in the equilibrium of political forces" can be managed with an "alternative device of war." Such a mechanism of peaceful change lies in a regularized, mutually accepted procedure whereby necessary bargaining, negotiation, and "conciliation would come to be regarded as a matter of course, and the threat of force, while never formally abandoned, recede further and further into the background."[80] Carr also reminded us over half a century ago, peaceful change under the "bargaining process can be enforced only by the power of the complainant."[81] The morality of peaceful change rings ever more true now in the nuclear age. To bring about peaceful change, it is imperative to take seriously neorealism's warning of the structural pressure for balancing and counterbalancing. It is equally important to heed Carr's advice that the dominant power can bring its influence to bear in peacefully managing changes in power relations.

The preceding analysis underscores that peace cannot last if the United States and China cannot arrive at a mutual accommodation at the strategic level. The importance of managing Sino-American strategic relations could not be more dramatically demonstrated by the 1995–1996 Taiwan crisis. Strategic conflict between the United States and China stems from both a mutual perceptual gap and genuine differences in interests. Vast power asymmetry in this bilateral relationship is compounded by Beijing's perpetual victim consciousness,

[78] For a sampling of these views, see Zhang Ming, "War without Rules," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November/December 1999, 16–18; Fang Ning et al., *China's Road*; Staff Reporter, "Unrestricted War," *Liaowang*, 13 March 2000, No. 11, 55–56 in FBIS-China, 22 March 2000.

[79] For Waltz's latest restatement of these propositions, see his "Structural Realism."

[80] Edward H. Carr [1946, 2nd ed.], *The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919-1939* (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd, 1961), chap. 13. The quotes are from 214, 219.

[81] Ibid., 218.

thereby generating a dynamic for conflict escalation.[82] As China grows stronger, it becomes more imperative to diminish Beijing's dissatisfaction with U.S. hegemony. To reverse the logic of structural pressure to balance, secondary powers like China must be convinced that "any geopolitical challenge to the United States is futile."[83] Meanwhile, the United States can help lessen the structural pressure by defusing Beijing's fear of U.S. containment through strategic dialogue and necessary policy adjustments.

The structural conflict highlighted in the foregoing analysis effectively belies any pretense of a strategic partnership between China and the United States. But if nothing else, the two countries can still rest their relationship on "negative strategic cooperation," insofar as they share a common interest in preventing war with each other.[84] For Carr, it is exactly such a shared commitment in averting a mutually destructive military showdown that makes it possible for both sides to seek peaceful adjustments and changes sufficient to manage structural conflict.*

[82] In this light China's opposition to the U.S. missile defense can be better understood. One leading Chinese arms control expert contended, China's minimum nuclear deterrent arsenal means that "Even if the United States says the system is not aimed at China, the capability is aimed at China." Quoted in Erik Eckholm, "What America Calls A Defense China Calls an Offense," *New York Times*, 2 July 2000.

[83] Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," 40.

[84] On "negative strategic cooperation," see Wang Weiguang, "Predicament and Options"; Yan Xuetong, "Post-Cold War Continuity."

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