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How China Sees America

The Sum of Beijing's Fears

Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell

“GREAT POWER” is a vague term, but China deserves it by any measure: the extent and strategic location of its territory, the size and dynamism of its population, the value and growth rate of its economy, the massive size of its share of global trade, and the strength of its military. China has become one of a small number of countries that have significant national interests in every part of the world and that command the attention, whether willingly or grudgingly, of every other country and every international organization. And perhaps most important, China is the only country widely seen as a possible threat to U.S. predominance. Indeed, China's rise has led to fears that the country will soon overwhelm its neighbors and one day supplant the United States as a global hegemon.

But widespread perceptions of China as an aggressive, expansionist power are off base. Although China's relative power has grown significantly in recent decades, the main tasks of Chinese foreign policy are defensive and have not changed much since the Cold War era: to blunt destabilizing influences from abroad, to avoid territorial losses, to reduce its neighbors' suspicions, and to sustain economic growth. What has changed in the past two decades is that China is now so deeply integrated into the world economic system that its

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internal and regional priorities have become part of a larger quest: to define a global role that serves Chinese interests but also wins acceptance from other powers.

Chief among those powers, of course, is the United States, and managing the fraught U.S.-Chinese relationship is Beijing's foremost foreign policy challenge. And just as Americans wonder whether China's rise is good for U.S. interests or represents a looming threat, Chinese policymakers puzzle over whether the United States intends to use its power to help or hurt China.

Americans sometimes view the Chinese state as inscrutable. But given the way that power is divided in the U.S. political system and the frequent power turnovers between the two main parties in the United States, the Chinese also have a hard time determining U.S. intentions. Nevertheless, over recent decades, a long-term U.S. strategy seems to have emerged out of a series of American actions toward China. So it is not a hopeless exercise—indeed, it is necessary—for the Chinese to try to analyze the United States.

Most Americans would be surprised to learn the degree to which the Chinese believe the United States is a revisionist power that seeks to curtail China's political influence and harm China's interests. This view is shaped not only by Beijing's understanding of Washington but also by the broader Chinese view of the international system and China's place in it, a view determined in large part by China's acute sense of its own vulnerability.

THE FOUR RINGS

THE WORLD as seen from Beijing is a terrain of hazards, beginning with the streets outside the policymaker's window, to land borders and sea-lanes thousands of miles away, to the mines and oil fields of distant continents. These threats can be described in four concentric rings. In the first ring, the entire territory that China administers or claims, Beijing believes that China's political stability and territorial integrity are threatened by foreign actors and forces. Compared with other large countries, China must deal with an unparalleled number of outside actors trying to influence its evolution, often in ways the regime considers detrimental to its survival. Foreign investors,

development advisers, tourists, and students swarm the country, all with their own ideas about how China should change. Foreign foundations and governments give financial and technical support to Chinese groups promoting civil society. Dissidents in Tibet and Xinjiang receive moral and diplomatic support and sometimes material assistance from ethnic diasporas and sympathetic governments abroad. Along the coast, neighbors contest maritime territories that Beijing claims. Taiwan is ruled by its own government, which enjoys diplomatic recognition from 23 states and a security guarantee from the United States.

At China's borders, policymakers face a second ring of security concerns, involving China's relations with 14 adjacent countries. No other country except Russia has as many contiguous neighbors. They include five countries with which China has fought wars in the past 70 years (India, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and Vietnam) and a number of states ruled by unstable regimes. None of China's neighbors perceives its core national interests as congruent with Beijing's.

But China seldom has the luxury of dealing with any of its neighbors in a purely bilateral context. The third ring of Chinese security concerns consists of the politics of the six distinct geopolitical regions that surround China: Northeast Asia, Oceania, continental Southeast Asia, maritime Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia. Each of these areas presents complex regional diplomatic and security problems.

Finally, there is the fourth ring: the world far beyond China's immediate neighborhood. China has truly entered this farthest circle only since the late 1990s and so far for limited purposes: to secure sources of commodities, such as petroleum; to gain access to markets and investments; to get diplomatic support for isolating Taiwan and Tibet's Dalai Lama; and to recruit allies for China's positions on international norms and legal regimes.

INSCRUTABLE AMERICA

IN EACH of China's four security rings, the United States is omnipresent. It is the most intrusive outside actor in China's internal affairs, the guarantor of the status quo in Taiwan, the largest naval

presence in the East China and South China seas, the formal or informal military ally of many of China's neighbors, and the primary framer and defender of existing international legal regimes. This omnipresence means that China's understanding of American motives determines how the Chinese deal with most of their security issues.

Beginning with President Richard Nixon, who visited China in 1972, a succession of American leaders have assured China of their goodwill. Every U.S. presidential administration says that China's prosperity and stability are in the interest of the United States. And in practice, the United States has done more than any other power to contribute to China's modernization. It has drawn China into the global economy; given the Chinese access to markets, capital, and technology; trained Chinese experts in science, technology, and international law; prevented the full remilitarization of Japan; maintained the peace on the Korean Peninsula; and helped avoid a war over Taiwan.

Yet Chinese policymakers are more impressed by policies and behaviors that they perceive as less benevolent. The American military is deployed all around China's periphery, and the United States maintains a wide network of defense relationships with China's neighbors. Washington continues to frustrate Beijing's efforts to gain control over Taiwan. The United States constantly pressures China over its economic policies and maintains a host of government and private programs that seek to influence Chinese civil society and politics.

Beijing views this seemingly contradictory set of American actions through three reinforcing perspectives. First, Chinese analysts see their country as heir to an agrarian, eastern strategic tradition that is pacifistic, defense-minded, nonexpansionist, and ethical. In contrast, they see Western strategic culture—especially that of the United States—as militaristic, offense-minded, expansionist, and selfish.

Second, although China has embraced state capitalism with vigor, the Chinese view of the United States is still informed by Marxist political thought, which posits that capitalist powers seek to exploit the rest of the world. China expects Western powers to resist Chinese competition for resources and higher-value-added markets. And

Beijing assumes that as China rises, the United States will resist.

although China runs trade surpluses with the United States and holds a large amount of U.S. debt, China's leading political analysts believe the Americans get the better end of the deal by using cheap Chinese labor and credit to live beyond their means.

Third, American theories of international relations have become popular among younger Chinese policy analysts, many of whom have earned advanced degrees in the United States. The most influential body of international relations theory in China is so-called offensive realism, which holds that a country will try to control its security environment to the full extent that its capabilities permit. According to this theory, the United States cannot be satisfied with the existence of a powerful China and therefore seeks to make the ruling regime there weaker and more pro-American. Chinese analysts see evidence of this intent in Washington's calls for democracy and its support for what China sees as separatist movements in Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

Whether they see the United States primarily through a culturalist, Marxist, or realist lens, most Chinese strategists assume that a country as powerful as the United States will use its power to preserve and enhance its privileges and will treat efforts by other countries to protect their interests as threats to its own security. This assumption leads to a pessimistic conclusion: as China rises, the United States will resist. The United States uses soothing words; casts its actions as a search for peace, human rights, and a level playing field; and sometimes offers China genuine assistance. But the United States is two-faced. It intends to remain the global hegemon and prevent China from growing strong enough to challenge it. In a 2011 interview with *Liaowang*, a state-run Chinese newsmagazine, Ni Feng, the deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of American Studies, summed up this view. "On the one hand, the United States realizes that it needs China's help on many regional and global issues," he said. "On the other hand, the United States is worried about a more powerful China and uses multiple means to delay its development and to remake China with U.S. values."

A small group of mostly younger Chinese analysts who have closely studied the United States argues that Chinese and American interests are not totally at odds. In their view, the two countries are sufficiently remote from each other that their core security interests

need not clash. They can gain mutual benefit from trade and other common interests.

But those holding such views are outnumbered by strategists on the other side of the spectrum, mostly personnel from the military and security agencies, who take a dim view of U.S. policy and have more confrontational ideas about how China should respond to it. They believe that China must stand up to the United States militarily and that it can win a conflict, should one occur, by outpacing U.S. military technology and taking advantage of what they believe to be superior morale within China's armed forces. Their views are usually kept out of sight to avoid frightening both China's rivals and its friends.

WHO IS THE REVISIONIST?

TO PEER more deeply into the logic of the United States' China strategy, Chinese analysts, like analysts everywhere, look at capabilities and intentions. Although U.S. intentions might be subject to interpretation, U.S. military, economic, ideological, and diplomatic capabilities are relatively easy to discover—and from the Chinese point of view, they are potentially devastating.

U.S. military forces are globally deployed and technologically advanced, with massive concentrations of firepower all around the Chinese rim. The U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) is the largest of the United States' six regional combatant commands in terms of its geographic scope and nonwartime manpower. PACOM's assets include about 325,000 military and civilian personnel, along with some 180 ships and 1,900 aircraft. To the west, PACOM gives way to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), which is responsible for an area stretching from Central Asia to Egypt. Before September 11, 2001, CENTCOM had no forces stationed directly on China's borders except for its training and supply missions in Pakistan. But with the beginning of the "war on terror," CENTCOM placed tens of thousands of troops in Afghanistan and gained extended access to an air base in Kyrgyzstan.

The operational capabilities of U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific are magnified by bilateral defense treaties with Australia, Japan,

New Zealand, the Philippines, and South Korea and cooperative arrangements with other partners. And to top it off, the United States possesses some 5,200 nuclear warheads deployed in an invulnerable sea, land, and air triad. Taken together, this U.S. defense posture creates what Qian Wenrong of the Xinhua News Agency's Research Center for International Issue Studies has called a "strategic ring of encirclement."

Chinese security analysts also take note of the United States' extensive capability to damage Chinese economic interests. The United States is still China's single most important market, unless

Chinese analysts believe the United States possesses potent ideological weapons and the willingness to use them.

one counts the European Union as a single entity. And the United States is one of China's largest sources of foreign direct investment and advanced technology. From time to time, Washington has entertained the idea of wielding its economic power coercively. After the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, the United States imposed some limited diplomatic and economic sanctions on China, including an embargo, which is still in effect, on the sale of advanced arms.

For several years after that, Congress debated whether to punish China further for human rights violations by canceling the low most-favored-nation tariff rates enjoyed by Chinese imports, although proponents of the plan could never muster a majority. More recently, U.S. legislators have proposed sanctioning China for artificially keeping the value of the yuan low to the benefit of Chinese exporters, and the Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney has promised that if elected, he will label China a currency manipulator on "day one" of his presidency.

Although trade hawks in Washington seldom prevail, flare-ups such as these remind Beijing how vulnerable China would be if the United States decided to punish it economically. Chinese strategists believe that the United States and its allies would deny supplies of oil and metal ores to China during a military or economic crisis and that the U.S. Navy could block China's access to strategically crucial sea-lanes. The ubiquity of the dollar in international trade and

finance also gives the United States the ability to damage Chinese interests, either on purpose or as a result of attempts by the U.S. government to address its fiscal problems by printing dollars and increasing borrowing, acts that drive down the value of China's dollar-denominated exports and foreign exchange reserves.

Chinese analysts also believe that the United States possesses potent ideological weapons and the willingness to use them. After World War II, the United States took advantage of its position as the dominant power to enshrine American principles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments and to install what China sees as Western-style democracies in Japan and, eventually, South Korea, Taiwan, and other countries. Chinese officials contend that the United States uses the ideas of democracy and human rights to delegitimize and destabilize regimes that espouse alternative values, such as socialism and Asian-style developmental authoritarianism. In the words of Li Qun, a member of the Shandong Provincial Party Committee and a rising star in the Communist Party, the Americans' "real purpose is not to protect so-called human rights but to use this pretext to influence and limit China's healthy economic growth and to prevent China's wealth and power from threatening [their] world hegemony."

In the eyes of many Chinese analysts, since the end of the Cold War the United States has revealed itself to be a revisionist power that tries to reshape the global environment even further in its favor. They see evidence of this reality everywhere: in the expansion of NATO; the U.S. interventions in Panama, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo; the Gulf War; the war in Afghanistan; and the invasion of Iraq. In the economic realm, the United States has tried to enhance its advantages by pushing for free trade, running down the value of the dollar while forcing other countries to use it as a reserve currency, and trying to make developing countries bear an unfair share of the cost of mitigating global climate change. And perhaps most disturbing to the Chinese, the United States has shown its aggressive designs by promoting so-called color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. As Liu Jianfei, director of the foreign affairs division of the Central Party School of the Chinese Communist Party, wrote in 2005, "The U.S. has always opposed communist 'red revolutions' and

hates the 'green revolutions' in Iran and other Islamic states. What it cares about is not 'revolution' but 'color.' It supported the 'rose,' 'orange,' and 'tulip' revolutions because they served its democracy promotion strategy." As Liu and other top Chinese analysts see it, the United States hopes "to spread democracy further and turn the whole globe 'blue.'"

EXPLOITING TAIWAN

ALTHOUGH AMERICAN scholars and commentators typically see U.S.-Chinese relations in the postwar period as a long, slow thaw, in Beijing's view, the United States has always treated China harshly. From 1950 to 1972, the United States tried to contain and isolate China. Among other actions, it prevailed on most of its allies to withhold diplomatic recognition of mainland China, organized a trade embargo against the mainland, built up the Japanese military, intervened in the Korean War, propped up the rival regime in Taiwan, supported Tibetan guerillas fighting Chinese control, and even threatened to use nuclear weapons during both the Korean War and the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis. Chinese analysts concede that the United States' China policy changed after 1972. But they assert that the change was purely the result of an effort to counter the Soviet Union and, later, to gain economic benefits by doing business in China. Even then, the United States continued to hedge against China's rise by maintaining Taiwan as a strategic distraction, aiding the growth of Japan's military, modernizing its naval forces, and pressuring China on human rights.

The Chinese have drawn lessons about U.S. China policy from several sets of negotiations with Washington. During ambassadorial talks during the 1950s and 1960s, negotiations over arms control in the 1980s and 1990s, discussions over China's accession to the World Trade Organization in the 1990s, and negotiations over climate change during the decade that followed, the Chinese consistently saw the Americans as demanding and unyielding. But most decisive for Chinese understandings of U.S. policy were the three rounds of negotiations that took place over Taiwan in 1971-72, 1978-79, and 1982, which created the "communiqué framework" that governs U.S.

Taiwan policy to this day. When the U.S.-Chinese rapprochement began, Chinese policymakers assumed that Washington would give up its support for Taipei in exchange for the benefits of normal state-to-state relations with Beijing. At each stage of the negotiations, the Americans seemed willing to do so. Yet decades later, the United States remains, in Beijing's view, the chief obstacle to reunification.

When Nixon went to China in 1972, he told the Chinese that he was willing to sacrifice Taiwan because it was no longer strategically important to the United States, but that he could not do so until his second term. On this basis, the Chinese agreed to the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué, even though it contained a unilateral declaration by the United States that "reaffirm[ed] its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question," which was diplomatic code for a U.S. commitment to deter any effort by the mainland to take Taiwan by force. As events played out, Nixon resigned before he was able to normalize relations with Beijing, and his successor, Gerald Ford, was too weak politically to fulfill Nixon's promise.

When the next president, Jimmy Carter, wanted to normalize relations with China, the Chinese insisted on a clean break with Taiwan. In 1979, the United States ended its defense treaty with Taiwan but again issued a unilateral statement restating its commitment to a "peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue." Congress then surprised both the Chinese and the administration by adopting the Taiwan Relations Act, which required the United States to "maintain [its] capacity . . . to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security . . . of the people on Taiwan." Once again, the deterrent intent was clear.

In 1982, when President Ronald Reagan sought closer relations with Beijing to ramp up pressure on Moscow, China prevailed on the United States to sign another communiqué, which committed Washington to gradually reducing its weapons sales to Taiwan. But once the agreement was in place, the Americans set the benchmark year at 1979, when arms sales had reached their highest level; calculated

The Chinese see American negotiators as demanding and unyielding.

annual reductions at a small marginal rate, adjusting for inflation so that they were actually increases; claimed that the more advanced weapons systems that they sold Taiwan were the qualitative equivalents of older systems; and allowed commercial firms to cooperate with the Taiwanese armaments industry under the rubric of technology transfers rather than arms sales. By the time President George W. Bush approved a large package of advanced arms to Taiwan in April 2001, the 1982 communiqué was a dead letter. Meanwhile, as the United States prolonged its involvement with Taiwan, a democratic transition took place there, putting unification even further out of Beijing's reach.

Reviewing this history, Chinese strategists ask themselves why the United States remains so committed to Taiwan. Although Americans often argue that they are simply defending a loyal democratic ally, most Chinese see strategic motives at the root of Washington's behavior. They believe that keeping the Taiwan problem going helps the United States tie China down. In the words of Luo Yuan, a retired general and deputy secretary-general of the Chinese Society of Military Science, the United States has long used Taiwan "as a chess piece to check China's rise."

THE PERILS OF PLURALISM

THE TAIWAN Relations Act marked the beginning of a trend toward congressional assertiveness on U.S. China policy, and this continues to complicate Washington's relationship with Beijing. Ten years later, the 1989 Tiananmen incident, followed by the end of the Cold War, shifted the terms of debate in the United States. China had been perceived as a liberalizing regime; after Tiananmen, China morphed into an atavistic dictatorship. And the collapse of the Soviet Union vitiated the strategic imperative to cooperate with Beijing. What is more, growing U.S.-Chinese economic ties began to create frictions over issues such as the dumping of cheap manufactured Chinese goods on the U.S. market and the piracy of U.S. intellectual property. After decades of consensus in the United States, China quickly became one of the most divisive issues in U.S. foreign policy, partially due to the intense advocacy efforts of interest groups that make sure China stays on the agenda on Capitol Hill.

Indeed, since Tiananmen, China has attracted the attention of more American interest groups than any other country. China's political system elicits opposition from human rights organizations; its population-control policies anger the antiabortion movement; its repression of churches offends American Christians; its inexpensive exports trigger demands for protection from organized labor; its reliance on coal and massive dams for energy upsets environmental groups; and its rampant piracy and counterfeiting infuriate the film, software, and pharmaceutical industries. These specific complaints add strength to the broader fear of a "China threat," which permeates American political discourse—a fear that, in Chinese eyes, not only denies the legitimacy of Chinese aspirations but itself constitutes a kind of threat to China.

Of course, there are also those in Congress, think tanks, the media, and academia who support positions favorable to China, on the basis that cooperation is important for American farmers, exporters, and banks, and for Wall Street, or that issues such as North Korea and climate change are more important than disputes over rights or religion. Those advocates may be more powerful in the long run than those critical of China, but they tend to work behind the scenes. To Chinese analysts trying to make sense of the cacophony of views expressed in the U.S. policy community, the loudest voices are the easiest to hear, and the signals are alarming.

SUGARCOATED THREATS

IN TRYING to ascertain U.S. intentions, Chinese analysts also look at policy statements made by senior figures in the executive branch. Coming from a political system where the executive dominates, Chinese analysts consider such statements reliable guides to U.S. strategy. They find that the statements often do two things: they seek to reassure Beijing that Washington's intentions are benign, and at the same time, they seek to reassure the American public that the United States will never allow China's rise to threaten U.S. interests. This combination of themes produces what Chinese analysts perceive as sugarcoated threats.

For example, in 2005, Robert Zoellick, the U.S. deputy secretary of state, delivered a major China policy statement on behalf of the

George W. Bush administration. He reassured his American audience that the United States would “attempt to dissuade any military competitor from developing disruptive or other capabilities that could enable regional hegemony or hostile action against the United States or other friendly countries.” But he also explained that China’s

China will not rule
the world unless the
United States
withdraws from it.

rise was not a threat because China “does not seek to spread radical, anti-American ideologies,” “does not see itself in a death struggle with capitalism,” and “does not believe that its future depends on overturning the fundamental order of the international system.” On that basis, he said, the two sides could have “a cooperative relationship.”

But cooperation would depend on certain conditions. China should calm what he called a “cauldron of anxiety” in the United States about its rise. It should “explain its defense spending, intentions, doctrine, and military exercises”; reduce its trade surplus with the United States; and cooperate with Washington on Iran and North Korea. Above all, Zoellick advised, China should give up “closed politics.” In the U.S. view, he said, “China needs a peaceful political transition to make its government responsible and accountable to its people.”

The same ideas have been repeated in slightly gentler language by the Obama administration. In the administration’s first major policy speech on China, in September 2009, James Steinberg, then deputy secretary of state, introduced the idea of “strategic reassurance.” Steinberg defined the principle in the following way: “Just as we and our allies must make clear that we are prepared to welcome China’s ‘arrival’ ... as a prosperous and successful power, China must reassure the rest of the world that its development and growing global role will not come at the expense of [the] security and well-being of others.” China would need to “reassure others that this buildup does not present a threat”; it would need to “increase its military transparency in order to reassure all the countries in the rest of Asia and globally about its intentions” and demonstrate that it “respects the rule of law and universal norms.” To Chinese analysts, such statements send the message that Washington wants cooperation on its own terms, seeks to deter Beijing

from developing a military capability adequate to defend its interests, and intends to promote change in the character of the Chinese regime.

To be sure, Beijing's suspicion of Washington must contend with the fact that the United States has done so much to promote China's rise. But for Chinese analysts, history provides an answer to this puzzle. As they see it, the United States contained China for as long as it could. When the Soviet Union's rising strength made doing so necessary, the United States was forced to engage with China in order to reinforce its hand against Moscow. Once the United States started to engage with China, it came to believe that engagement would turn China toward democracy and would win back for the United States the strategic base on the mainland of Asia that Washington lost in 1949, when the Communists triumphed in the Chinese Civil War.

In the Chinese view, Washington's slow rapprochement with Beijing was not born of idealism and generosity; instead, it was pursued so that the United States could profit from China's economic opening by squeezing profits from U.S. investments, consuming cheap Chinese goods, and borrowing money to support the U.S. trade and fiscal deficits. While busy feasting at the Chinese table, U.S. strategists overlooked the risk of China's rise until the late 1990s. Now that the United States perceives China as a threat, these Chinese analysts believe, it no longer has any realistic way to prevent it from continuing to develop. In this sense, the U.S. strategy of engagement failed, vindicating the advice of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, who in 1991 advocated a strategy of "hiding our light and nurturing our strength." Faced with a China that has risen too far to be stopped, the United States can do no more than it is doing: demand cooperation on U.S. terms, threaten China, hedge militarily, and continue to try to change the regime.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE AN OFFENSIVE REALIST?

DESPITE THESE views, mainstream Chinese strategists do not advise China to challenge the United States in the foreseeable future. They expect the United States to remain the global hegemon for several decades, despite what they perceive as initial signs of decline. For the time being, as described by Wang Jisi, dean of Peking

University's School of International Studies, "the superpower is more super, and the many great powers less great." Meanwhile, the two countries are increasingly interdependent economically and have the military capability to cause each other harm. It is this mutual vulnerability that carries the best medium-term hope for cooperation. Fear of each other keeps alive the imperative to work together.

In the long run, however, the better alternative for both China and the West is to create a new equilibrium of power that maintains the current world system, but with a larger role for China. China has good reasons to seek that outcome. Even after it becomes the world's largest economy, its prosperity will remain dependent on the prosperity of its global rivals (and vice versa), including the United States and Japan. The richer China becomes, the greater will be its stake in the security of sea-lanes, the stability of the world trade and financial regimes, nonproliferation, the control of global climate change, and cooperation on public health. China will not get ahead if its rivals do not also prosper. And Chinese strategists must come to understand that core U.S. interests—in the rule of law, regional stability, and open economic competition—do not threaten China's security.

The United States should encourage China to accept this new equilibrium by drawing clear policy lines that meet its own security needs without threatening China's. As China rises, it will push against U.S. power to find the boundaries of the United States' will. Washington must push back to establish boundaries for the growth of Chinese power. But this must be done with cool professionalism, not rhetorical belligerence. Hawkish campaign talk about trade wars and strategic competition plays into Beijing's fears while undercutting the necessary effort to agree on common interests. And in any case, putting such rhetoric into action is not a realistic option. To do so would require a break in mutually beneficial economic ties and enormous expenditures to encircle China strategically, and it would force China into antagonistic reactions.

Nevertheless, U.S. interests in relation to China are uncontroversial and should be affirmed: a stable and prosperous China, resolution of the Taiwan issue on terms Taiwan's residents are willing to accept, freedom of navigation in the seas surrounding China, the security of Japan and other Asian allies, an open world economy, and the protection

of human rights. The United States must back these preferences with credible U.S. power, in two domains in particular. First, the United States must maintain its military predominance in the western Pacific, including the East China and South China seas. To do so, Washington will have to continue to upgrade its military capabilities, maintain its regional defense alliances, and respond confidently to challenges. Washington should reassure Beijing that these moves are intended to create a balance of common interests rather than to threaten China. That reassurance can be achieved by strengthening existing mechanisms for managing U.S.-Chinese military interactions. For example, the existing Military Maritime Consultative Agreement should be used to design procedures that would allow U.S. and Chinese aircraft and naval vessels to operate safely when in close proximity.

Second, the United States should continue to push back against Chinese efforts to remake global legal regimes in ways that do not serve the interests of the West. This is especially important in the case of the human rights regime, a set of global rules and institutions that will help determine the durability of the liberal world order the United States has long sought to uphold.

China has not earned a voice equal to that of the United States in a hypothetical Pacific Community or a role in a global condominium as one member of a "G-2." China will not rule the world unless the United States withdraws from it, and China's rise will be a threat to the United States and the world only if Washington allows it to become one. For the United States, the right China strategy begins at home. Washington must sustain the country's military innovation and renewal, nurture its relationships with its allies and other cooperating powers, continue to support a preeminent higher-education sector, protect U.S. intellectual property from espionage and theft, and regain the respect of people around the world. As long as the United States addresses its problems at home and holds tight to its own values, it can manage China's rise. 🌐