CHAPTER 7
U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS DURING CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

Since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the fluctuations in U.S.-China relations have been influenced by the profound changes occurring in the world, in the relationship among Great Powers, and in the internal affairs of respective countries. For decades, the United States sought what many Americans have described as a “special relationship” with China. This special relationship has had a strongly cyclical character. In its positive phase, it joined America’s “dreams of influence and uplift” to China’s hope of securing wealth and power from a foreign patron. In its negative phase, it saw China rejecting American influence as disruptive and demeaning and the U.S. turning away from China in anger and dismay. This cycle, by which hostility gave way to reconciliation, and euphoria yielded to disenchantment, has been repeated several times in the history of Sino-American relations over the last 200 years. Echoes of that cycle have been clearly evident in the evolution of U.S.-China relations since 1972. Such a relationship, however, is no longer suitable to the objective circumstances surrounding U.S.-China relations.

The inconsistency between U.S. political and economic ties with China complicates the relationship. In the past, the two were always in balance: in the 1950s the United States and China were completely hostile towards each other resulting in no trade; in the 1970s the two nations were cautiously interacting with each other both politically and

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2 Ibid.
economically; the mid-1980s saw the heyday of political, military and economic ties. But the violent crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in and around Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 3-4, 1989, changed the perceptions about China in the United States. For the U.S, Tiananmen Square was less an example of Chinese brutality than it was an event that jarred policymakers into seriously rethinking the value of China in a world absent of the Soviet threat.\(^3\) During the election of 1992, Clinton had been very critical of the Bush administration's China policy. In light of the increased emphasis on human rights during the Clinton presidency, this chapter would explore whether the policies of the administration marked a decisive shift away from America's policy of enhancing economic and security cooperation between the two states.

The prime determinant of China's foreign policy during the Cold War was its relation with the two superpowers – the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Therefore, after the disintegration of Soviet Union in December 1991, China was concerned about its position in the international scenario, especially its relationship with the U.S. It realistically assessed that the failure of the Communist governments was due to their failure on the domestic front. So, China was determined that it should not reverse the reform process initiated by Deng Xiaoping. China was however concerned about the potential negative effects of economic globalization although it also acknowledges that participation in the process is an "objective requirement" for economic development. Reformers expressed concern that China was not changing fast enough to meet the challenges of globalization, while hardline nationalists viewed globalization as a threat to Chinese values, independence and sovereignty, contending that China could and should pull back from

deepening involvement in the globalization process. Although the mainstream believes that China benefits from globalization in many ways, the U.S. is seen to be receiving even greater benefits. For Chinese leaders and the mainstream of officials and researchers, this Sino-American imbalance of power is a reason not to withdraw from globalization but rather to seize the opportunities it provides to enhance China's comprehensive national power.⁴

**CLINTON IN THE WHITE HOUSE**

In January 1993, Bill Clinton took office in a political climate not only lacking a national consensus on relations with China, but one epitomized by almost unrestrained bipartisan Congressional vitriol against Beijing. China policy became a favourite target for easy partisan politics for a Democrat-controlled Congress. George Bush, former envoy to Beijing, was viewed as friendly to Deng Xiaoping and his fellow octogenarians. Clinton appeared determined to change China’s human rights practices by leveraging America’s tremendous trade and market influence. Campaigning for the presidency in 1992, he accused his incumbent rival, George Bush, of “coddling dictators from Baghdad to Beijing” and sending "secret emissaries to raise a toast with those who crushed democracy" in Tiananmen Square.⁵ The image of “secret emissaries” was reinforced by Lawrence Eagleburger-Brent Scowcroft visits to Beijing.⁶ Clinton thus hinted that he would take a tougher approach in support of the U.S. goals of human rights, trade and nuclear proliferation. This chapter would examine whether Clinton succeeded in

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following a different path with regard to China on issues such as trade and human rights linkage, Taiwan, Tibet and nuclear non-proliferation.

**Linkage of Trade and Human Rights**

From the beginning, the two central themes of Clinton’s foreign policy – harnessing global economics to enhance U.S. growth, and promoting democracy and values – were at odds with each other with regards to China. Clinton however seemed to see no conflict between American ideals and American commerce, or between his desire to please the Chinese students, whom he had so carefully courted during his campaign, and the business community whose support he had also assiduously cultivated.⁷

*Clinton sees no dichotomy in his foreign policy goals*

During the interim between Clinton’s election and his swearing-in, some in Washington speculated that Clinton might immediately abandon his campaign position on China’s most-favoured-nation benefits, his position remained consistent. At the economic conference Clinton chaired in Little Rock in December 1992, one businesswoman tried to talk to him about China. Jill Barad, the president and chief executive officer of Mattel, warned of the consequences if China’s MFN status was withdrawn. Duties on Chinese-made toys would go up from 12 to 70 percent, she said, and American companies like Mattel might lose their market share to foreign competitors. She also warned that American shoe companies obtained 60 percent of their products from China, and

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⁷ Ibid.
American imports of textiles from that country added up to $4 billion a year. Clinton told Barad he hoped not to have to dislocate any of these industries. He did not favour the revocation of China’s MFN benefits “if we can achieve continued progress” in areas like human rights, Clinton said. He was thus reaffirming his campaign position: placing conditions upon the renewal of China’s benefits. “I don’t want to do it economically, I don’t want to do it politically,” he said. “But I think we’ve got to stick up for ourselves and for the things we believe in and how these people are treated in that country.” He also sounded another theme about China in Little Rock, one that he would repeat on numerous occasions in the transition and throughout his first year in the White House. China had a $15 billion-a-year trade surplus with the United States, Clinton pointed out. Its stake in trade with the U.S. was considerably larger than America’s. Clinton’s suggestion was that in any showdown over trade benefits, China would yield, because its exports to the U.S. were larger than were America’s to China. Yet, any such showdown would inevitably boil down to a test of political wills, not merely a dollar-for-dollar calculation of the balance of trade. If Clinton did not have the ability to withstand opposition from the U.S. business community, which included not only the American firms exporting to China but also those, like Mattel, which imported from it, then those comparative figures would be irrelevant.

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9 Ibid. pp. 276.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
Clinton’s foreign policy team included Warren Christopher as secretary of state, Anthony Lake as national security adviser, and Winston Lord as assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific. All three showed strong commitments to the cause of human rights and democracy. In his confirmation hearing, Christopher said, “Our policy will be to seek to facilitate a broad, peaceful evolution in China from communism to democracy by encouraging the forces of economic and political liberalization in that great and highly important country.” In response, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wu Jianmin warned that the U.S. should not try to meddle in China’s affairs. At his Senate confirmation hearing, Lord made it plain that the Clinton administration intended to require improvements in human rights if China wanted renewal of its trade benefits. “We will seek cooperation from China on a range of issues. But Americans cannot forget Tiananmen Square,” he testified. Nevertheless, submerged in Lord’s testimony, which gave the first detailed overview of the new Clinton administration’s policies toward Asia, there appeared to be a quiet, unacknowledged trade-off with China. If China made the concessions on human rights that the Clinton administration sought, the United States would pull back from the venturesome new Taiwan policies of the Bush administration and return to the straight and narrow approaches of the previous decade. As it turned out, the implicit bargain was not one that China accepted.

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12 Ibid.
Conditional Extension of MFN Status to China

In March 1993, Clinton sent a letter to Beijing that listed 14 issues of concern in the three broad categories of human rights, proliferation, and trade, suggesting that if China took steps to satisfy these concerns, it would facilitate the MFN debate. That fanned Chinese fear, and Beijing sent Clinton its own list of desired actions for U.S. policy. The 1993 MFN debate ended with Clinton gaining Congressional agreement for renewing Beijing’s trade status by an executive order with support from Senate Majority leader George Mitchell and Representative Nancy Pelosi, who had led the charge against Bush’s China policy. Thus, on May 28, 1993, President Clinton signed an executive order extending China’s MFN status for an additional year and established conditions for the continuation of MFN in 1994. Those conditions included requiring the secretary of state to certify that “overall significant progress” had been made in several areas related to human rights: liberalizing emigration policy, ending exports of prison labour goods, releasing political prisoners, permitting international monitoring of prison conditions, protecting Tibet’s “distinctive religious and cultural heritage,” and improving access to international radio and television broadcast. President Clinton also warned that sanctions would be imposed if it were proven that China had violated the MTCR guidelines banning the export of certain classes of ballistic missiles. The announcement also asserted that U.S. would now “speak with one voice on China policy.”

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branch policy and a congressional policy. We have an American policy, he added.\textsuperscript{17} The stage was set for a significantly more confrontational approach toward China than that pursued under the Bush administration.

\textit{Sino-U.S. Relations on a Downward Spiral}

As a matter of record, China has long opposed in principle the threat or imposition of economic sanctions, particularly in circumstances in which their use was unilateral in nature. Following the executive order linking MFN and human rights, China expressed “strong opposition” to the move but did not make clear whether it would cooperate with the approach in detail.\textsuperscript{18} Although some analysts in the U.S. questioned the wisdom of the linkage, other analysts at the time believed China would cooperate, mainly because the changes called for were not onerous and the vague standard of judgment seemed easy to meet.\textsuperscript{19} However, the relationship began to unravel on all fronts at once. In July and August, a series of controversies over human rights, trade and proliferation exploded in rapid succession. With regard to human rights, Beijing refused to allow a previously detained labour activist, Han Dongfang, to return to China, and also jailed several dissidents. On trade issues, disputes over textiles, illegal rhinoceros horn imports, and lack of progress in market access loomed, and, U.S. opposition, on human rights grounds, to Beijing’s bid to host the Olympics in 2000, a national cause in which China had invested considerable public face, outraged the Chinese leadership. In August, based on

\textsuperscript{17} Address by William J. Clinton on Renewal of MFN Status for China, May 28, 2993, Foreign Policy Bulletin 4/2: 44-47 S/O '93.


intelligence evidence, Washington imposed limited sanctions on China for violating restrictions of the MTCR on sales of ballistic missile equipment. The low point was probably reached in early September, when a U.S. challenge inspection of the Chinese freighter Yin He – on suspicion it was carrying restricted chemical weapons compounds to the Middle East – turned up nothing.\footnote{Robert A. Manning, "Clinton and China: Beyond Human Rights," \textit{Orbis}, Spring 1994, pp. 193-205.}

At the same time as it was criticizing Chinese human rights abuses and imposing sanctions on its nonproliferation behaviour, the administration appeared to appreciate China’s economic potential, particularly after Deng Xiaoping reinvigorated economic and commercial reform in 1992. Both the American business community and U.S. officials recognized there were trends operating in China that were in America’s interest to promote. Coupled with the recognition of China’s economic progress, came the fear of Chinese hardliners who had started viewing U.S. as an adversary. Also, Deng Xiaoping’s failing health made a succession struggle imminent in China. By September 1993, the Clinton administration was also facing pressure from the Pentagon to take a less confrontational approach with China, because of the looming crisis over North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme. North Korean leader Kim II Sung had announced that his government would withdraw from the NPT rather than submit to inspections. Pentagon officials feared a potential showdown could lead to a war on the Korean Peninsula. They were eager to settle the problem through negotiations rather than force. The key to any
diplomatic solution was China, the only Asian power to maintain any semblance of ties with North Korea.\textsuperscript{21}

\textit{Clinton Retreats from Campaign Rhetoric}

All of these developments – the business community’s unhappiness, the pressure from Pentagon, and a series of acrimonious public confrontations with Beijing – culminated in the first significant change in the China policy of the Clinton administration. After a contentious series of internal meetings, the administration launched what would eventually be called a policy of “comprehensive engagement”\textsuperscript{22} with China. Kent Wiedmann, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs explained the policy, "The purpose of this strategy can be simply stated: To pursue all of our interests at the levels and intensity required to achieve results; To seek to build mutual confidence and agreement in areas where our interests converge; and Through dialogue, to reduce the areas in which we have differences.” He added, “This strategy is consistent with the policies of the past five Administrations, all of which recognized that while there would necessarily be differences between two great countries with vastly different political and social systems, it was necessary to pursue constructive relations with China now and in the future. While we continue to have differences over trade, human rights, and non-proliferation, we believe our engagement strategy has succeeded

\textsuperscript{22} P.M. Kamath, “U.S.-China Relations under the Clinton Administration: Comprehensive Engagement or the Cold War Again?” \textit{Strategic Analysis}, vol. 22, no. 5, August 1998, pp. 691-709.
not only in helping to advance U.S. interests with China, but also in encouraging China's continued integration into the international community.\textsuperscript{23}

First, in its broadest and most general sense, the Clinton administration used the term engagement to signify a policy that implied involvement and interaction as opposed to isolationism. Such a formulation was largely intended for a domestic audience as the usage entailed a willingness to continue to be involved actively in international affairs. The Clinton administration felt obligated to defend its actions in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, and the Middle East as constituting positive engagement, consistent with American interest.\textsuperscript{24} The second way in which engagement was used in reference to China was to connote a strategic agenda involving the carefully considered extension of incentives and penalties to influence Beijing's behavior. Thus, engagement implied a willingness to use positive incentives as a means of rewarding good behavior. In September 1993, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake called for the United States to pursue a strategy of enlargement – enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies.\textsuperscript{25} China, however, did not fit into a neat category and Lake's description of the administration's China policy did not provide much clarity. The third manner in which engagement has been used is in the sense of a general dialogue between high level U.S. and Chinese officials. It meant seeking to communicate more effectively with senior Chinese officials so as to promote better understanding of U.S. policies and positions.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. pp. 19.
As part of the new policy, Clinton met Chinese President Jiang Zemin at the first expanded session of the APEC forum at Blake Island, Washington, in November 1993 and reassured Beijing that U.S. policy continued to be based on the “three Communiqués” and it supported a unified China. By the time of the APEC meeting, Clinton was beginning to grope toward the outlines of a broad new post Cold War strategy for dealing with the rest of the world, an approach that would emphasize free trade and commercial diplomacy. At this time, the establishment of the WTO was also in the pipeline. Following the summit meeting at Blake Island, cabinet-level visits to China picked up sharply in 1994. The change in Clinton’s policy led to warming up of relations. By January 1994, the Chinese also reciprocated by releasing some Tibetan political prisoners, beginning talks with the International Committee of the Red Cross aimed at reaching accord on regularizing the monitoring of those detained in Chinese prisons, and agreeing to provide access for U.S. customs officials to inspect prisons alleged to be exporting goods to the U.S. as part of implementing an agreement between the U.S. and China on prison labour exports. Beijing also reached accord on textile disputes, agreed to open its financial markets to U.S. financial institutions, reduced tariff on 234 products and eliminated quotas and import licenses on 238 others in mid-February.27

In 1994, Clinton’s economic team, worried about a loss of trade with China, started criticizing the entire concept of linkage of MFN status with human rights. Representatives of the business community and former American leaders like Henry Kissinger and Jimmy Carter also advised Clinton to drop the MFN linkage once and for

all. The Chinese government also began openly and unabashedly turning up the commercial pressure in its dealing with the Clinton administration. On May 26, 1994, Clinton announced his decision to delink China’s MFN status and human rights. He acknowledged that “not all requirements of the executive order were met.” Nevertheless, he was cutting the linkage between China’s MFN benefits and human rights. “We have reached the end of the usefulness of that policy, and it is time to take a new path,” he said.\(^2^8\) The warm reception accorded to Commerce Secretary Ron Brown by Chinese officials in August 1994 was a both a reward for business pressure on the White House to extend MFN trade status and a response to Brown’s expressed desire to build a more healthy relationship with China through “commercial diplomacy.”\(^2^9\) Similar extensions of MFN for China were made in 1995 and 1996. The only condition made by Clinton was to halt the import of Chinese-made firearms, both military and sporting, into the United States. The fact that Clinton intended to give priority to maintaining cordial relations with China was evident from his 1997 State of the Union Address, which stated, “We must pursue a deeper dialogue with China -- for the sake of our interests and our ideals. An isolated China is not good for America. A China playing its proper role in the world is. I will go to China, and I have invited China’s President to come here, not because we agree on everything, but because engaging China is the best way to work on our common


challenges like ending nuclear testing, and to deal frankly with our fundamental differences like human rights."

**Other Economic Issues in Sino-U.S. Relation**

Other economic issues, with political implications, have also arisen to plague U.S.-China relations: China’s growing trade surplus with the United States, coupled with a stubborn resistance to opening its own markets fully to U.S. goods; China’s alleged use of prison labour to produce items for export to the United States and its lack of “transparency” in commercial dealings with U.S. interests. Critics of trade relations with China cited the $60 billion trade surplus in 1998 (which totaled $83 billion in 2001) as a reason for reassessing the entire relationship. Under the threat of U.S. trade sanctions, China signed bilateral trade agreements with the United States on market access in 1992. Protection in China of U.S. intellectual property rights also remains a serious problem. A serious dispute arose regarding China’s illegal piracy of American intellectual property. After lengthy negotiations to get Chinese authorities to resolve the problem, the Office of the Trade Representative, under statutory authority of Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 and the Omnibus Trade Act of 1988, threatened to impose 100 percent tariff on a specified range of Chinese imports to the U.S. Following agreement in early 1995 on the issue of protection of intellectual property, China began to crack down on pirating of

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30 President Clinton’s State of the Union Address, February 4, 1997 (available at http://www.clinton2.nara.gov/WH/SOU97/).
The agreements produced mixed results: market access and IPR protection have significantly improved in China, but U.S. firms continue to face numerous trade barriers, and IPR piracy remains a serious problem in China.

On China's side, there was resentment at its exclusion from the WTO as a developing country, for which it blamed the United States, although it refused to provide some data required for WTO membership, such as budgetary figures. President Clinton's unwillingness, mainly because of America's trade deficit with China, particularly in manufacturing and textiles, to accept China's sweeping concessions on market access issues and agree to its accession to the WTO during Premier Zhu Rongji's April 1999 visit to Washington left Zhu and other economic reformers angered and vulnerable to criticism at home. The United States sought to use China's application to join the WTO as a means to gain greater market access in China. The United States insisted that China could join the WTO only if it substantially cut trade and investment barriers. During its negotiations with China over the terms of its WTO accession, the Clinton administration pledged that, in return for significant market opening commitments on the part of China, it would press the Congress to enact permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) legislation. Once a satisfactory bilateral agreement was reached with China in November 1999, the Clinton administration began to push for PNTR legislation. The administration argued that China would get into the WTO with or without congressional approval of PNTR status for China, and that failure to pass such legislation would prevent the United States and China from having an official trade relationship in the WTO. As a result, it was contended, U.S. firms would be excluded from the trade concessions made by China.

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
to gain entry into the WTO, while U.S. competitors in the WTO would be able to take full advantage of new business opportunities in China, and the United States would be unable to use the WTO dispute resolution process to resolve trade disputes with China. Clinton further maintained that China’s accession to the WTO would promote U.S. economic and strategic interests, namely by inducing China to deepen market reforms, promote the rule of law, reduce the government’s role in the economy, and further integrate China into the world economy, making it a more reliable and stable partner. Finally, the administration contended that congressional rejection of PNTR would be viewed by the Chinese as an attempt to isolate China economically; such a move would seriously damage U.S.-China commercial relations and undermine the political position of economic reformers in China. 35

After many years of tough negotiations, a consensus in the WTO on the terms of China’s membership was reached in September 2001. China’s accession was formally approved by the WTO on November 10, 2001, and on December 11, 2001, it became a WTO member. In order to ensure that the WTO agreements would fully apply between the United States and China, the 106th Congress passed legislation (H.R. 4444, P.L. 106-286) authorizing the President to grant China PNTR status after it joined the WTO (President Bush extended PNTR status to China on December 27, 2001). The Act also required the U.S. Trade Representative to annually issue a report assessing China’s

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compliance with its WTO trade obligations. Finally, the Act established a special Congressional-Executive Commission to examine China’s human rights policies.36

The Status of Taiwan

One of the most crucial aspects of Sino-US relations has been the issue of Taiwan, the island bastion to which the Kuomintang (KMT) government retreated in 1949 after the China mainland fell to the Chinese Communists. Although the U.S. was initially supportive of Taiwan as a counter to Communist China, it later came to accept some of China’s demands regarding Taiwan. The U.S. under President Truman initially eschewed any military involvement with the defense of Taiwan, though he did order what later became known as the “Taiwan Strait Patrol,” an occasional passage by a destroyer through the Taiwan Strait intended to keep an eye on what was happening on both sides of the strait. China’s entry into the Korean War became the catalyst not only for an expansion of U.S.-KMT diplomatic ties but also for a growing U.S. security interest in Taiwan. This security interest included an order from President Truman to the U.S. 7th Fleet to “neutralize” the Taiwan Strait and a resumption of military aid to the KMT forces on Taiwan. The U.S. diplomatic commitment to Taiwan included recognizing the KMT-led Republic of China (ROC) as the sole representative of China, maintaining an embassy in the ROC capital of Taipei, and supporting it in international bodies such as the United Nations. The U.S. also concluded a mutual defense treaty with the ROC in December 1954. The identification of the U.S. with Taiwan was intensified during the McCarthy period of the 1950. To the PRC, U.S. support of Taiwan represented interference in China’s internal affairs and prevented the consummation of the

36 Ibid.
Communist revolution and the full unification of the nation. Ever since the Communist victory on the mainland and the establishment of the Kuomintang rule over Taiwan, China’s main aim has been to get political recognition for only one China—that is, mainland China, and the possible reunification of Taiwan with China. To this day, reunification of Taiwan with the mainland remains the most persistent issue of concern to the PRC in its relation with the United States.

The U.S.-China rapprochement of 1971-89 was rooted in a common opposition to the Soviet and was founded in a fundamental realignment of U.S. foreign policy embodied in the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972. Washington agreed to support Beijing's bid for the U.N. seat formerly held by the Nationalist Chinese government on Taiwan, and the U.S. withdrew its military bases and forces from Taiwan. Washington restored full diplomatic relations with Beijing in 1979 and withdrew official recognition of the Taiwan government. Yet the U.S. has maintained "unofficial" relations with Taiwan under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. This law also mandates U.S. military protection of Taiwan in defense of its independence from China, while not disputing Beijing's claim that Taiwan is merely a province of China.37 In 1982 the Reagan administration agreed to limit arms sales to Taiwan in return for Beijing's promise to resolve differences with Taiwan peacefully. But then the Bush administration resumed sales of high-tech weapons to Taiwan, including 150 F-16 fighter aircraft, ostensibly to counter China's purchase of 50 modern Russian Su-27 fighters. Such a response was disproportionate, especially since Taiwan also acquired 60 French Mirage fighters and manufactures its own modern...
fighters using imported U.S. technology. The Clinton administration was faced with a crisis along the Taiwan Straits which encouraged both Chinese and American leaders to work toward better relations.

**Crisis over Taiwan**

Initially, in the early 1990s, the Chinese response to the victory of the democratic movement in Taiwan was very cautious. At that point China believed that the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taiwan would be in favour of the “one China, one Taiwan” policy and feared that there would be moves to assert the independence of Taiwan. The fact that the U.S. supported the growth of the democratic movement within Taiwan added to the fear that the U.S. and Western countries’ growing ties with Taiwan would “perpetuate the separation of Taiwan and the mainland indefinitely.” By this time, the fact that the U.S. had sanctioned the sale of F-16s to Taiwan further added to the Chinese concerns over the Taiwan issue.

When it first took office, the Clinton administration had initiated a comprehensive review of American policy toward Taiwan. The reason for the review was to put off any controversy regarding Taiwan because the administration did not want any distractions during the year in which it was pursuing its policy of MFN linkage. In the 1994, the administration finally announced the results of this review. The changes in Taiwan policy were mostly minor, merely redefining the details of the unofficial relationship through

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38 Ibid.
which America had done business with the island since 1979. For example, the administration decreed that officials from Taiwan would still be barred from setting foot in the White House, State Department and Pentagon, but would henceforth be allowed to visit other government buildings in Washington. However, top level Taiwan officials, such as President Lee Teng-hui, would not be granted visas to travel to the U.S. but would be permitted to make "transit" stops on American soil.

In May 1994, U.S. trade officials became embroiled in a seemingly minor contretemps involving Taiwan. On May 4, a Boeing 747 owned by the Taiwan government touched down at Hickham Air Force Base in Honolulu, which carried Taiwan’s president Lee Teng-hui and several of his top advisers. They were on their way both to Central America and to the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa. The State Department, fearing China’s reaction, had denied permission for Taiwan’s president to stop over for a night in Honolulu. Instead, he had been invited to a reception in a transit lounge at the American air force base while his airplane was refueling. But after arriving in Hawaii, the head of Taiwan’s Washington office found the arrangements for the reception to be insultingly spartan. As a result, when the plane landed in Hawaii, Taiwan’s president refused to disembark. Lee swore that Taiwan would no longer accept quietly the second-class status to which it had long been relegated. Things can’t be the way they were before, Lee said, adding that Taiwan was now a democracy, and its leaders were responsible to its people. In the U.S., several members of the Congress denounced the administration. In June, two of Taiwan’s supporters in Congress, Senators

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., pp. 315-16.
Frank Murkowski of Alaska and Hank Brown of Colorado, wrote a letter to Lee, inviting him to come back to the United States. The following month, the Senate voted 94 to 0 to approve a resolution calling upon the State Department to grant visas to officials from Taiwan. American attitudes toward Taiwan had changed. By the early 1990s, Taiwan was undeniably a thriving democracy and the island had become America's sixth largest trading partner. So too, after 1989, American views of China had transformed: the Tiananmen Square massacre made clear the nature of the Communist Party's rule over the Chinese people, and the collapse of the Soviet Union called into question the necessity for America to avoid offending Beijing. Furthermore, while Beijing could rely on support from American business community in its campaign to win an extension of China's trade benefits, it could not rely on them in its efforts to constrain Taiwan because American exports to Taiwan were $16 billion in 1993, more than twice as much as to China.

With the help of a lobbying firm, Taiwan went to work in Congress on behalf of President Lee. At the beginning of 1995, the new House Speaker Newt Gingrich endorsed the idea of a visit to the United States by the President of Taiwan, as well as readmission of Taiwan to the United Nations. The administration, however, rejected any suggestion of a visit by Lee. On February 15, 1995, Secretary of State Warren Christopher dismissed the idea saying, it would be "inconsistent with the unofficial character of our relationship" with Taiwan. In early May 1995, the administration was finally forced to confront political reality. The House of Representatives approved, 396 to

43 Ibid. pp. 318.
44 Ibid.
0, a non-binding resolution calling upon the administration to permit Lee Teng-hui to make a private visit to Cornell University, of which he was an alumnus. The Senate followed suit, voting 97 to 1, in favour of lee’s visit. By this time, many of the nation’s newspapers carried editorials in favour of Lee’s visit. The only conceivable rationale for denying Lee a visa was the fact that China was so determinedly opposed to it. In May 1995, President Clinton finally decided to support an unprecedented visit by the president of Taiwan after he had been embarrassed by China into backing away from his MFN executive order. Taiwan President Lee Teng Hui landed in Los Angeles on June 7, 1995. In Syracuse, the welcoming party at the airport included the mayor, the president of Cornell, a motorcade of stretch limousines, four state police cruisers and three Republican members of the U.S. Senate.\(^{46}\)

**China Reacts Unfavourably to the Visit**

The Lee visit sent U.S.-China relationship into a tailspin. China’s reaction to the Lee visit was extreme but indicated clearly the domestic sensitivity of the issue in Beijing. After warning for months of serious consequences if Lee were permitted to make the visit, and being reassured by Warren Christopher’s statement that such a visit was not consistent with America’s unofficial relation with Taiwan, Beijing leaders evidently believed that they had no alternative but to take serious steps in response. Beginning in mid-June, Beijing broke off all bilateral dialogues with Washington, withdrew its ambassador, and initiated a series of military exercises, including M-9 missile launches into the Taiwan Strait in 1996. The Taiwan crisis came to a head with the United States dispatching two

\(^{46}\) Ibid. pp. 326.
aircraft carrier battlegroups to the vicinity. From slow mend and engagement, the relationship had suddenly deteriorated into crisis and confrontation. In the United States, stunned by China's reminder of its commitment to risk war over Taiwan and its ability and will to destabilize East Asia, the administration and members of Congress re-evaluated America's China policy, seeking to stabilize relations through "engagement."

It was the Clinton administration's engagement-as-dialogue approach that helped move the relationship out of the doldrums and into a more productive phase. In January 1996, as part of the review of policy toward China, it was decided that efforts needed to be made to manage better the bilateral relationship, anticipating problems and looking for solutions in advance of the headlines. National Security Adviser Anthony Lake chose to play a more active role in this process than he had in the past. In a July 1996 meeting in Beijing, Lake sketched out a worldview in which the established big powers worked cooperatively to extend peace and economic development throughout the world. He indicated that China had a key role to play as one of the global powers. He also, for the first time, conveyed to China the president's willingness to exchange state visits with China's president Jiang Zemin. The White House also reassured Beijing that future visits by senior Taiwan leaders to the United States would be rare and for strictly personal reasons. During this period the administration also assured China that Washington did not support Taiwan's independence, two Chinas, or Taiwan's membership in international organizations of sovereign states, including the United Nations.48

48 Ibid.
Change in China Policy in Clinton’s Second Term

Following the Lake visit and especially in Clinton’s second term, when Samuel R. Berger replaced Lake as national security adviser, administration officials began justifying engagement as a process of “integrating” China into the world community so that it would voluntarily observe and contribute to the growth of international norms in nuclear nonproliferation, trade, human rights, and environmental protection. The exchange of summits – Jiang’s visit to the U.S. in October 1997 and Clinton’s trip to China in June-July 1998 – gave the appearance that the bilateral relationship had achieved breakthrough success and that a new plateau of cooperation had been reached. The administration pointed out that it had achieved important agreements on nuclear nonproliferation: China had signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, cut off assistance to the Iranian nuclear programme, and tightened export controls on nuclear related materials in 1997. On the issue of human rights, China signed two U.N. human rights conventions and released several high profile political prisoners, including Wei Jingsheng in 1997 and Wang Dan in 1998. The two presidents agreed to describe the U.S.-China relations as moving toward a “constructive strategic partnership” in the 21st Century.49 However, there were issues which continued to mar the relationship. In 1999, support for China policy reached an all time low after lengthy congressional investigations into alleged campaign contributions by China to the Democratic National Committee and successful espionage activities by China against American nuclear research laboratories. Reports of expanded Chinese missile deployment opposite Taiwan elicited calls for a more active defense cooperation between Taiwan and the U.S. Crackdowns against democratic activists in 1998 renewed

49 Ibid. pp. 25.
calls for a tougher approach to human rights. For Beijing, the most shocking event was the accidental bombing — by U.S. and NATO forces attacking Serbia — of China’s embassy in Belgrade on May 7, 1999, which killed three Chinese journalists and wounded 20 embassy staffers. China responded with a paroxysm of rage and anti-Americanism. Dialogues were temporarily suspended. However, relations again took an upswing after the U.S. signed an agreement to facilitate China’s entry into the WTO in November 1999.  

**Human Rights and U.S. Tibet Policy**

In early 1949, Mao Tse-Tung’s Communist forces consolidated their victory over Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists, who subsequently fled to Taiwan. The Chinese Communist Party had maintained since 1922 that Chinese recovery of Mongolia, Sinkiang, and Tibet was its primary goals. During 1949, tension increased between Lhasa (capital of Tibet) and Beijing, and Tibetans feared imminent invasion after the Chinese vowed to “liberate” Tibet on September 3, 1949. In November, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) forces moved toward the PRC-Tibetan frontier, and began to infiltrate into eastern Tibet. Negotiations between Lhasa and Beijing began in 1950 but proved fruitless and by October 7, the PLA invasion of Tibet was fully underway. The question of Tibet was proposed for U.N. debate in November 1950, but India persuaded the U.K. and the U.S. that debate on the matter would not produce any useful results, so debate was put off. The Tibetans themselves appealed to the U.N. on December 13, 1950, but U.N. never held any discussion on the matter.  

On May 23, 1951, the Tibetan delegation signed the “17

50 Ibid. 25-26.
Point Agreement,” which allowed the PLA free rein in Tibet and gave the PRC control over Tibet’s foreign affairs and defence in exchange for religious and political autonomy. The U.S. government did make an effort to repudiate the agreement. Secretary of State Dean Acheson cabled Ambassador Henderson that Tibet should not be “compelled by duress” to accept the agreement, and offered light arms and political support, with the proviso that India agree. But the Dalai Lama decided to accept the agreement, hoping that the Chinese would live up to their end of the deal.52

U.S. persuades Dalai Lama to Flee

However, the Chinese did not allow the Tibetans to run their internal affairs with any meaningful degree of autonomy, and as a result they had a difficult time ruling Tibet from the beginning. After much privation – including massive food shortages, arbitrary arrest, torture and detention, the destruction of over 1,000 monasteries, constant attacks on Buddhism and the monastic structure of society, and according to the Dalai Lama, the death of more than 65,000 Tibetans – the Tibetan people grew increasingly restless. A number of bloody clashes in eastern Tibet bordering on open rebellion became more frequent, particularly after 1955. In March 1959, tensions between the PLA and the Tibetans boiled over and large demonstrations and riots occurred in Lhasa.53 The U.S. government, meanwhile, became involved in conjunction with its policy of containing Communist China. Heretofore it had played a minor role in the Sino-Tibetan conflict, but it now actively tried to persuade the Dalai Lama to denounce the agreement and flee into

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52 Ibid.
53 Ibid. pp. 194.
exile. By the end of the month, the Dalai Lama had fled to India, followed by about 80,000 Tibetans. China now set aside the agreement and established a people's government in Tibet. The Dalai Lama, in India, similarly denounced the agreement, claiming Tibet's right to self determination and independence. The political status of Tibet vis-a-vis China re-emerged as a contested issue.

**U.S. endorses Tibet's Right to Self Determination**

At the news of the atrocities of the Chinese occupation of Tibet, sympathy for the Dalai Lama poured forth in the United States. He was asked by private American groups to visit the U.S. and speak about the troubles of Tibet, which he did. Although the U.S. government in no way sponsored the Dalai Lama’s visit, it interposed no objection either. The Dalai Lama’s highly publicized visit to the United States undoubtedly stirred up strong resentment within the Chinese government, where it smacked of foreign interference in China's internal affairs. Nevertheless, despite American public’s sympathy toward the Dalai Lama and Tibet, at no time did the U.S. government policy support the Dalai Lama as the leader of an independent country. But the U.S. did support Tibet’s right to self-determination which was articulated in 1960 by Secretary of State Christian E. Herter in a letter to the Dalai Lama: “As you know, while it has been the historical position of the US to consider Tibet as an autonomous country under the suzerainty of China, the American people have also traditionally stood for the principle of self-determination. It is the belief of the US government that this principle should apply

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55 Ibid.
to the people of Tibet and that they should have the determining voice in their own political destiny.”

During the two decades after the 1959 uprising, China ended the feudal estate system in Tibet and gradually implemented a system of pervasive communes. It also destroyed the vast monastic system and, during the Cultural Revolution, vigorously attacked traditional Tibetan culture and prohibited all religious activities.

Sino-Tibetan relations entered a new phase in 1978 when China embarked on a more liberal trajectory under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Beijing shifted its Tibet policy away from the assimilationist/class struggle policy of the Cultural Revolution, instituting in its place a policy that emphasized meeting the ethnic sensibilities of Tibetans while improving their economic situation. At the same time, Beijing and the Tibetan exiles began secret talks to resolve their dispute. The Dalai Lama formally sent negotiating delegations to Beijing in 1982 and 1984. These talks, however, proved fruitless. The Chinese were unwilling to consider real political autonomy in Tibet, i.e., a political system different than the rest of China and run by Tibetans. Conversely, the exiles were unwilling to accept a solution that addressed only cultural, religious and linguistic issues and did not give them political control over Tibet. This failure left the Dalai Lama and his leaders in a difficult position politically. On the one hand, they did not have the means to compel Beijing to accede to their demands, while on the other hand, they saw China moving ahead with its internal reform programme without them.

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59 Ibid.
When the U.S. jettisoned its China "containment" strategy in favor of detente, direct support for Tibet ended. Tibet was no longer an issue even marginally important to U.S. national interests. In 1986-87, the exiles launched a new strategic initiative whose aim was to secure increased political support from the U.S. and Europe in order to exert new and effective leverage on China. A key element in this new strategy was that the Dalai Lama, for the first time, would make political speeches in the West. In September 1987, he initiated this strategy in Washington, D.C. with a major speech before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The following June, he made another important address at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. In the latter speech he laid out publicly for the first time his willingness to accept something less than independence for Tibet, namely, complete political autonomy. Several days after the Dalai Lama's speech in Washington, a small group of monks in Lhasa demonstrated in support of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence. They were arrested without incident, but a few days later when more monks demonstrated to demand the release of the first monks, a full-scale riot erupted. During the succeeding two years, three other riots occurred in Lhasa, the last compelling Beijing to declare martial law in Tibet for one year.

Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama's initiative achieved considerable success internationally and in the U.S. The U.S. Congress passed legislation supporting Tibet, the Dalai Lama and his envoys gained access to top leaders in the U.S., and in 1989, the Dalai Lama was

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. On 22 December 1987, President Reagan signed the Foreign Relations Authorization Act (1988-89) into law, which contained a Tibet amendment. The amendment's Statement of Policies stated, "It is the sense of the Congress that the United States should express sympathy for those Tibetans who have suffered and died as a result of fighting, persecution, or famine over the past four decades; the United States should make the treatment of the Tibetan people an important factor in its conduct of relations with the People's Republic of China..." While this was weaker than the now defunct position stated by Christian Herter in 1960, it was seen in Dharamsala as a major victory and as the start of a Congress-driven move to create a new U.S. foreign policy that would proactively seek settlement of the Tibet question in a manner favorable to the Tibetan people. Beijing reacted predictably by shifting to a more hard-line strategy. This policy developed new and effective security measures to prevent further political demonstrations from turning into riots. The economic strategy, however, pulled in large numbers of Chinese entrepreneurs/labourers to Tibet to work, increasing the size of the non-Tibetan population in Tibet. Beijing's refusal to reverse this influx is the core issue creating the current crisis.

The Dalai Lama's international initiative garnered strong sympathy and support for Tibet in the U.S. Congress, in the human rights community, and among citizens' lobbying groups, and was able to move the Tibet issue from the rarefied atmosphere of

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64 Ibid.
professional "foreign affairs" to the more visceral arena of internal U.S. politics. Consequently, the U.S. Congress initiated a variety of actions in support of the Dalai Lama such as creation of a Voice of America (VOA) Tibetan language broadcast unit in 1990 and the passing of pro-Tibetan legislation such as the one cited earlier. This highly visible and emotional interest in Tibet has effectively exerted pressure on recent administrations to increase overt government recognition of the Tibetan issue.

Clinton's Tibet Policy

First Term

In the 1990s, particularly, after China ceased to be important for the U.S. in balancing the Soviet power, the U.S. started giving considerable attention to Tibet and the Dalai Lama. The inauguration of Bill Clinton in 1993, in particular, began a major escalation of this trend. As part of his policy of giving high priority to human rights issues in foreign affairs, he openly criticized China's actions in Tibet. For example, when he announced on May 28, 1993 that the Secretary of State would not recommend MFN status in 1994 unless China made significant progress with respect to a series of human rights problem areas, he listed "protecting Tibet's distinctive religious and cultural heritage" as one of these areas. Therefore, Clinton became the first U.S. president to make improvement of the human rights situation in Tibet a condition for renewal of the privileged trade status. Six months later, when Clinton met Chinese Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin face to face in Seattle, he urged Jiang to improve cultural and religious freedom in Tibet and to

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65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.

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open talks with the Dalai Lama. For the first time in decades, Tibet was given a prominent place on the agenda of bilateral U.S.-China relations and integrated into U.S. China policy. The year 1993 appeared to be a major turning point for U.S.-Tibetan relations: if MFN was denied to China in part because of its policies in Tibet, the Tibetan exiles would have attained precisely the kind of new leverage they had been seeking.

Meanwhile, the situation in Tibet remained volatile. On May 24, 1993, the largest demonstration since 1989 swept through Lhasa. The crowd of some 2,000, whose slogans leaned heavily toward 'Chinese, go home' and 'Free Tibet,' was eventually broken up peacefully by Chinese security forces who confronted them in full riot gear. However, although the Tibetan capital saw a number of subsequent smaller acts of rebellion, Beijing stayed its hand because it was awaiting Washington's decision on China's MFN status. The U.S. legislature's moves on Tibet made Beijing suspicious of Washington's intentions; in the Chinese government's eyes, Washington's professed concern over human rights issues in Tibet was little more than a pretext for the American government to provide support to the independence movement. One Chinese media source described the movement as "the product of imperialist aggression against China before 1949 and a means used by some Western countries to conduct a virtual Cold War against China after 1949."

However, U.S. policy shifted radically in 1994 when President Clinton changed his position and announced that he would not use economic sanctions to try to force political changes in China, let alone Tibet. The Tibetan exiles were thrust back to square one,

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especially at a time when China had escalated its repression in the region.\textsuperscript{69} The U.S. post-MFN Asian policy once again placed geo-political and economic interests ahead of human rights and democracy issues, and steered away from a public, confrontational style.\textsuperscript{70} In the 1994 State Department report on Tibet, Washington unambiguously reassured China that the United States accepts Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. The report stated that U.S. policy explicitly recognized the Tibet Autonomous Region as part of the PRC, and that this policy is consistent with the view of the international community, including all of China's neighbors.\textsuperscript{71}

\textit{Second Term}

The Clinton administration did try to use its influence in Beijing to quietly persuade China to open new talks with the Dalai Lama to resolve the conflict. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, yielding to congressional pressure, announced on July 30, 1997, that it would create an office to raise the profile of Tibet in the policy making bureaucracy. The State Department on October 21, 1997, appointed Gregory B. Craig as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Affairs. He was assigned the task of "promoting a dialogue between Beijing and exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama." He would also "seek to protect the unique religious, cultural and linguistic heritage of Tibet."\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{69} "Amidst Crackdown in Tibet, Clinton Renews MFN for China," \textit{World Tibet Network News}, May 22, 1996.


\textsuperscript{72} Times of India, August 7, 1997.
Over the following eight months, the administration devoted more time and effort to Tibet than any of the previous five administrations. Craig was active, and Albright herself gave the issue top priority in dealing with Beijing. A National Security Council aide, Jeffrey Bader, explored chances for progress between China and the Dalai Lama. These efforts appeared to pay off during Clinton's trip. During Clinton's meeting with President Jiang Zemin in 1998, the president predicted that if Jiang met the Dalai Lama, "they would like each other very much." The Chinese president answered that the door to dialogue was open if the Dalai Lama could say "that Tibet is an inalienable part of China and he must also recognize Taiwan as a province of China." Jiang's tone and his notable refusal to denounce the Dalai Lama suggested a softening of China's position and room for compromise. A headline in The Times branded Jiang's remarks "stunning." A Clinton aide told the Washington Post that China had extended "an unusual olive branch." The Dalai Lama already had said that he does not seek outright independence from China. But in the months after Clinton returned to Washington, the administration failed to follow up quickly on Tibet and, by the time it did probe for progress from Beijing, China had returned to a hard line. By 1998, the administration's attention was focused on the Congress, which was moving toward impeachment of the president. Clinton selected Craig as his special counsel, assigning him to "quarterback the response" to independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr's charges. Craig's job of Tibet coordinator lay vacant for four months. Meanwhile, at the NSC, Bader was selected to be ambassador to Namibia, and Tibet was accorded less attention than it had received previously. In 1999, Albright

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
appointed a new Tibet coordinator, Julia Taft, who was also the assistant secretary in charge of refugees.\textsuperscript{76}

By 1999, China had taken new steps toward tightening its control of Tibet. In June, it introduced to Tibet a 9-year-old boy the regime had chosen as the next Panchen Lama, Tibet's second-ranking religious leader. The boy dutifully urged Tibetans to "love the Communist Party of China." The Clinton administration did not take any steps except to dispatch Taft to New York City for a chat with the Dalai Lama.\textsuperscript{77} The Chinese were also successful in excluding the Dalai Lama from the Millennium World Peace Summit, a U.N.-backed religious summit, which was held in New York on August 28, 2000. The Dalai Lama's office said that apparent pressure from the Chinese Government on the U.N. caused him to be excluded from the summit.\textsuperscript{78}

The Clinton White House largely refrained from comment concerning the human rights situation in Tibet generally because the U.S. government was attempting to develop a closer and more complex relationship with the Chinese government.

\textbf{Bush Administration's China Policy}

The administration of George W. Bush assumed office in January 2001 viewing China as a U.S. "strategic competitor" and promising a tougher approach than that of either of his predecessors. Bush administration officials indicated they would broaden the focus of American policy in Asia, concentrating more on Japan and other U.S. allies and de-
emphasizing Sino-U.S. relations. Presumably as part of this policy, the Bush presidency quietly revised the “one China” policy of six previous presidents. For almost 30 years, creative ambiguity was at the heart of the one China policy: the U.S. warned China not to use force to resolve the Taiwan issue but did not categorically pledge to defend the island regardless of Taiwan’s position on sovereignty. But the Bush administration made repeated categorical pledges to do “whatever it takes” to protect the island. However, it is interesting to note that unlike previous instances, China did not threaten a major breakdown in relations, much less heightened tensions across the Taiwan Strait. The reason can be found in it booming economy which depends in large part on America’s continuing purchase of more than $80 billion in Chinese made products and huge capital investments in China.

After this rocky start, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States appeared to affect the policy calculus for both Washington and Beijing. The Bush administration appeared to see the potential for Sino-U.S. cooperation against global terrorism as a priority, and U.S. officials down-played other key differences and problems in the relationship evident during much of 2001. The Bush administration has also witnessed a large number of high level visits: In October 2001, President Bush had his first visit with PRC President Jiang Zemin as part of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum ministerial meeting, held in Shanghai. In April-May 2002, PRC Vice-President Hu Jintao, who just succeeded President Jiang Zemin as Party Secretary at the 16th Party Congress, made his first visit to the United States, meeting

81 Ibid.
with President Bush and with a range of other senior U.S. officials. On October 25, 2002, President Jiang Zemin made a state visit to the United States, meeting with President Bush at the President’s ranch in Crawford, Texas. In the post–September 11 period, although the neoconservatives have used their influence in the Bush administration, particularly in the office of Vice President Dick Cheney and in the Pentagon, to promote robust military support for Taiwan—unprecedented since normalization of Sino-U.S. ties in 1979—and limit military-to-military relations with China, they do not have much control over other dimensions of Sino-U.S. relations. Overall, the Chinese have seen both opportunities and challenges from the changes that have occurred in U.S. foreign policy in the post–September 11 era. On one hand, counterterrorism’s emergence as the top U.S. priority changed the context of Sino-U.S. relations and broadened the area of cooperation between China and the United States. On the other hand, the United States seems to have become more force-prone, more unilateralist, and more unpredictable. If the level of political and strategic trust between the two countries is any indication, it is fair to say that the current stability in Sino-U.S. relations is tactical, not strategic.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Relations between the United States and China have been notable for their fluctuations, ambivalent mutual images and inability to find a constructive and cooperative equilibrium. Bilateral relations and mutual images either have been...

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frozen in Cold War conflict or have swung markedly from embrace to acrimony and back again time after time.\textsuperscript{84} U.S. policy toward China reflects Washington’s core ambivalence on human rights. China is a major focus of U.S. commercial and strategic interests. But it engages in a wide range of severe and systematic abuses. Chinese human rights activists and political reformers have kept the issue of state repression and abuses prominent. As a presidential candidate, Clinton had vigorously criticized Bush administration policy in the wake of the Tiananmen Square massacre. Clinton transformed his campaign rhetoric regarding Bush’s China policy into concrete action when he issued an executive order linking renewal of trade benefits to human rights improvements. However, in the face of Chinese intransigency as well as domestic lobbying by the American business community over the following year, he buckled under pressure. In 1994, China’s trade benefits were renewed despite the absence of human rights improvements, and the question of linkage was dropped. To cover its retreat, the administration justified its stand by asserting that the choice was between a policy of isolation and one of engagement and in view of China’s importance the latter choice was more appropriate. It also claimed the relationship was too important to be held hostage to a single issue. But when the administration more successfully threatened to end trade concessions over issues such as copyright piracy, there was no clamour from the corporate community about holding the relationship hostage to single issue diplomacy.\textsuperscript{85}

During U.S.-China summits in 1997 and 1998, Clinton spoke out forcefully on human rights in order to appease U.S. constituencies concerned with abuses such as forced

prison labour, the denial of freedom of religion, and Tibet. But the administration failed to use negotiations for the summits – which China badly wanted – to secure significant Chinese reforms, settling instead for token gestures such as the release (and immediate forced exile) of prominent dissident Wei Jingsheng and the resumption of a bilateral human rights dialogue. Thus, Clinton’s policy of “comprehensive engagement” toward China did not differ from his predecessors. The administration’s policy has given priority to human rights when competing concerns are insignificant or when public pressure compelled a response. The issue of human right has been consistently subordinated to other policy objectives like increased trade and military co-operation.

At the moment, it is unclear what the long-term effect will be on Sino-U.S. relations as a consequence of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Combating global terrorism could serve as a new framework on which to build Sino-U.S. cooperation, filling the void left when the Soviet Union collapsed and strategic cooperation ceased to be a viable basis for the relationship. The benefits of Sino-U.S. cooperation on anti-terrorism initiatives could help mute more hardline, anti-American elements in the PRC, and could change the focus of Congress toward broader anti-terrorism measures and away from measures targeting the PRC. Cooperation on anti-terrorism could also give the United States greater leverage with issues involving the PRC’s reported transfer of nuclear, missile, and/or chemical weapons technology to countries thought to support terrorism, like Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and Syria.²⁶

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While developments in China's internal affairs and external policy are yet to be determined, experts and observers in the United States have staked out two positions on the preferable strategy for dealing with the PRC. Both agree that China is an important player in the international, particularly Asian theater, whose actions and preferences must concern the U.S. The engagement school believes that the basic formula for success in reshaping Chinese policies, in areas such as proliferation, trade, and human rights, is sustained and significant contact — in the form of diplomatic dialogue, military relations, trade, and participation in international organizations. Thus, one expert has argued that "renewed military-to-military contact between the United States and China should continue in an effort to help Americans understand the Chinese military and strategy and thus influence its long-term development." Another observed that "many China specialists and foreign policy practitioners advocate enmeshing China in as many international regimes and binding commitments as possible so as to maximize the smooth integration of China into the international order." Others, who make up what has been characterized as the containment school, are less optimistic about the possibility of a fundamental change in the Chinese regime in the absence of significant pressure by the United States. While they do not advocate a policy of isolation, they do believe that engagement has become a policy of appeasement — an excuse for refusing to fully confront unacceptable Chinese practices in areas such as human rights and proliferation.

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as well as for failing to acknowledge the Chinese threat to the rest of Asia. At present, engagement has become the basis of U.S. policy toward China. Whether that policy stays in place, and for how long, will be influenced by a number of developments in both China and the United States.