

American Perspective versus Chinese Expectation on China's Rise

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Abstract

According to Pew Global Attitudes survey released in July 2011, most of the survey participants say that China either will replace or already has replaced the United States as the world's superpower. China's emergence as a great power has become inevitable. US-China relations will profoundly impact on the entire world. In order to promote global peace and development, while shifting the balance of world power, some questions need to be scrutinized: How do Americans view China's rise? Where is China heading? Will the US and China get along? How the US and China work together on urgent international issues? This paper will look into American perspective on China's rise and China's expectation from various angles, find the similarities and differences between American perspective and China's expectation in some major areas of economy, military, ideology, and foreign policy, and attempt to find a realistic way to improve the China-US relations.

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1. Introduction

As early as 1993 David Shambaugh foresaw that China would become a superpower in the early twenty-first century.¹ China has already surpassed the Japanese economy and has become the second largest world economy. *The Economist* predicts that China will overtake the United States as the world's largest economy within the next ten years.² Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger told CNN in June 2011 that the Communist nation poses a "big challenge" for the United States.³ Apparently, US-China relations will profoundly impact on the entire world.⁴ The issue of improving the

relationship between China and the US has become the most important subject in the twenty-first century.

According to Aaron Friedberg, one of the most authoritative American analysts of China's foreign policy, there are three main camps in contemporary international relations theorizing: liberalism, realism, and constructivism. However, each of the three theoretical schools is divided into two variants: "one of which is essentially optimistic about the future of US-China relations, the other distinctly pessimistic."⁵ The prevalent opinion in the US is that a rising China has reshaped the existing global order and challenged the world leadership of the US. American pessimistic international theory suggests that this time period of the relationship between the United States and China is the worst after the Jet flights collision over Hainan Island in 2000. Aaron L. Friedberg points out that "Hu Jintao's visit may mark the end of an era of relatively smooth relations between the US and China."⁶ The Chinese government insists that the responsibility for the difficulties in China-US relations does not lie with China and it is up to the US to improve relations between the two countries. Ample evidence suggests that the US is preparing a long cold war with China.⁸

Although both American optimistic liberals and pessimistic realists have offered constructive opinions on the current status of US-China relations, they have paid less attention to the issues of what caused such a difficult relationship and how to improve US-China relations. This paper attempts to examine the main factors that affect US-China relations, analyze the differences between Western and Chinese perspectives on China's rise, and explore remedy to improve US-China relations. This paper will argue that the conflicts between the two nations are normal while China is rising, because the conflicts are derived from different perspectives. The conflicts are real, but they might make the two nations more cautious in dealing with their relations. Thus, the US must be confident of its leading position in the international society in order to appropriately manage China's rise in the twenty-first century.

2. The US Remains the World Superpower

While China is rising, the voice of American mainstream still does not believe the US is inevitably declining.⁹ Thomas J. Christensen, the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, points out that media has "often exaggerated China's rise in influence and the declining power of the United States."¹⁰ However, some argue that American people have heard all these stories of American decline before, but this time is for real.¹¹ US debts have reached another record high of \$14 trillion and it will

reach 15 trillion by May 2011. Every American shares almost \$46,000 debt.¹² About \$4.4 trillion among \$14 trillion debts was held by foreign governments that purchase US securities. This reasonably raises a question: who owns the US?¹³ The mounting debt is a cancer of the nation which could drag the US down if the government cannot gradually reduce the debts.

American people increasingly feel that China is catching up to the US. According to a survey conducted by the Washington-based Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in 2011, about 47 per cent of participants say China, not the US, is the world's top economic power, while 31 per cent of participants continue to name the US. The result of the survey obviously contradicts the reality, but it reflects that American people feel anxious with China's growing power and influence. US officials have admitted that China's rise is a source of anxiety, as they worry about that the US is at risk of falling behind in a global battle for influence with China.¹⁴ Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has warned that the US is struggling to hold its role as global leader.¹⁵

The United States does not want to be the number 2 in the world. The majority of Americans are not happy that China will become the largest economy, superseding the United States.¹⁶ Both optimists and pessimists hold mixed feelings with China's rise, viewing China as an economic competitor and political rival.¹⁷ Thomas Friedman points out that "China is a threat, China is a customer, and China is an opportunity."¹⁸ Generally, realists believe that the relationship will basically be stable and peaceful,¹⁹ but pessimistic realists always suggest that "rising states usually want to translate their power into greater authority in the global system in order to reshape the existing global order in accordance."²⁰ They believe that since the start of the world financial crisis in 2008, China has begun to stand up by taking assertive strategy toward the US.²¹ They question whether China is departing from Deng Xiaoping 邓小平's foreign policy of *tao guang yang hui* 韬光养晦 (hide brightness and cherish obscurity) toward the US.

Elizabeth Economy, director for Asian Studies at Council on Foreign Relations, notes that the consensus of the Deng era began to fray and Beijing began to expand its influence to the rest of the world.²² In ASEAN meeting in 2010, Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiechi 杨洁篪 told Southeast Asian counterparts that "China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that is just a fact."²³ China claims that the South China Sea was a core interest of the nation and oppose any attempt to internationalize the South China Sea issues. China's assertive approach has stirred anxiety across Asia.²⁴ As a result, some of China's neighbouring countries, such as India, Indonesia, Japan, and Vietnam, are working more closely with the US as a balance to the expansion of China's influence. John Lee, a foreign policy

specialist, warns that China is losing friends worldwide and China maybe the loneliest rising power in recent history.²⁵

Nevertheless, China holds different viewpoints on why China's relations with neighbouring countries are deteriorating. According to *2011 Pacific Blue Book* published by the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of the Academy of Social Sciences in January 2011, all problems with its bordering countries are not the results of China's new foreign policy but derived from the action of the US returning to Asia. China views that the United States seeks to contain China's rise and attempts to block it. The US claims that it still has a vital role in helping to manage this changing balance of power in Southeast Asia.²⁶ Hillary Clinton points out that the US has a national interest in the freedom of open access to the South China Sea.²⁷ The majority of Asian countries welcome the presence of the US Seventh Fleet in Asia.²⁸ If both the US and China claim core interest in the region, the potential for conflict between the two nations is much greater.

Some prominent American scholars are pessimistic on China's rise for a long time. As early as 1997, Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro in their book *The Coming Conflict with China* argued that war between China and the US was a distinctive possibility. In 2005, Robert D. Kaplan noted that whether or not there will be a Sino-American war is no longer a question. The remaining question is how the United States should fight China.²⁹ David Gordon recently observes that the US "is heading into a more conflict-ridden world, with U.S.-China tensions at its core."³⁰ John Mearsheimer warned that "The United States and China are likely to engage in an intense security competition with considerable potential for war."³¹ Thus, Susan L. Shirk, former deputy assistant secretary for China in the Bureau of East Asia, suggests that "China needs to reassure the United States that China's rise is not a threat and will not challenge America's dominant position."³²

Is it inevitable for a rising China to threaten the US and the West? The answer depends on how the US views China's rise and how views itself. The reality is that the US remains the most powerful country in the world, and China does not have political, military and economic power to challenge the US regardless of China's intention. To be sure, while the Chinese economy is growing, it is very normal for China to expand its influence abroad, because the nature of capital is to seek for profits through investing no matter where it invests. As a result, the US is unavoidably facing challenges from the Chinese economy. Competition is the healthy symptom of market economy. China's rise will not necessarily create the same scenarios of World War I and II. Military conflict is not inherent in a nation's rise, and the United States in the twentieth century is a good example of a state achieving eminence without conflict with the then dominant countries.³³ Hopefully, China's performance will be better in the twenty-first century.

3. Two Different Perspectives

Conflicts between the US and China are real, but they will not necessarily turn into a war. Instead, the conflicts would remind both sides that they should more carefully examine the direct source of the conflicts – different perspectives – in order to find a common ground to peacefully co-exist. Most scholars agree that the conflict between the two countries mainly include their political incompatibility, economic competition and military competition, but there are disagreements on what is the fundamental conflict between the two countries.

3.1. Political Incompatibility

A country's foreign policy is the extension of its internal political system; and political differences between the two countries fundamentally affect US-China relations. The nature of China's foreign policy toward the West is not rooted in the growing economic power of China, but is fundamentally driven by the nature of Chinese political system. The current Chinese society is unstable. Chinese society is full of people's dissatisfactions because of serious social injustice and government corruption. A recent survey shows that only six per cent of Chinese people see themselves as happy, despite the government's efforts to improve Chinese sense of happiness.³⁴ People's dissatisfaction could spark off social violence anytime. The Chinese government feels very nervous with people's discontent. This explains why Chinese internal security spending exceeds defense budget in 2011.³⁵

China's rapid economic growth has generated other changes in all social aspects, but it does not mean that China has departed away from the communist political system. At the present time, China still adheres to the one-party system; Marxism is Chinese official ideology; Chinese economics is called socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics; and Chinese media is strictly subject to censorship. All these indicate that the socialist system is still present.³⁶ Although China is no longer a typical Leninist state, China remains unchanged in its political nature.³⁷ What change for the Communist Party of China (CPC hereafter) in the post-Mao era are not the political system but only economic measures and political strategies. Gabriella Montinola observes that "Nearly all of the formal aspects of democracy are absent, notably, individual rights of free speech and political participation, a viable system of competition for political office, and a set of constitutional limits on the state."³⁸ It is too early to argue that the CPC is dead and that China is on the way toward an alternative model of democracy to the West.³⁹ At present, the main schools of political thoughts, including neo-Maoism, neo-liberalism, and neo-Confucianism, are intensively debating approaches

of reforming Chinese social and political systems. The direction of Chinese political system is really uncertain.

In American viewpoint, one of the reasons for the current difficult bilateral relations is that in 2010 the Chinese government negatively responded to Nobel Peace Prize Committee's decision to honor Chinese political dissident Liu Xiaobo 刘晓波. Liu was put in jail after the crackdown of Tiananmen Square Incident and was released in early 1991, but the Chinese government arrested him again after Liu wrote the *Charter 08*, which calls for modern democracy and an end to the Communist Party's political dominance.⁴⁰ The Chinese government believes that the Nobel Peace Prize Committee's decision is an attempt to deny the legitimate Chinese judicial judgement and undermine the Chinese political system.⁴¹ The Chinese government defied the Nobel Peace Prize decision by continuing to jail Liu and forbidding any members of his family to attend the Nobel ceremonies in Oslo. During the ceremony, the president of the Nobel Committee placed Liu's Nobel diploma and medal on an empty chair where Liu was supposed to have been sitting. One commentator notes that "There could be no clearer evidence of the fundamental differences between China's political system and America's than the empty chair that represented Liu on the Nobel stage."⁴² Apparently, the political standpoints between the CPC and Western governments cannot be compromised.

Americans view the Chinese political system as directly countering the core values of the West, and they see no fundamental way for the two countries to co-exist. Americans will never trust a communist system that denies basic freedoms to its own people.⁴³ Thus, especially to idealists, a transition to democracy is a crucial step not only to China's future success, but also to the future of China-US relations.⁴⁴ However, the Chinese government has insisted that China's development must come with "socialism with Chinese characteristics", the so-called "China model" or "Beijing Consensus". Chinese official media has persistently argued that it is wrong for the West to impose its ways on other cultures.

Even if the Chinese political situation is not getting worse, which is most likely, the CPC will continue to postpone fundamental political reform. The political and ideological battle between the two nations will be inevitable. The US does not have any other choice but to do business with China. Practically, Western political leaders often take realistic approaches and push aside political disagreements in favour of maintaining the crucial economic relationship, because many Westerners see the economic ties between the two nations as a means of binding them together. Idealists define Chinese president Hu Jintao's state visit to the United States as a "trade mission".⁴⁵ The agenda of the 2010 summit indicates that China's political issue is not Washington's top concern. During the joint press conference President Obama

emphasized the different historical tradition and cultural system which sounds to defend Chinese political system. Obviously, the Obama administration took a soft attitude toward China's political issue instead of making the Chinese government angry.

The CPC remains powerful and there is no other opposition party in China to compete with the CPC. The total numbers of the party members have continued to climb, almost reaching 80 million, although the majority of the party members use the *dang piao* 党票 (the title of party member) for professional advancement instead of any strong commitment to the communist belief. Under this circumstance, it is best for China to reform its political system within the current political system and continue to use the CPC as the main vehicle to drive China toward the future. Thus, political reform in China will be a slow process. In this sense, China's road toward democratization might be different from the normal pattern of Western societies. Gordon White notes that "many of the current proposals for rapid and radical democratization are fraught with wishful thinking, and many of the assertions about the punitive complementarities between democracy and socio-economic progress are simplistic and misleading."⁴⁶ After the Jasmine Revolution in the Middle East, the CPC will take it more cautiously in approaching political reform in order to maintain social stability.

3.2. Economic Competition

The intensive economic competition may constitute one of the biggest barriers to the bilateral relations. China is the fastest growing economy in the world with an average growth rate of nine per cent a year over the past three decades, about five times faster than the US. While some American analysts believe that a healthy Chinese economy is vital to the US, others argue that China's growing economic power will threaten US hegemony due to the following reasons.

China holds almost \$1 trillion US government bonds, but it lags far behind other Asian and European countries in direct investment in the US. While Chinese companies invested only \$791 million in US companies in 2009, South Korean companies invested \$12 billion, Japanese firms \$264.2 billion, German firms \$218 billion, and British companies \$453 billion.⁴⁷

The US trade deficit with China continues to increase. China's goods exports to the US were \$229.2 billion, while US goods exports to China were \$55.8 billion, with the US trade deficit in goods at \$173.4 billion in 2010. The US trade deficit with China is expected to hit \$270 billion in 2011.⁴⁸ The US trade deficit with China causes the United States to lose 2.4 million jobs to China. The fear of losing jobs has been one of major reasons for the US to be skeptical of China.⁴⁹

The trade imbalance stems in part from the undervalued Chinese currency. The US accuses China of artificially lowering the cost of goods it exports and helps to attract foreign companies to locate production in China. The US believes that it hurts American exports and damages the financial recovery around the world. Although the US Treasury refrained in February 2011 from labelling China a currency manipulator, it warned that the *yuan* is still substantially undervalued, and thus, “more rapid progress is needed.”⁵⁰

The Chinese government has placed trade barriers to restrict foreign investors and unfairly disadvantages foreign competitors. For examples, China provides illegal subsidies to the production of wind power equipment and censored Google and forced it to shut down China-based Internet search engine. The Chinese government also put restrictions on some export products, such as rare earth minerals, to enhance its power to influence global prices.⁵¹ Consequently, more clean-energy technology companies are moving operations to China to save costs.⁵²

However, the Chinese government claims that all these arguments are without legitimate basis. First of all, China’s GDP does not represent the power of China’s economy. Although China’s total GDP is the second largest economy in the world, its GDP per capita is only about \$4500, only about a tenth of the US’s, ranking below hundred in the world.⁵³ China will have to take a long time to catch up with the US.⁵⁴ The Asian Development Bank already predicted that that China’s growth rates in the next two decades “will be only a little more than half of what they were in the last 30 years.”⁵⁵

China is only the world’s low-cost workshop for assembling products, so it has its great limits. China could not continue to develop its indigenous industry without advanced technology. China just began to build an economy that relies on innovation rather than imitation.⁵⁶ In addition, China faces serious challenges. One of the challenges is environmental degradation. Sixteen of 20 most polluted cities in the world are in China; air quality in three quarters of Chinese cities falls below the standard; and one third of Chinese land is affected by acid rain. China is one of the major sources for global warming. China’s coal-fired power plants fall as acid rain on Seoul, South Korea, and Tokyo. According to the *Journal of Geophysical Research*, much of the particulate pollution over Los Angeles originates in China.⁵⁷ China has to spend \$170 billion a year to fix the environmental problems and it is expected to spend more in the years to come.⁵⁸

Regarding the currency exchange rates, according to the Chinese government, it is the US, not China, that aims to manipulate currency policy. The US allowed the dollar to fall 23 per cent from its early 2002 peak against all of trading partners. By contrast, in 2010 China’s central bank has issued a statement pledging to increase currency flexibility. China has already let

its currency rise against the US dollar from 8.27 *yuan* for every dollar to 6.6 *yuan* by February 2011.⁵⁹

3.3. Arms Race

While China is rising, the military dimension becomes more important to US-China relations. There is a growing debate in the United States on the future of the Chinese military development, concerning with China's military capabilities and intentions.⁶⁰ In December 2010, U.S defense secretary Robert Gates visited China and concluded that China's military development will challenge the US military power in Asia and may challenge the capability of the US military operations worldwide.

In American view, China has the fastest growing military budget. In 2010, the defense budget was 532.115 billion *yuan* (about 78 billion USD), and is expected to hit 601 billion (9.1 billion USD) in 2011. China has maintained an annual average increase in defense expenditure of 12.9 per cent since 1989.⁶¹ China's military development lacks transparency, so US officials remain largely in the dark about China's long term goals.⁶²

China has accelerated its military modernization, including foreign purchases and indigenous production of high-technology equipment.⁶³ First, Chinese J-20 fifth-generation stealth fighter has reached an initial operational capability and may contest US air supremacy with the F-22.⁶⁴ Second, China has developed an anti-ship ballistic missile – the DF-21D. American military experts point out that the DF-21D is designed to sink American super-carriers and affect US support for its Pacific allies.⁶⁵ Third, “China is developing “counter-space” weapons that could shoot down satellites. Gregory Schulte, deputy secretary of defense for space policy, points out that “the investment China is putting into counter-space capabilities is a matter of concern to us.”⁶⁶

The recent South China Sea sovereignty issue has intensified China's relations not only with some Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Philippines, and Malaysia, but also with the US. In June of 2011, China urged the US to stay out of South China Sea dispute, and warned that US involvement may make the situation worse.⁶⁷ China has claimed the entire South China Sea as its “core interest” and declared that China will consider launching a pre-emptive nuclear strike if the country finds itself faced with a critical situation in a war with another nuclear state. An American military officer suggests that Chinese military ambition shows that “China's imperialism is on full display.”⁶⁸

China's military development has drawn concerns from the US and also caused alarm in many of its Asia-Pacific neighbours who fear the consequences of a strong Chinese military. In American viewpoint, since

there is no obvious threat to China, why has China accelerated the process of military modernization?⁶⁹ In Chinese viewpoint, however, a nation's power must be supported by its military power. As major powers rise economically, military modernization usually follows. Technology and science is the main driving force of developing military power in the twenty-first century. It is necessary for China to modernize its military force because Chinese military lags far behind the US and the European countries. It is not China, but the US, that has the largest defense budget in the world, accounting for 47 per cent of the world's total military spending. There are about 154 countries with US troops and 63 countries with US military bases and troops.⁷⁰ The Chinese defense minister Liang Guanglie told Robert Gates that China is not an advanced military country and China poses no threat to the rest of the world.

Regardless of whether China's military development is a threat to the US, the reality is that neither the US nor China is able to dominate each other. A military clash between them would exhaust both countries.⁷¹ Chinese vice-foreign minister Cui Tiankai 崔天凯 has made similar comments that "I don't think anyone in the Asia-Pacific region has the ability of encircling China, and I do not think that many countries in the Asian-Pacific would become part of that circle. China and the US don't have any other choices but to work together."

4. Building Mutual Trust and Understanding

Although the US and China hold different perspectives on China's rise, the two nations are interdependent during the age of globalization. To be sure, none of both sides wants to be dependent on the other, but neither side can afford a split.⁷² In the past three decades, the US and China have achieved progress in cooperation in economic, trade, and other fields, including military cooperation in three areas: exchange of antiterrorism information, prevention of nuclear proliferation, and the hosting of six-party talks on the North Korea nuclear program. At present, the Afghanistan war is not yet over, al-Qaida terrorism remains active, and the issue of nuclear proliferation is still in the air. The two nations will continue to work together in all these areas. All these suggest that the two economic giants are more likely to find a common ground to co-exist.

However, if the two governments do not compromise different perspectives, a cold war between the two nations is possible, but the cold war will inevitably damage the interests of both countries. When Henry Kissinger was interviewed by Fareed Zakaria from CNN in June 2011, he made it clear that another Cold War is not the answer.⁷³ During the summit of China and the US in December 2010, President Barack Obama and Hu Jintao tried to downplay

differences and vowed stronger cooperation between the two countries, but it is impossible to quickly overcome the sense of mistrust and solve structural problems through a state dinner.

Henry Kissinger in his book *On China* suggests that “The best outcome in the American debate would be to combine the two approaches: for the idealists to recognize that principles need to be implemented over time and hence must be occasionally adjusted to circumstance; and for the ‘realists’ to accept that values have their own reality and must be built into operational policies.” This recommendation can be also applied to China’s side.

First of all, the US and China should find a realistic way to prevent the bilateral relations from getting worse. Both sides should accept the differences between the two countries. The Chinese government does not want to see the West apply universal values to China, nor Western support of Tibetan and Taiwanese independent movement, nor the sale of weapons to Taiwan. By contrast, the US demands some change in China, including reforming Chinese political system, increasing Chinese individual and religious freedoms, improving market economy to ensure equal competition, expanding citizen participation, and making transparent military development. Obviously, there is an “increasing unwillingness of Washington and Beijing to understand each other’s viewpoints.”⁷⁴ This suggests that both sides need to patiently and gradually narrow the gap between the two perspectives. In political area, China’s political reform is necessary but it could not in overnight completely change the system. Although it is proper to criticize China for its human rights violations, the US should not ignore the substantial progress China has made since 1978.⁷⁵ In economic area, protectionism would harm both nations but active engagement is the best way to minimize the conflicts. In military area, although the US has reasons to take China’s recent military development cautiously, Chinese military force remains a decade behind the United States.⁷⁶ China is not an existential challenge to the United States.⁷⁷ If the US keeps its confidence, it is able to manage all challenges from China’s rise.

Mutual understanding is critical to narrowing the gap between the two perspectives. At the present time, the “mistrust of Beijing throughout Asia and in Washington is palpable.”⁷⁸ It is widely believed that most Americans not only distrust but also despise China.⁷⁹ During the US’s mid-term election in 2010, many candidates played the China card, running advertisements on US televisions against China. Similarly, Beijing does not share many of the same interests as the United States and its allies.⁸⁰ A significant number of Chinese people believe that the US has been trying to block China’s rise.

Mutual understanding is at least partially based on a common value system. The US remains the leader of the existing global order; and the value of democracy continues to be the mainstream of the existing global order. The core value of modern democracy, such as individual rights, justice, equality

and common good, is the cornerstone of Western societies that guides their governments in making foreign policy.

On the one hand, from an idealistic perspective, Chinese political liberalization is essential to building mutual trust. China is well positioned to keep growing for years to come. Question is where China is going. Is China departing away from the West? Or, is China heading towards the West? Although nobody knows where China is headed,⁸¹ it is evident that China's growing economic power does not automatically translate into political power and international authority. It is hard to believe that China could become an internationally recognized world leader without accepting universal values. In order to make peace with the existing global order, China really needs to make well-balanced development between economic growth and political liberalization through domestic political reform. If China becomes democratic, the relationship between the two countries will stabilize and, ultimately, "it will enter into the democratic zone of peace."⁸²

On the other hand, the Chinese cultural and history tradition will affect the process of China's democratization. This is one of the most important reasons for the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in *On China* to make a bold argument that it is important to begin with an appreciation of China's long history in order to any attempt understand China's future world role.⁸³ China was humiliated by the West for a century, so nationalism in China is very strong. Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo 戴秉国 at a Joint Press Conference of the Second Round of the China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogues in 2010 explained that "China's number one core interest is to maintain its fundamental system and state security; next is state sovereignty and territorial integrity; and third is the continued stable development of the economy and society."⁸⁴ Theoretically, it is the most important for the CPC to maintain its communist political system; practically, territorial integrity is the essential issues among China's core interests, especially territorial integrity of Taiwan with China.

Taiwan is the most important issue for the US-China relations since the outbreak of the Korean War. The unification of the mainland with Taiwan is the common will of the Chinese government and the majority of the Chinese people. Mainland China will never relinquish this mission under any circumstance. If the Chinese government made a wrong policy on Taiwan, it could trigger anti-government movement at home. If the US made a wrong policy on Taiwan issue, it could hurt the feelings of the majority of the Chinese people and trigger anti-American nationalism. Charles Glaser, director of the Institute for Security and Conflict Studies at George Washington University, recently suggests that the US should modify its foreign policy and make concessions to Beijing, including the possibility of backing away from its commitment to Taiwan in order to avoid a war between

the US and China.⁸⁵ It is also worth noting that it is not wise for the CPC to unify Taiwan before changing the nature of its political system unless Taiwan claims independence, because the political gap between mainland China and Taiwan is huge. The CPC might be capable of taking over Taiwan by military force but it would be difficult to win the support from the majority of Taiwanese people.

For the long term, cultural exchange is the key to help in building mutual trust and understanding between the two countries. Nevertheless, China's three decades economic development is a "single-minded pursuit of economic growth."⁸⁶ While China's trade surplus has exceeded \$21 billion in 2010, its cultural product trade deficit is growing. The ratio of imports of cultural products to exports was 10:1 years ago and is believed to be much higher today.⁸⁷ This reflects that the influence of Chinese culture in the West is limited. To lower the distrust between China and the US, China should renovate its culture by introducing universal values and world advanced cultures into China, but it is uncertain if the CCP is willing to open up its political domains to facilitate the emergence of a modernized culture.⁸⁸ The CPC has recently attempted to revive Confucianism, but the result of this effort is uncertain. As a matter of fact, this attempt does not only indicate that the CPC has exhausted its cultural resources, but also imply that the re-invention of Chinese cultural tradition has become desperately urgent.

International relations are directly interacted by governments; the top leaders of both countries are significantly important to making US-China foreign policy. American president's decision is determined not only by its domestic economic situation, but also by influences from congress and public opinion. In this sense, the American president plays a less role in making foreign policy. After the charismatic leader Chairman Mao died in 1976, the power of the CPC has been decentralized. Although China's policymaking process has already become pluralized, the top leader of the CPC still plays a critical role in making foreign policy due to the nature of communist political system. The political orientation of other top Chinese leaders and the leaders of the Foreign Ministry also contribute to foreign policy making. Therefore, in order to avoid unnecessary mistakes in foreign policy making process, both countries' leaders need to be open-minded and carefully listen to the voices coming from think tanks and common citizens.

5. Conclusion

China's economic and military power is growing, but China's international influence is still constrained by the stagnation of political system, cultural deficit, and the low level of comprehensive economic and military power. The United States remains the dominant power in the world. The exaggeration

of China's power is in part derived from psychological impact and media exaggeration. The United States must keep confidence and accept challenges from the rising power. Different perspectives could generate healthy competition in which people can learn how to live with others during the age of globalization. The disagreements between the two giants will continue. The CPC will maintain its basic attributes of communist political system. Market economic competition continues to be driven by making profits. Both sides will keep defending its national interests through developing their military muscles. Nobody can stop all these disagreements but there is nothing to fear different perspectives, if both sides could carefully treat each other. Overestimating China's economic and military power would create anxiety; overreacting to China's rise would worsen the bilateral relations. The most important thing for both sides to do is to clearly understand political isolation, economic protectionism and military confrontation are not the solution. Realistically, building mutual trust and understanding through cultural exchange program and positive engagement is the best way to reduce the risk of great power war.

Notes

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1. David Shambaugh, "Introduction: The Emergence of 'Greater China'", *The China Quarterly*, 136 (December 1993), p. 653.
 2. "How to Gracefully Step Aside", *Economist*, 10 January 2011. According to the *Economist*, if you double the expected American growth from 2.5 per cent per year to 5 per cent per year, you push the key date back from 2019 to 2022. If you slow China's growth to 5 per cent annually, you delay the year to 2028.

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