

## **Sino-American Relations: Climbing High to See Afar**

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Sino-American relations took a nosedive when the EP-3 Collision occurred in April. By the end of July, Secretary Colin Powell visited Beijing and brought opportunities for mending this damaged relationship. During this saddle-shaped period, divergences emerged among Chinese international experts over a number of major issues. Is peace and development still the theme of our time? Has the United States shifted its global strategic focus to the East? Has the Chinese international environment deteriorated substantially? Will China and the United States surely confront with each other in the end? ... This article intends to dialectically analyze the general world situation and Sino-American relations.

### **Views on the Global Situation**

*1. Is peace and development still the theme of our time?*

The global situation today has not experienced similar drastic changes like those that happened shortly after the end of the Cold War. The U.S.-dominated multi-polar world order remains. The basic problems for the international community and the theme of our time are still peace and development: (1) political multi-polarization and economic globalization are taking shape despite many problems; (2) technology advances daily, competition over comprehensive national strength is fierce, and alignment of forces and reallocation of interests have undertaken some profound changes; (3) the world is not peaceful despite the general relaxation

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tendency.

At the global level, the sole superpower in the post-Cold War era is pursuing a unipolar world. Its quickened development and deployment of a National Missile Defense System (NMD) is very likely to cast some far-reaching negative impacts on the international security environment. However, unilateralism is somewhat restrained by the multi-polarization in the world which also blurs the demarcation line between friends and foes in current international security settings. What is more, globalization has increased interdependence among the international community. Nevertheless, we have to remain cool-headed and take precautions to the rife hegemonism and rising unilateralism. It is possible for us to build a peaceful international environment lasting for a considerable long period. Since competition among countries is still mainly competition over comprehensive national strength, we should insist on the set development strategy focusing on economic construction.

*2. Has the United States shifted its global strategic focus to the East?*

Any country's foreign policy will serve its overall national strategic goal. In the view of the author, the fundamental strategic goal of the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is still to safeguard its dominant/hegemonic position in the world. As the only super power today, the United States will guard against and prevent any rising forces from challenging its dominant status. But big power has big problems too. It is by no means an easy job for any country to monopolize international affairs.

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. government has pursued global strategic goals by the following three basic means: ensuring national security, developing the American economy and expanding the democratic camp. The tough position of the George W. Bush Administration on defense made the U.S. global strategy today more aggressive and dangerous. The importance of military security is increasing in the new Administration's global strategy and foreign policy. There are five reasons behind it: Republicans' traditional advocacy of strength, the composition of the Bush Team, the increased domestic conservative forces, steady growth of comprehensive strength in recent years and the political debts to the

military industries who supported Bush during his campaign. What worries us most at present is that the Bush Administration is seeking absolute security and determined to build a missile defense system of both defensive and offensive nature. This plan will 1) violate the ABM Treaty and break the existing strategic balance and stability in international relations; 2) hinder the process of international arms control and disarmament; 3) undermine the international anti-proliferation regime and trigger a new round of arms race; and 4) stimulate the military element to play a bigger role in international affairs. No matter effective or not, MND will only encourage its possessor to execute unilateralism and to use or threaten the use of military forces. Therefore, we should pay close attention to the future development of this issue.

The United States has security interests all over the world. The U.S. global strategy is just like the eagle on its national emblem, gripping both an olive branch and a sharp arrow. The eagle stands on the American continent, with the left wing pointing to Asia and right wing to Europe. The eagle glances around, focusing on the hot spots all over the world. It is U.S. national interests that decide whether or not to interfere and how much to stake. Generally speaking, U.S. national interests could be divided into three kinds: vital interests, important interests and ordinary interests. There will be more hot spots in Asia Pacific in the future so that the United States will pay more attention even deploy more military forces to the region. However, the author believes that the U.S. global strategy emphasizes equally the Atlantic and the Pacific and the so-called "Strategic Focus Shift from Europe to Asia" is actually a delusion. It is true that an enemy is always needed for the sake of the interests of American military industries and state military apparatus. The fact that Russia still maintains large number of missiles decides that the United States cannot apply its primary military forces to Asia. On the contrary, any contingency in the world will draw American attention. In terms of regional security concerns, the United States still emphasizes Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

An important characteristic of the international situation in the first half of this year was the undulating relations among big powers, which was partly

due to the tough foreign policy introduced by the new Republican government in the United States. The Bush Administration's foreign policy features unilateralism and pragmatism--emphasizing strength and aiming to protect U.S. global interests while fortifying U.S. global leadership. Hard-line foreign policies began to be carried out on every front since Bush was inaugurated, i.e. suspending unilaterally the moderation process with the DPRK, bombing Iraq, receiving the "Foreign Minister" of Chechnya, deporting Russian "spies", retreating from the Kyoto Protocol, ignoring European Allies' opposition to the deployment of NMD, etc. But the outcomes turned out to be disappointing. Signs have already been seen in terms of policy readjustments regarding Russia, China and the DPRK.

In sum, the global structure and the U.S. national interests basically remained the same after George W. Bush took the office. Therefore, the Bush Administration has been implementing some consistent global strategy and foreign policy. The only change occurred was the rising of domestic right-wing forces that would like to view China more as a rival and advocated a stronger military presence in the Asia-Pacific. China has to open its eyes widely and be vigilant towards this new trend.

### *3. Has China's international environment deteriorated substantially?*

In general, China's position in the world is not degrading. On the contrary, China's role in the UN as well as international affairs is increasing and China's relations with major powers in the world are basically stable.

China always insists on independent foreign policy of peace and is willing to have friendly exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries in the world under the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. As a result, outstanding achievements have been gained through its all-directional diplomacy, i.e. successful bidding for the 2008 Olympics, completion of WTO negotiations, hosting 2000 APEC Shanghai Summit, etc. Despite ups and downs in the past two decades since the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, the essence of U.S.-China policy remains unchanged. Owing to the issues of Taiwan, security problem and EP-3 Collision incident, Sino-

American relations suffered from large-scale quakes recently. However, signs of moderation have become obvious nowadays.

While the Cold War has ended, some American political leaders still adhere to the Cold War thinking. Driven by the Cold War mentality of "absolute security", the United States has not only extended the scope of "self-defense" infinitely, but also been looking for a new enemy. In order to justify its giant military apparatus and armed forces all over the world, the United States does need tensions abroad even an invented enemy. We have to pay close attention and prepare for the worst. Nevertheless, we could not say the danger of war is greater than before or some qualitative reverses have occurred to China's international environment.

### **Continuity and Changes of U.S.' Policy toward China**

The change of U.S. presidents did not necessarily mean a hard time for the Sino-American relations. But in the first half of this year, Sino-American relations did experience some storms, partly owing to the conspiracy of "disintegrating China" and "westernizing China" promoted by the right-wing anti-China extremists, partly owing to the incident of EP-3 collision.

In addition to domestic right-wing political forces, which set off a new anti-China upsurge in the Capitol Hill as well as the mass media, the new Administration also made a series of decisions harmful to the Sino-American relations, i.e. allowing LEE Teng-hui to visit the United States, permitting the "Transit Diplomacy" plotted by CHEN Shui-bian, drafting another anti-China resolution at the UN Human Rights Conference, arranging the meeting between Dalai Lama and President Bush, etc. Above all, the most serious provocation lied in the issues of security and Taiwan. After the April Review, the United States has upgraded its arms sale to Taiwan both in the quality and quantity: 4 Kidd-class destroyers, 8 diesel submarines, 12 P-3s anti-submarine reconnaissance planes plus other advanced weapon systems totally amounted to four billion dollars. That will be the largest arms deal between the United States and Taiwan since 1992 when United States sold 150 F-16s to the island. China had no choice but made solemn representations to and lodged a stern protest with the

United States. Besides, when interviewed by ABC on April 24, President Bush vowed to assist Taiwan to protect itself by all necessary means. Of course we also noticed that he softened his attitude when he gave another interview to CNN the next day by saying that the United States policy remained unchanged: the U.S. would follow the One China policy, would not allow Taiwan to declare independence and would hope to see peaceful resolution of the Taiwan Issue by the two sides across the Strait.

Seen from the words and deeds of the new Administration, one could easily find changes and adjustments in policies. Particularly more emphasis has been given to China. It is somehow inevitable for the U.S. to toughen its policy towards China. But can we thus say the China policy of the new Administration has been finalized? From the comprehensive and developing perspectives, we cannot draw a conclusion so early that Sino-American relationship is doomed to be confrontational. U.S. foreign policies await some reviews and readjustments. Before this process is completed, the foreign policies of the Bush Administration will not take the shape. As a matter of fact, no containment policy could succeed in the background of globalization and multi-polarization. The United States admitted in its National Security Strategy that it would seek international cooperation in order to protect its own interests. The United States can hardly realize its interests in Asia-Pacific without Chinese cooperation. Being hostile to China might meet the short-term interests of only a few interest groups in China. However such hostility is against the long-term fundamental interests of the United States, including economic ones. The author is quite sure that the United States will deal with China in a proper way for the sake of its utmost national interests.

The moderation of Sino-American relations started in May 2001 when agreements were reached between the two countries over China's entry into WTO and President Bush urged the Congress to grant China the status of normal trading partner. There were more progresses after the ending of the EP-3 Incident. As to the Olympic bidding, the U.S. government remained neutral and Bush even sent his congratulations to Jiang after hearing the Chinese success. In the White House and Department of State, officials asserted that United States was not regarding

China as an enemy and expressed their willingness to see good bilateral relations. National Security Advisor Mme. Rice also acknowledged that the relationship with China has improved dramatically. From July 28-29, Secretary Powell visited Beijing, not only conveying a message from President Bush that he hoped to develop a kind of constructive and cooperative relationship with China, but also reaffirming the One China policy. During his visit, President JIANG, Premier ZHU, Vice-Premier CHEN and Foreign Minister TANG all held meetings with Secretary Powell. Though those two days could not solve all problems between China and the United States, the visit did set up a good foundation for the Bush visit in fall and symbolized that the Sino-American relationship has come back to the track of healthy steady development.

Generally speaking, the current China policy of the new Administration remains to be engagement plus containment, with emphasis on the latter. Any changes have been either in tactics or priority but not in essence. It will need some more time before the China policy is finalized. As mentioned before, there are two major problems: the security issue and Taiwan issue. As to the former, NMD advocated vigorously by the United States is somehow aiming at China although China is not the only target. As to the latter, Taiwan authorities have been encouraged to refuse unification and to pursue independence by a series of actions taken by the America, i.e. threatening the Mainland not to use force, increasing substantially arms sale to Taiwan, enhancing the U.S.-Japan alliance, lessening control over Taiwan political leaders' visits to the States, etc. Judging from the current situation, U.S.-China policy could still be characterized as *One, Two and Three*—One China, Two Tracks (engagement plus containment) and Three No's policy towards the cross-strait relations (No war, no unification and no independence). In other words, it is very difficult for the Bush Administration to reverse the China policy set by his predecessors. Even so, we have to be vigilant and prepare for the worst given the fact that the right-wingers intend to play off Taiwan against China and their proposals of guarding against China and containing China are quite popular.

All in all, the United States is not willing to see a strong China but cannot prevent the rise of China. It will therefore position well-targeted military forces in

the Asia-Pacific without publicly naming the enemy, constrain the development of China without losing the market, continue arms sale to Taiwan without touching the bottom line of the Chinese government. Because of the fundamental self-contradictions of U.S. national interests, U.S. policy toward China will appear to be two-faceted forever.

### **Observing the Times and Climbing High to See Afar**

When President JIANG met with Secretary Powell in July, he reaffirmed the historic significance of the normalization of relations between the United States and China, holding that the development of bilateral relations benefited not only peoples of the two countries but also peoples of other countries in the world. When talking about future Sino-American relations, JIANG pointed out that; "Our two countries should stand at the new century, climbing high to see afar, jointly promoting world peace and development."

Climbing high will enable us to get a clear understanding of the general situation, make a timely judgement and then work out splendid plans. President JIANG once said in 1999 that "at favorable times, we can not be blindly optimistic and have to find problems and solve them promptly; at difficult times, we should not be pessimistic or lose hope, we must go upstream undauntedly towards the bright future with determination; and at challenging times, we must keep a cool head, react only after even-tempered observation and handle the issue properly." These words could become guidance for us to deal with Sino-American relations. So, we can take the tense situation calmly, seize the opportunity to solve our own problems and substantially increase our comprehensive national strength, namely economic power, defense capability and national cohesiveness.

Climbing high would also free China and the United States from the cloud and mist so that the two sides could have the panorama of the overall relationship. Despite many differences, there are still wide-ranging issues that could serve as the foundation for mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries. First, instability and uncertainty of the world situation. China and the United States are both countries with global influences. Their obligations to world peace and



regional stability are increasing not decreasing. Second, world economic development and cooperation boosted by globalization and advance of science and technology, particularly the IT revolution. The economic interdependence has enlarged not narrowed the scope of economic cooperation between China and the United States. Third, regional and global issues emerging in the post-Cold War era. Those issues could only be solved through international cooperation. In this sense, the common interests between China and the United States are expanding not reducing.

The author suggests that in the following four areas the two countries should better accommodate to and cooperate with each other. (1) In the strategic and security dimension, to maintain normal Sino-American relations will be of great importance to regional security as well as world peace. Both countries are nuclear powers and permanent members of the UN Security Council. If China, as the biggest developing country, and the United States, as the biggest developed country, could be friendly to each other and develop bilateral relations on the basis of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the present and future of the world would be blessed. (2) In the economic dimension, economic exchange and cooperation based on equality and mutual benefits should serve as the foundation for the bilateral relationship. Being advanced in economy, science and technology, the United States has lots of useful experience in management too. On the other side, opening China has vast market and great development potential. For instance, the GDP of China increased by 9 percent annually in average for the past two decades. Both economies have their advantages and disadvantages and their foreign trades are complementary. Any frictions in economic exchange and contradictions in economic cooperation could be overcome though negotiation while sanction or retaliation would only be counterproductive. (3) In the ideological dimension, divergences between the two countries will remain inevitably owing to the different cultural traditions, historical experiences and social systems. Nonetheless, we should acknowledge that we are living in a colorful world with all sorts of civilizations and social systems coexisting with each other. We should learn merits from each other and seek common developments while shoving our differences aside.

Both China and the United States are entitled to the freedom of choosing one's developing model, hence differences even disputes should serve as impetus to exchanges not excuse of interference. (4) Issue of Taiwan. The Taiwan issue is above all a domestic issue of China concerning cross-strait relations. Chinese government will stick to the guiding principles of "Peaceful Unification" and "One Country, Two Systems". People living on both sides of the Straits are all Chinese. There is nobody in the world who is more eager to see peaceful solution of this issue than the Chinese government. Chinese leaders have stated that as soon as the Taiwan authorities accept the One China principle, everything is negotiable. The Taiwan issue is also a thorn on the side of the bilateral relations between China and the United States. Framework has already been set by the three communiqués regarding bilateral relations and the Issue of Taiwan. It has been proven by the history that Sino-American relations would develop healthily so long as the two abide by the principles provided in the three communiqués.

To develop bilateral relations need to know yourself as well as the other party concerned. It is predicted that Bush Administration will finally adopt a two-track policy towards China, namely engagement plus constraints. (1) In the economic and trade aspect, the platform of the Republican Party is closely connected with the interests of big American enterprises. With the advance of economic globalization, U.S. trade with and investment to China during this presidency will not inferior to those in the past. From the long-term perspective, economic ties will continue to promote the general bilateral relations. After China's entry into WTO, more attention will be given to China's compliance with her commitments and obligations. Besides, the economic situation of the United States will also affect Sino-American relations. (2) In the ideological aspect, although Democracy and Human Rights may not be the priorities for this Republican government, the scheme of Westernizing China will persist. (3) In the security aspect, China will face serious challenges from MD although this plan will inevitably confront both international pressures and domestic constraints. (4) The upgrading arms sale to Taiwan intensified the sensitivity of this issue. Even though the U.S. government has reaffirmed One China

policy, we still have to guard against the vacuuming of this principle and prevent breakthroughs from occurring in the U.S.-Taiwan security relations.

The issue of Taiwan is the most sensitive core issue in Sino-American relations. And it is the only issue that could derail Sino-American relations in the foreseeable future. There is no doubt that Chinese government and Chinese people will safeguard the national sovereignty and territorial integrity at all costs. The status of Taiwan as a part of China will not be allowed to change. If the American could abide by the principles about Taiwan embodied in the three communiqués, the Taiwan Issue left over by the history would be resolved. Then Sino-American relations would improve and develop dramatically. Otherwise, Sino-American relations would be harmed. U.S. arms sale to Taiwan has become a big obstacle to the Sino-American relations and solution of the Taiwan Issue. First, arms sale to a part of a sovereign state violated the basic principle of international law. Second, American selling weapons to Taiwan broke its commitment in the August 17<sup>th</sup> Communiqué. Third, arms sold to Taiwan sent some wrong signals to the Taiwan separatists and encouraged their morale. Fourth, we always maintain the principle of "Peaceful Unification" and "One Country, Two Systems". The United States also emphasizes on peaceful solution. But selling advanced weapons to Taiwan could only heighten the tension across the Strait and reduce the possibility of peaceful unification. Fifth, what the United States fight for should be the utmost national interest. On the global chessboard, China no doubt outweighs Taiwan. If regional situation were disturbed by the rise of Taiwan independent forces, the United States interests would also be affected.

People have yet to find out a suitable term to define Sino-American relations. But "rivals" or "adversaries" are definitely not the word. One can be certain that no matter what direction of this bilateral relationship moves to the implications would be strategic and extensive. In order to develop healthy bilateral relations, the two countries could cooperate in the following fields. (1) Safeguarding peace and stability of the region and the world. China needs a peaceful environment to build its economy; regional turmoil is not in the interests of the United States either. (2)

Bilateral economic relations. The United States is the second largest trading partner of China and China the fourth of the United States. The prospects of bilateral economic cooperation has become brighter after China enters WTO. The two should reinforce consultation works through the mechanism of JEC and JCCT. (3) International cooperation within the UN framework. Both being permanent members of the UN Security Council, neither could succeed in UN without the other's support. As to the UN peacekeeping mission, China has cooperated with the United States by sending civil policemen and military observers to the target areas. (4) Arms control and disarmament. In spite of differences over NMD, China and the United States have made joint efforts in establishing and promoting regimes like NPT and CTBT. In the future the two countries could further their anti-proliferation cooperation. (5) Struggles against transnational organized crimes, international terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal immigration, counterfeiting money and money laundry, etc. (6) Regional issues such as maintaining stability in the Asia-Pacific, building a nuclear-free zone in the Korean Peninsula. (7) Energy, environment protection and sustainable development. (8) Science and technology. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, dozens of science and technology agreements have been reached between China and the United States. The Joint Commission of Scientific and Technical Cooperation will promote further joint projects. (9) Cultural and educational exchanges. Based on the statistics of the Chinese education authorities, there are over 120 thousand Chinese students who have been to the United States to study since 1978. Overseas students from the United States amounted to over 10 thousand in the same period of time. In the spirits of equality and mutual respect, China and the United States have conducted several rounds of official and unofficial human rights dialogues. (10) Establishing crisis-preventative and management regimes such as MMCA.

The national interests of China and the United States are partly overlapping and partly conflicting. Hence in the foreseeable future this bilateral relationship will continue to see both cooperation and differences. Considering the current overall strength and future development strategy of China, the United States should not view China as its threat. Cooperation will be

mutually beneficial while confrontation be mutually harmful. In recent years, effective cooperation between China and the United States has played a positive role not only in promoting peace and development in the region and in the world, but also in advancing common interests of the two countries. One useful experience we learned is that both sides should respect each other, seek common grounds and reserving differences, not to interfere in each other's domestic affairs and strive for more common interests. As to conflicts of interests, the two should negotiate and consult with each other; as to frictions in values, the two should first increase trust and reduce suspicion through dialogues; as to structural contradictions hard to overcome, the two should establish crisis management mechanism and prevent them from escalating into confrontation.

Chinese government and Chinese leaders are always paying great attention to Sino-American relations. We will regard and handle this relationship from the long-term strategic perspective, in other words, climbing high to see afar. A cooperative and non-confrontational bilateral relationship will meet the national interests of both countries and conform to the trend of the times, namely peace, cooperation and development. After all, it will need joint efforts to build a constructive and cooperative Sino-American relationship.