

THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA: STRATEGY IN A CHANGING WORLD

THREE PROFESSORS FROM THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE DISCUSS U.S./CHINA RELATIONS

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With the Chinese economy booming and placing unprecedented demands on the world's resources, including oil, what is happening in China has a direct impact on every day life in the United States. At the same time, China is continuing to build its fleet and other armed forces in what appears to be a challenge to the United States. Accordingly, U.S./China relations was a timely topic for the Council's first symposium presented in conjunction with the Naval War College Foundation on 11 October. It featured a panel discussion by three distinguished members of the Naval War College faculty: Dr. Joan Johnson-Freese, Chair of the National Security Decision Making Department, and Drs. Thomas Fedczyn, and Andrew Stigler, both members of the faculty of that department. The following are excerpts from their talks.

Dr. Johnson-Freese framed the discussion. We're talking about strategic thinking in a changed world and China will be the theme that runs through all of our presentations. China is certainly a country which is very anxious and aggressively moving

into becoming what they refer to as a "first-world country".

What's changed [about the world environment]? I would say three things have changed.

The first is globalization. Globalization is simultaneously an integrating and fragmenting force. Integrating through the use of information technologies. Fragmenting because very often countries that find that for one reason or another they cannot keep up, often become very inward looking in their own views. . . .

[Another] aspect of globalization is in the commercial world. There is far less control, far fewer monopolies. For the United States, this has been at times problematic. Referring back to China, the U.S. for the last six years now has worked very hard to restrict the technology that is going to China. It has largely been ineffective because we don't have a monopoly on the technology. We have, in fact, nurtured and promoted aerospace industries in other countries to the extent that the Europeans advertise their satellites as "ATAR-free", which means that to buy your satellites, you don't have to work through the American bureaucracy. And that has become a major selling point for

them. So, the first strategic change is globalization.

The second I would say is 9/11. It pointed out not only the U.S. vulnerabilities, but the U.S. strengths. We certainly have rallied together in ways that are admirable and to our credit but it was certainly an event that was outlook changing in the U.S.

The third part of the environment that has changed is post-military victory in Iraq. In that regard, we have shown . . . that the United States is very good with hard power but not doing as well with soft power. We are a shining city on the hill for other countries to emulate. But in [a poll] that came out in July of 16 countries, in 8 of these 16 countries, China - - a communist dictatorship - - is viewed more favorably than the United States.

With that said, I'd like to make a couple of points about China. I had the opportunity last month to speak before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. [The first issue of concern about U.S.-China-Taiwan relations voiced at the Commission was]: "If Taiwan does not care about its defense why should the United States?" The evidence they cited about Taiwan not caring about their defense was their tabling the \$10 billion arms package that the U.S. had offered to Taiwan and that Taiwan has increasing economic ties to China. There is a great deal of concern about that.

It was also brought up for discussion at the Commission: "What is in the best interests of the United States?" Certainly, a peaceful resolution of the whole issue is in the best interest of the U.S. and it was increasingly brought up at the Commission that it is not the obligation of the U.S. to defend [Taiwan] in the case of hostilities; it is

the responsibility of the U.S. to assist [Taiwan] in its defense. That that point is being argued is indicative of concern about what is the role of the U.S. potentially in a China-Taiwan dispute. I think a lot of that is fueled by U.S. allies in the region who, quite frankly, do not want to be drawn into a potential dispute between the U.S. and China.

The second issue that we deal with a lot regarding China is the rise of China. The status quo in Asia won't continue forever. Again, the question: What is in the best interests of the United States - - a growing and stable, economically developing China or an unstable imploding China? I personally think it is the former but if it is the former, how can we ensure that China becomes a strategic partner rather than a strategic competitor? I think we are sending schizophrenic communications post 9/11 and post military victory in Iraq. For example, in June of 05, Secretary Rice referred to China as a "strategic partner" Yet, last month, Deputy Secretary [Robert] Zoellick referred to China as a "caldron of anxiety". Certainly, I know in space affairs, we are sending China very different signals. We're sending the world very different signals. I'm not sure what our message is supposed to be. Again, in space, on one hand, we are saying that the United States does not have a space weapons program and is not working in that direction. On the other, we have Air Force officials talking about programs that have ASAT capabilities. We talk to the Chinese about not wanting them to pursue certain technologies in space and then [the U.S. pursues an exercise] where the scenario is a large mainland country threatens its small off-shore neighbor. Somehow, the Chinese thought we were talking about

them. So, there is a lot of mixed signals going into China right now and I don't think in the long run this is in our best interests.

There have been indications of change in the rhetoric of the Administration. . . They are talking about engaging China, working towards areas of cooperation. One of those areas being in the global war on terror, the other has been in the six party talks regarding North Korea.

I think most of the intransigence about China comes from Congress, quite frankly. There are a few members of Congress who for a variety of reasons - - running from human rights to trade disputes to religious tolerance - - are very much hard line regarding China. The rest of the world is falling all over themselves to engage China. That means that very often the United States is being left the odd man out.

Again, when we look at [the poll] issued in July, the Chinese have been very aggressively pursuing what I term a charm campaign, not only in Asia, but in the rest of the world. They are being very successful. When 8 out of 16 countries in the world view China more favorably than the United States, they are doing something right.

We, on the other hand, are doing something wrong. I think our strategic communications about our message are not on point. I think we need to get much better at that. We need to decide what is the message we want to send and to send it clearly and consistently.

Dr. Fedyszyn continued the discussion. I'm retired Navy and I'm going to take this opportunity to talk about navies. I'll pick up on the China thread that [Dr. Johnson-Freese] left me and then I'll talk

a little bit about the U.S. Navy, just to give you a comparison of where the two nations are going. Admiral Gary Roughead, [Deputy] Pacific Fleet Commander, has given several talks lately about the Chinese Navy and he is very concerned, as is Secretary [of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld, about the growth of the Chinese Navy. Roughead's position though is that for any navy to be his friend, he will need to know the capability of that navy as well as the intentions of that navy. We're getting a very clear idea of the capabilities of the Chinese Navy, it is not at all clear what their intentions are. They are absolutely opaque in telling us straight-up what they intend to do, which is probably what I would do if I were in their shoes too. We can read about what the Chinese say about what they intend to do with their navy. They say that they intend to push forward the maritime defense perimeters further seaward

It is no secret that the Chinese navy is expanding. It is absolutely no secret that their navy has over 50 submarines right now, 50 competent submarines, and nine or ten of them are nuclear submarines. They bought submarines, good KILO submarines, diesel submarines, from Russia and now they have from Germany what we call "air independent propulsion" submarines that allow them to remain submerged longer and their ability to recharge their diesels has improved. So loosely, their submarine force is more capable than it was not too many years ago, and they are building indigenous submarines in China, both diesel as well as nuclear.

In terms of surface combatants, they have about sixty quality surface combatants - - about 20 destroyers and 40 frigates. Several of them are Russian SOVREMENNY class China is

also building its own first-line destroyers, the [LUDA I/II] 051 class, with a capability short of an American destroyer although approximating those of the more recent American destroyers. Not exactly what we call the Aegis combat system but you can see that they are moving in that direction - - phased array radars in a combat system architecture built into their ships in a completely integrated fashion. Also, relatively long range surface-to-air missiles as well as surface-to-surface missiles.

Aircraft carriers - - thus far the Chinese Navy is lagging. They have bought a Russian aircraft carrier in the past. They have never managed to get the [carrier] to sea. This is a 67,000 ton carrier. For years, American intelligence has said that they have tried to turn her into an actual ocean-going carrier but this has not happened. It still could happen but as yet she is sitting pierside in Shanghai. However, we think they are beginning to build smaller carriers capable of about 24 jet aircraft and about 40,000 tons. I say we think because no hulls have been assembled. [But], a lot of intelligence experts believe that there is a possibility by the year 2010 that the Chinese could have an aircraft carrier.

[The Chinese Navy also has] a massive number of smaller ships And I really do mean vast, depending on which intelligence source you believe, there are about 2000 ships in the Chinese navy. Of course, many are not much better than a row boat but still an awful lot of patrol cutters, guided missile patrol boats etc.

215,000 sailors. The U.S. Navy is larger than that but not by a lot. The Chinese Navy also has the marines and they also have coastal defense forces. They also have air forces.

So, without really meaning to say that the Chinese Navy is on the shores of San Diego, it is safe to say that the Chinese Navy is getting bigger. What they do with it remains completely open to question. . . .

There is little doubt that the Chinese definitely have the green and the brown [water navies]. The question is: How blue water oriented will they be? This clearly is the big question of the day. . . I'm not posing as the China expert today but I will address one of [Dr. Johnson-Freese's] points and that is globalization. As the Chinese economy grows, its need for natural resources, [particularly] oil, will increase. [To import oil to China from the Middle East, it must be brought through the Strait of Malacca]. So, the need to protect their sea lines of communications, ergo the need for a sophisticated blue water navy. Secondly, some of the off-shore drilling that they are talking about doing is in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the Spratly Islands. In these cases, clearly, being able to project its naval forces further would very much benefit their national economy. So, there is clearly some reason to suspect that this capability will match a more, I won't say aggressive, but forward leaning and blue water intention. Thereby, to some large extent, putting them face-to-face with the United States Navy.

Precisely, what those relations will be, we still have time to determine. If you read our national security strategy, one sees a friendly relationship. If you read the press, you see American ships visiting China, you see Chinese ships visiting Guam [just] over the last six weeks. So, clearly, the relationship between the navies is friendly and we

are getting to know one another better as they go further into the blue water.

A bit about our Navy, I think is necessary. Sixteen years ago, we thought about a 600 ship navy. In fact, when I was in command of [USS] NORMANDY (CVN 60), we almost made it to six hundred ships, we were at about 592, - - very, very close, but we did not quite make it there. . . Today, 285 ships operational - - less than half of what we had fifteen years ago. Indeed, we still rule the waves. We still have the largest navy in terms of tonnage. We still have absolutely the most capable aircraft carrier force than any other nation in the world. Our technology far surpasses any other nation's technology.

The way we are operating our navy today is much different than ten years ago. Ten years ago there was no question, we would deploy within a very predictable pattern. We would go to the same places, the Pacific, the Mediterranean etc. With the current war on terror, Admiral Vern Clark and the present CNO Admiral Mike Mullen, have changed the rules. They now have what they call the "Fleet Response Plan", predictable deployments went out the window. They talk about "surge capability". The fact that we have 11 carriers is less meaningful than how many carriers actually get to the point of the spear when the President wants them there. It used to be a very small number. The answer today is about seven of the 11 that can get there within 30 days. So, the latest CNOs have been changing the way we've been deploying our ships. They've been able to force us forward, much more unpredictably. We don't deploy anymore without a purpose. We deploy to fight wars. We deploy with a purpose. With our Fleet Response Plan, you are looking at a much more flexible

navy, a navy that no longer responds to the requirements of the Cold War but does respond to the Global War on Terror.

However, I cannot stress enough that we are doing all this magic with 285 ships. The number of ships that were in the last President's ship building budget was four. Figuring that the average life of a ship is about 30 years, you can do the math quickly and see that the Navy will probably continue to shrink unless the ship building budget drastically turns around in the other direction. . . But, clearly, the U.S. Navy is shrinking and while we are gaining in quality, we are absolutely losing in quantity.

People say, well, "why don't you recommission some of the old ships?" One of the reasons why we like to stay small is because people cost so much money. To buy a sailor today costs \$120,000 per year virtually until he dies if he stays a career sailor. So, CNOs are always finding ways to not be as labor intensive.

That is the direction in which your Navy is going. It is still number one. Absolutely no competitor on the seas. It is stretched very thin. It is operating very hard. Life for a sailor is very difficult today. If we have to face China right now, that is something above and beyond. I think it would take some extra serious thinking on the . . . naval issue.

Professor Stigler focused his comments on a new initiative "Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism." involving the State Department and the Department of Defense. This is a multi-faceted program that seeks to inter alia: make nation states that support terrorism unsustainable; support modern Muslim

governments; build security ties with Muslim countries; change Moslem perceptions of the West; reinforce the message that the Global War on Terrorism is not a war against Islam but rather part of a civil war within Islam. As part of this program, the United States has launched its own radio station and satellite television network to broadcast its message to the Moslem world, set up databases which can be accessed by university students; established exchange programs; and launched an online magazine to change perceptions and thus undercut support for terrorism. While these efforts have shown some success, there are difficult obstacles to overcome as indicated by the fact that polls indicate that Bin Laddin has a higher approval rating in these countries than President Bush.

Turning to China, Professor Stigler made the following comments. One of the virtues of [current Chinese government policy is that it] has led to a considerable liberalization of [China's] domestic media, which, of course, allows the United States to communicate directly with the China's people. This has been going on for the past ten years. [They] are unfortunately backing off a bit lately. . . [They] have forbidden non-global reporting in China. What had been happening in China was that journalists in one part of the country would travel to another province and then report very skeptically upon how the local government officials were doing their jobs in that province. Apparently, journalists were less likely to face repercussions if they reported on something outside their province because their local officials were less likely to crack down on them. [The central government] has tried to forbid that policy.

Also, there are a number of internet blogs in China. But [the central government] recently has insisted that all those bloggers give their real names and register their blog.

“American Source” [is a website] run by the State Department, offering American perspectives on the news. [This has received a substantial number of hits on the internet]. But, at the same time, apparently republication of the news has been quite broad. In fact, the official Chinese government sources for news have been quoting directly this State Department website. Recently, they have even been quoting the website directly and naming that it is American Source. Previously, they had dropped this attribution. So, this is an interesting development.

Right now, [the State Department] is saying that diplomacy offers numerous opportunities in China. One area which I think indicates what diplomacy can achieve in our relations with China is the fact that China recently unpegged its currency to the dollar and allowed it to fluctuate. This ended a ten year policy. This was after two years of complaints from the United States and Germany. [The Chinese government] had said that this was a matter of Chinese sovereignty and that they had no intention of changing that policy, which, of course was to China's advantage. So, in effect, China will on some issues of significance alter its policies as a result of American diplomatic approaches.

There is unfortunately room to be a bit more skeptical about what diplomacy can achieve in terms of confronting [some other issues].