CHINA CROSS TALK

The American Debate over
China Policy since Normalization

A READER

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unrestricted trade and business-as-usual diplomacy, to slow down the process of dynastic decline. This would only delay the return to China of the politics of decency.

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James D. Seymour, senior research scholar, East Asian Institute, Columbia University


2. The U.S.-China Business Council issued a statement deploring the "violent suppression and wanton killing . . . and apparent turning away from . . . economic liberalization," but chairman Roger Sullivan opposed sanctions. See The China Business Review, July 1989, 9. See also, David M. Lampton and Roger Sullivan, "The Price China Has Paid," Christian Science Monitor, 10 July 1989, in which the authors argue that China has paid enough of a price for the mistakes of its leaders, and that the West's response should be minimal. The National Committee did issue a statement highly critical of the crackdown, but appeared to soften its message in statements aimed at China. See interview with Chairman David M. Lampton in the pro-Communist Wenhui Bao (Hong Kong), 4 September 1989, 2; and FBIS, 5 September 1989, 4-6. Lampton told the author that Wenhui Bao highly distorted the interview in its published version.

The Caricature of Deng as a Tyrant Is Unfair

Henry Kissinger

Both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives have, after extraordinarily cursory debate, voted overwhelmingly to impose sanctions against China going well beyond the measures already taken by President Bush. Such a lopsided vote in direct opposition to a popular president with considerable experience in Chinese affairs is remarkable.

The vote was also unprecedented. I cannot recall sanctions invoked by either the president or Congress against a major country in reaction to events entirely within its domestic jurisdiction. The case of South Africa concerned a peripheral player on the international scene. The only comparable precedent—the Jackson-Vanik Amendment designed to spur Jewish emigration from the U.S.S.R.—backfired. And it only withheld additional benefits as do the congressional sanctions against China. Moreover, Congress established no criteria for eventually lifting the China sanctions.

To avoid any misunderstanding, let me summarize my own views regarding the events around Tiananmen Square. No government in the world would have tolerated having the main square of its capital occupied for eight weeks by tens of thousands of demonstrators who blocked the authorities from approaching the area in front of the main government building. In China a demonstration of impotence in the capital would unleash the lurking regionalism and warlordism in the provinces. A crackdown was therefore inevitable. But its brutality was shocking, and even more so the trials and Stalinist-style propaganda that followed.

Nevertheless, China remains too important for America's national security to risk the relationship on the emotions of the moment. The United States needs China as a possible counterweight to Soviet aspirations in Asia, and needs China also to remain relevant in Japanese eyes as a key shaper of Asian events. China needs the United States as a counterweight to perceived ambitions from the Soviet Union and Japan. In return China will exercise a moderating influence in Southeast Asia and Korea and not challenge America in other areas of the world. These realities have not been altered by events around Tiananmen. Should this reciprocity evaporate, Soviet policy would gain in flexibility and Japan would doubt the Asian role of the United States. America's position in the rest of Asia—especially in Korea—could become uncomfortable indeed.

Anyone familiar with the history and attitudes of China will therefore share the reluctance of President Bush—who is after all a humane and compassionate man—to launch the United States on a course both dangerous and undefinable. At least two questions need to be addressed:

(a) Why should the United States Congress challenge a relationship that has enjoyed bipartisan support for nearly two decades?
(b) What is to be achieved by the course advocated by the congressional majority?

The passions result in part from the impact of television coverage. The media described events accurately enough, but television could not—in the nature of the medium—supply the historical or political context (Ted Koppel's special being an important exception).

But what happened in Beijing was not a simple morality play. The conflict grew intractable because serious individuals were in conflict over important issues. What began as a student protest for greater popular participation in government fused with the intraparty struggle of factions headed by the deposed general secretary, Zhao Ziyang, against groups surrounding senior Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping over the pace of economic reform and the need
for political change. I have known Zhao Ziyang for nearly a decade. He is an attractive human being and a dedicated reformer who in his last conversations with me outlined a program of price reform which was both indispensable to a move to market economics and politically risky because it was bound to increase prices.

But I also know Deng as a reformer and a good friend of the United States. I remember him during a visit of mine to Beijing in 1975 when he stood against the Gang of Four on behalf of ties to America—a warning to those who now claim China has no place to go regardless of sanctions. Though I have never discussed it with him, I suspect that President Bush's perceptions are heavily influenced by the same experience.

Thus in my view the caricature of Deng in American discussions as a tyrant despoiling Chinese youth is unfair. For the past decade and a half, Deng has been the driving forces behind Chinese reform. He introduced aspects of market economics and sought to institute a more predictable judicial system. His tragedy is that he has been too successful in the economic field and too hesitant in the political area. He has been too committed to communism to be prepared to face the fact that free-market economics cannot be instituted by a totalitarian Communist Party, but he was also too committed to progress to abandon a course bound to undermine one-party rule.

In a similar dilemma, President Mikhail S. Gorbachev of the Soviet Union has sought to construct a power base outside the Communist hierarchy, specifically in the Supreme Soviet. By contrast, Deng, a survivor of the Long March, sought to forestall the decline of Communist power by reforming it. He tried to subject every party member to review, and when that failed, he restricted the Communist Party hierarchy to essentially conceptual tasks.

Neither course worked. The weeding out of 30 million party members aborted because it had to be administered by the very people who needed to be removed. The reduction of the role of the Communist Party created a vacuum, especially after Deng moved Zhao from the prime minister's position to the office of general secretary of the Communist Party to replace Hu Yaobang.

As a result, Zhao Ziyang's reform program, which in the best circumstances would have been difficult to implement, foundered. Trapped between a government he no longer controlled and a Communist Party indifferent to his policies, Zhao Ziyang appealed to groups beyond his normal Communist reform constituency. In early May, two weeks into the student upheaval, Zhao contradicted Deng before the Asian Development Bank when he stated that the student protest was not a serious matter. Two weeks later when welcoming Gorbachev, Zhao stressed on television that Deng was making all the key decisions. This was generally interpreted as an attempt to place all the blame on Deng.

By then certainly it was apparent that the protesters had obtained support from organs beyond the capacity of student groups. Ten of thousands of pro-
the proclamations of its creators. Within the last decade the Iranian revolution consumed its democratic spokesmen.

U.S.-Chinese relations prospered during the passage from Mao to Hu [Guofeng] to Deng despite their bitter antagonisms, because America stayed aloof from the impenetrable thicket of Chinese domestic politics. It was perceived by all contenders as committed to the eternal Chinese goals of territorial integrity and the well-being of its people.

Such an attitude is all the more important now because Chinese change did not end with the events on Tiananmen Square. I believe Deng's statement that he remains committed to economic reform. This has, after all, been the theme of his long life and the cause of his personal suffering. The hesitation of eight weeks before the crackdown, the efforts by even Li Peng to meet with student leaders, the visit of Zhao Ziyang and Li Peng to the hunger strikers in the hospital demonstrate the reluctance of the Chinese leadership to take measures likely to undermine the international prestige so laboriously accumulated over the past decade and a half.

The Chinese leaders must realize, or their successors will learn, that economic reform is impossible without the educated groups that supplied some of the fervor of the Beijing upheaval and of the workers who furnished much of the muscle. Thus, as so often in Chinese history, the rhythm of Chinese life and of Chinese common sense is likely to produce some practical solution. It would therefore be extraordinarily unwise for the United States to disengage from China at a moment of such fluidity or to adopt policies likely to be interpreted in Beijing as attempts to overthrow the government.

Advocates of additional sanctions claim that China's interest in American help is so great no sanction would jeopardize the relationship. That could be a dangerous illusion. If the Chinese leadership concludes—albeit reluctantly—that the outside pressure to which America is supposed to be the counterweight is overbalanced by America's interventions in China's domestic affairs or even by the inability of the executive and Congress to develop a coherent policy, it could invoke Chinese xenophobia as a defense against perceived American intervention in its domestic affairs.

The challenge of China thus goes beyond the events at Tiananmen Square. And President Bush's refusal to let himself be stampeded will in the long run serve America's national security as well as the values America cherishes.

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**Kissinger's Kowtow**

Stephen J. Solarz

In the days when China still had emperors, anyone who approached the Dragon Throne was required to abase himself and kowtow before the sovereign. Now Henry Kissinger, even before his forthcoming visit to the Middle Kingdom, has kowtowed to China's latter-day emperor through the op-ed page of The Washington Post.

Kissinger, whose article argued that “no government in the world would have tolerated having the main square of its capital occupied for eight weeks” and that “a crackdown was therefore inevitable,” appears to believe that China's leaders were justified in crushing the democracy movement and that our strategic interests with Beijing are far too important to make an issue of human rights. True to form, he appeals for a policy of amoral Realpolitik by erecting the straw man of a hysterical Congress that, according to him, went way overboard in its response to the Tiananmen Massacre. Yet what did Congress really do? It did not impose a comprehensive trade embargo, revoke China's most-favored nation tariff status, suspend its textile quota, eliminate its eligibility for
Export-Import Bank financing or reduce the sophistication of the American-dual-use technology China is privileged to receive.

Congress did codify the suspension that President George Bush had already imposed on the transfer of military items and on the multilateral liberalization of China's access to dual-use technology. It also prohibited the sale of crime-control equipment such as cattle prods and suspended U.S.-government-funded risk insurance and feasibility studies. Furthermore, contrary to Kissinger's patent false statement that Congress "established no criteria for eventually lifting the China sanctions," the legislation provided for presidential waivers on human rights or national security grounds.

Kissinger, who now defends the president's policy as a way of criticizing Congress, neglects to mention that he opposed a suspension of military cooperation with China before the president's decision to freeze all arms sales. Unlike the president and Congress (who approved the legislation he condemns by a vote of 418 to 0), he apparently saw nothing wrong with continuing to send arms to a "People's Liberation Army" that engaged in the brutal slaughter of people it was supposed to protect.

The actions of Congress did not reflect a mere spasm of emotion. Indeed, its motivation was precisely the same as the president's: to demonstrate that the United States cannot do business as usual with a government that relies on indiscriminate violence and sweeping repression. Obviously, Kissinger still fails to understand that America's relations with other countries—particularly a Communist country like China—must rest on a solid foundation of public opinion. When the Chinese government resorts to the wanton violation of human rights, it will inevitably pay a price with the American public and its elected representatives.

Kissinger grudgingly acknowledges that "most of the grievances of the protesters were real." Would that he had asserted that Beijing's citizens were justified in voicing those grievances, and that a significant segment of Chinese officialdom agreed on the urgent necessity of political reform. Would that he had admitted that the party could have solved the crisis by accepting the people's reasonable demands. Would that he had recognized that the demonstrations had almost ended by June 3rd, and that the army's resort to violence was a deliberate effort to intimidate the populace into submission. By evoking all the paranoid reasons why Deng Xiaoping and his henchmen believed repression was necessary, however, Kissinger justifies their actions.

There is no question that the United States' relationship with China is geopolitically important. Yet most American policy-makers have come to realize, particularly in the context of Mikhail Gorbachev's "new thinking," that Beijing is no longer quite the counterweight against Moscow that Kissinger thought it was in the early 1970s. True, China has played a constructive role in Asia in recent years. But it does so in pursuit of its own national interest, not for the purpose of pleasing the United States, and it will continue to do so on that basis.

Instead of offering an apology for repression, thereby confirming the prejudices of his Chinese interlocutors, Kissinger could better use his time in Beijing explaining to Deng and his colleagues why China will continue to suffer international opprobrium until they demonstrate genuine respect for the human rights of their own people. It would also be helpful if, after reaffirming America's recognition of China's continued geopolitical significance, he called on them to end martial law, release political prisoners, end the executions and set on with a serious program of political reform.

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Stephen J. Solarz, congressman (D-NY) and chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs.
The Missions

One of the most controversial moves President Bush made was sending two officials, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, to Beijing to privately meet with Chinese leaders twice in 1989, first in July and then in December. Such moves seemed to contravene the administration’s own ban on high-level contacts announced that June. The second meeting was made public on December 9, only after Scowcroft and Eagleburger arrived in Beijing. The July visit was not revealed to the public until December 19, after Ambassador Lord wrote the following op-ed, which was only in response to the second visit. Secretary Eagleburger’s February 1990 testimony, which appears next, was in defense of both missions.

Misguided Mission

Winston Lord

Since the June massacre in Beijing, Americans have hoisted two banners. One proclaims “sustain indignation”; the other, “preserve bilateral relations.” These principles are not mutually exclusive. Indeed the United States had struck the right balance between condemnation and connection until Gen. Scowcroft’s pilgrimage. That mission both erased any pretense of official indignation and weakened the true foundations of Sino-American relations.

The administration’s justifications are not persuasive:

Don’t isolate the Chinese leaders. It is they, fearing their own people, who have isolated themselves. Their fixation is with power. Censure may not budge them—although the sharp world reaction to executions may have limited the numbers. But international acquiescence surely reinforces their view that crushing their populace elicits only fleeting outcries, no lasting repercussions.
Directly convey American outrage. In the Middle Kingdom, dispatching a high-level delegation speaks much louder than any words. Furthermore, Scowcroft's public toast expressed as much outrage for the administration’s critics as for the perpetrators of the massacre. Judging by the official backgrounding, his private remarks blamed Congress for all the furor. Whatever mild reproaches he may have transmitted were screened out by their media; the Chinese people were treated only to friendly smiles and exchanges.

Maintain contact on international issues. Senior officials gain access and carry weight. The Chinese reaffirmation that they won't ship intermediate missiles to volatile areas, though recycled, is important; so too is dialogue on Cambodia and Korea. But there are alternative channels unburdened by the awful symbolism of the Scowcroft voyage, such as our ambassadors and high-level meetings in international forums. In any event the Chinese pursue a hardened, independent foreign policy based on national interests, not spite over levels of contact.

Weigh the Soviet factor. While the geopolitical dimension of Sino-American ties remains important, it has evolved from a de facto alliance against the Soviets to the more nuanced realm of multipolar balance. Beijing needs to worry more about fast-moving U.S.—Soviet relations than Washington does about Sino-Soviet relations. Today on top of abiding historical, geopolitical and economic limits to Sino-Soviet rapprochement, add Gorbachev's heresies at home and in Eastern Europe. Their contagion poses a much greater threat to China's leaders than Western "bourgeois liberalization."

The administration forfeited moral reproof to seek improved bilateral ties. But even on its own terms the Scowcroft mission was severely misguided for the long run. Consider each of the key audiences.

The only group pleased by the visit, the predominant hard-liners in Beijing, will be gone in a few years. They have reinforced their power with images of business as usual. They take satisfaction that once again the foreigner pays tribute. Gratitude is not esteem.

The closet moderates in and out of government will form the core of leadership with whom we will deal in the future. Far from strengthening their hand, the administration has robbed them of the argument that Chinese repression and xenophobia entail costs. Japan, Europe and others will feel free to follow the Scowcroft trail.

The despair, disillusionment and anger of other Chinese is widespread. Only the tiny percentage in Western countries understand that the administration’s posture does not reflect the American mainstream. The rest must conclude that the blood around Tiananmen Square has truly been scrubbed away.

The trek to Beijing has shattered the broad consensus in America. For 20 years five presidents of both parties had pursued a balanced policy which garnered overwhelming bipartisan support. Now this secure base is rudely shaken by passionate debate. A backlash may well produce heavier sanctions than those the administration already opposes.

One does not shirk up the long-term foundations for Sino-American relations by appearing weak to China's leaders and callous to the Chinese and American people. One does not earn respect abroad by reversing field within months and practicing double standards. One cannot maintain a balanced approach at home by submerging our values and disdaining congressional and public opinion.

The damage done by the mission was compounded by its egregious style. Clinking glasses on worldwide television, Gen. Scowcroft lined up the administration with the Beijing regime against the Chinese and American people: "In both our societies there are voices of those who seek to redirect or frustrate our cooperation. We both must take bold measures to overcome these negative forces."

Two days later, in Berlin, Secretary of State James Baker pronounced: "In their peaceful urgent multitude the peoples of Eastern Europe have held up a mirror to the West and have reflected the enduring power of our own best values . . . true stability requires governments with legitimacy, governments that are based on the consent of the governed."

Let us hope that the administration would hold to these eloquent sentiments longer than six months if there were slaughters in the Tiananmen Squares of Eastern Europe or the Soviet Republics. The Scowcroft mission sends precisely the wrong signals to Gorbachev. Both the Chinese and Eastern European demonstrations have been massive, broadly based and entirely nonviolent. The main difference is that the Chinese people made very modest demands for dialogue with their leadership, while the Eastern Europeans have made very radical demands for the overthrow of theirs.

To be sure, the administration would react strongly over a sustained period to any massacre of innocents in Europe—and Gorbachev probably knows this. That is precisely the point. What we have here is not just a double standard but cultural, if not racial, bias—however unintentional and unconscious. Are we to believe that Chinese are not like Europeans, that they never had freedom and cannot afford it now because China would be un governable and "stability" is crucial to economic reform?

For years critics complained of a double standard in human rights, one for the Soviet Union, another for China. But there were two legitimate reasons for a more muted approach toward Beijing. First, Chinese society, with glaring exceptions, was generally moving in the right direction while the pre-Gorbachev Soviet Union was not. Second, China posed no threat to the United States and proved helpful on many international issues while the Soviet Union was expanding its arsenals and engaging in adventurism.

With many of these premises now overturned, it is time to shelve the double standard.
The president knew the trip would unleash a huge domestic storm, but acted boldly to stem a downward spiral in Sino-American relations. He is gambling that Beijing will make major concessions before Congress reconvenes. We can anticipate some positive moves, but we should not let Beijing or Washington inflate the significance of cosmetic gestures.

Instead Beijing should:

- Acknowledge that last spring was a tragedy for patriots, not only for soldiers;
- Grant amnesty to demonstrators, not conduct witchhunts;
- Free countless dissidents in jail, not just two in an embassy;
- Remove fears, not just martial law;
- Let in VOA broadcasts, not just an additional broadcaster;
- Welcome without onerous conditions journalists, scholars and Peace Corps volunteers, not just computers and cash;
- Cease intimidation of foreigners and invective against America.

This agenda is not utopian. It merely calls for the status quo ante June. The regime is unlikely to move significantly on such fronts. If it does, I, for one, would be delighted to modify my verdict on the Scowcroft mission.

In foreign policy there is frequent tension between the imperatives of strategy and morality, between preserving peace and promoting human rights. Happily for the policy-maker these pursuits are often mutually reinforcing, with no difficult tradeoffs. What better example than the glorious panorama of Eastern Europe. Could there possibly be a more profound contribution to peace on the European continent than the realizing of long-suppressed aspirations? In a few short months, enemy armies have dissolved, warning times have multiplied, and a formidable buffer zone has emerged.

The new agenda for American diplomacy thus features the encouragement of freedom in societies moving toward post-Communism. This pursuit dramatically strengthens the prospects for peace as well. Meanwhile the octogenarians in the Forbidden City are in a time warp, finding common cause with the likes of Honecker and Ceausescu, Castro and Kim, while the Chinese people hunger for rights being grasped by peoples on the other side of the globe.

The administration, which strives skillfully to keep up with the times in Europe, was trapped in its own time warp when it launched Gen. Scowcroft. We can hope that Chinese actions in coming weeks will ease these sufferings of the people and thereby Washington’s plight. But realistically it will take new leaders for China to catch up with history.

Until that time when we can fully resume cooperation with China, we should restore a measured approach. The choice is not solely between isolation and approbation. Let us conduct necessary business with the Beijing authorities in workmanlike fashion, not with fawning emissaries. Let us calibrate our actions with theirs. Let us maintain productive links where possible with progressive Chinese forces. Above all, to serve American interests as well as values, let us align ourselves with China’s future.

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United States Policy toward China

House testimony by Lawrence S. Eagleburger

THE FIRST TRIP TO BEIJING

Mr. Eagleberger [witness, prepared statement]: . . . The secret trip that General Scowcroft and I made to Beijing last July was intended precisely to convey an undiluted message from the President to the Chinese leadership about America’s horror over Tiananmen. As we all know only too well, messages delivered below the level of the top leaders often get softened or altered on the way up the chain of command. Moreover, actions taken in the glare of publicity often engender public posturing, in which saving “face” becomes more important than a sober consideration of the issues.

Accordingly, the President decided to send a quiet mission directly to China’s leader. Our purpose was to convey to the Chinese, without ambiguity, a clear sense of the reaction in this country, beginning with that of the President, to what had happened. We firmly communicated that the United States does not condone the appalling violence used to suppress the peaceful demonstrations, nor do we condone the repression that has followed. I can tell you that our July visit was neither easy nor pleasant.

I have heard some say that the first trip may have stiffened the spines of China’s leaders and delayed the day of relaxation. I do not believe that. I believe that the first trip demonstrated the seriousness of American purpose, made clear the stakes involved in a worsening of our relations, and, ultimately, provided an incentive for a return to the path of reform.