

Young American China Watchers' Views on China

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Abstracts: In this paper, the author has made a thorough study over the new generation of American China Watchers. Most of the pages are devoted to a detailed comparison between the old generation and the young generation of American China Watchers regarding to their background, education, and views over China. At the end of the paper, the author also gives some policy suggestions for both the Chinese and U.S. government based on the findings in this study.

Starting with Franz Michael, John K. Fairbank, and A. Doak Barnett, the American China watchers have encompassed four generations.¹ With the coming of the new century, they have vastly increased in number, as well as in the variety of their research fields, and they are now actively participating in the China policy debate in the U.S. How this generation of China watchers looks at China, and how their opinions will influence the US government's policy towards China deserves a comprehensive and in-depth analysis.

Research and publications on this generation of China watchers' views on China are quite limited. In China, Professor Yuan Peng categorized them into four generations, and summarized that since the 1990s, American China watchers have regarded China Studies as a profession rather than a career, and are displaying attitudes towards the

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¹ The oldest generation of China watchers includes Franz Michael, A. Doak Barnett, Bob Scalapino, John Fairbank, Benjamin Schwartz, Allen Whiting, and Lucian Pye, etc. followed by Richard H. Solomon, Susan Shirk, Richard Baum, Michel Oksenberg, Andy Nathan and June Dreyer, etc.; then David M. Lampton, Harry Harding, Jonathan Pollack and Michael Swaine; the fourth generation includes Alastair Iain Johnston, Bates Gill and Thomas J. Christensen, etc. This research on China experts does not include the traditional Sinologists.

country which are more rational and less emotional.¹ Wang Jianping and Xue Li have summarized these American's China Studies since World War II from the perspective of research content and methodology, concluding that in the 1990s, contemporary China Studies in the US had the characteristics of specialization of subject and internationalization of research.² In the US, an article by David Shambaugh introduced the research of several young academics on China's military and security policy making. This showed the scope of their research to be broadening, but made no comment on their viewpoints on these policies.³

The "young American China watchers" refers here to persons aged 25-45, devoting the early part of their careers to China-related studies in research institutions such as universities, think tanks, governmental agencies and private enterprises. This article aims to explore the answers to the following questions: 1) What impact does the rise of China have on the U.S., politically, economically and internationally? 2) How do these China watchers perceive the Chinese political system today, and how do they foresee Chinese political and social development in the next five to ten years? 3) What are their perspectives on U.S. policy towards China? And what policy implications do their views have for U.S.-China relations? This article also attempts to provide policy suggestions based on the findings of the research.

The methods used in this research project were interview and literature analysis. From October 2006 to April 2007, the author interviewed 28 academics involved in U.S.-China relations studies. These interviews were conducted face-to-face, by e-mail, by telephone, and by attending lectures given by some of these China watchers. A questionnaire was used during the interviews, and the author analyzed different answers given by the interviewees as well as their reports, commentaries and occasional papers appearing in journals, books, newspapers and on the internet.

¹ American Think-Tanks and Their Attitudes Toward China, edited by China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, Current Affairs Press, 2003, p.88.

² See Wang Jianping & Xue Li: "America's China Studies after the World War II," *The Social Science Journal*, Issue 2, 2003.

³ See David Shambaugh: "From the Cold War to China's Rise: the change and consistency of the American research on China's foreign policy," *World Economics and Politics*, Issue 10, 2006.

Basic Findings Regarding the Interviewees

After the data collection stage, twenty interviewees were selected as subjects. The basic findings about them were as follows:

1. Educational Background

Generally speaking, today's China watchers have received a far better education than those of previous generations, in Chinese culture and political science, which should provide them with stronger capabilities in conducting research. Among the twenty subjects: seven have a Master's Degree in International Relations, Asian Studies, or Law and Diplomacy; five have a PhD in East Asian Security, International Security, Political Science or International Relations; five are currently PhD candidates; two have a BA degree; five have authored or co-authored at least one book; and twelve have contributed to newspapers and/or other public media.

2. Work Background

Among the twenty interviewees: Ten belong to think tanks, eight to universities, and two to other organizations such as government agencies or private enterprises. Eight of those interviewed have previously written reports or provided consultation for congressman and/or government agencies such as the State, Defense, or Treasury Departments. Compared with the older China watchers, the present generation have a relatively diverse work background. The "revolving door" mechanism in U.S. academia and policy circles has provided them with more opportunities to understand the policymaking process, and to gain first-hand experience of working within government agencies.

3. Work and Study Experience in China

This is the major difference between the older and young generations. While the older generation's research was largely based on historical literature analysis, the present generation has more opportunities to conduct field work and interviews in China. Among the twenty interviewees: seventeen have worked or studied in mainland China (seven as English language teachers, and seven in business consultancy, diplomacy, or other fields), thirteen have worked as visiting scholars in well-known universities or research institutes, seven have studied in China (mainly Chinese Language and History), six have lived or traveled

extensively in the less developed parts of China (rather than Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, etc), three have worked in Taiwan or Hong Kong, and nine speak some level of Chinese, although their fluency was not measured.

4. Young China Watchers' China Studies

The older generations of China watchers' focused on the growth of the Chinese Communist regime before 1949, the Cultural Revolution, political and economic development during the period of Reform and Opening-up, and other issues of strong historical importance. Present-day China watchers have witnessed China's rapid change from a developing country to a re-emerging major world power. Therefore, their research tends to focus on the new challenges China is facing in political and social development, changes in its foreign and security policy, and also non-traditional security issues in the greater context of China's peaceful rise. This provides these academics with a broad research field and many opportunities to excel in their field. For example, their research subjects have included: "China's New Diplomacy," "China's Soft Power," "Beijing Consensus," "Chinese Nationalism without Marxism," "China's Rural Election," "HIV/AIDS Prevention," and "China's Relations with 'Failed States,'" One of those interviewed even claimed that China's rise will be his rise, and he will be rising with China's rising.

Basic Findings on Their Views on China

According to the results of the interviews, and also the requirements of this research, those interviewed were divided into two groups, the "engagement group" and the "hedging group." Reflecting current US approaches towards China, those in the engagement group tend to support the "responsible stakeholder" framework, while members of the hedging group tend to focus on the more negative aspects of U.S.-China relations, embracing the so-called "hedging" strategy.

As defined by this research, "engagement" policy was the approach taken by the previous six U.S. presidents, from Nixon to Clinton, of integrating China into the U.S.-dominated global system, and attempting to regulate Chinese domestic and international behavior.¹ Stating that the

¹ The specific policy could be varied, as the Clinton administration emphasized

U.S. is trying to “engage” with China does not simply mean that the US is seeking co-operation or to establish a friendly relationship, but also that it is cautious of any behavior of China that might harm US national interests.

According to the research of Evan S. Medeiros, hedging strategy has three dimensions: integration and counteraction, assurance, and containment. Although it has the dimension of integrating and working together with China, It implies that if China’s development should endanger the U.S.’ supreme status, the U.S. will use whatever method it takes to prevent this. It is necessary to point out that “hedging” is the strategy used to prepare for “worst-case” scenarios, and is not a pro-active approach, as “containment” is.

On China’s Rise

China’s rise is one of the most decisive dynamics that shape the 21st century; it imposes four direct and indirect challenges - rather than threats- to U.S. interests in East Asia and other parts of the world. These four challenges include:

Firstly, the “Beijing Consensus” may replace the “Washington Consensus.” China’s political system is believed to be antithetical to American values; the Chinese model of rapid economic development under the leadership of a communist party — a rare and remarkable achievement-is attractive to a number of developing countries. According to one hedging — group academic, “China emphasizes top-down control of development and poverty reduction, and the sidelining of political reform for economic reform”.¹ Some in America are worried that China’s model of development may reduce the attraction of free market democracies, and undermine the political base of the capitalist world.

Secondly, China’s military modernization poses a potential threat to U.S. military capability. Although some young academics believe that China’s military buildup is a natural result of economic development, China’s military modernization still raises great concern in the U.S. One

encouraging internal political and economic change within China, while the G. W. Bush administration initially focused on restraining China’s external behavior. See Hao Yufan, Zhang Yandong ed.: “Constrained Engagement: Possible Trend of Bush’s China Policy”, Xinhua Press, 2001, p.10.

¹ Joshua Kurlantzick: “China’s Charm Offensive in Southeast Asia,” *Current History*, September 2006, p.272.

academic argued that “Chinese military modernization appear to exceed legitimate needs, while looking to develop asymmetric capabilities vis-à-vis the United States.”¹ With the Taiwan issue still unresolved, this becomes more complicated because of a non-transparent military budget and decision-making process, and the lack of a crisis management mechanism between the two countries.

Thirdly, China’s increasing economic power and economic interdependence with the U.S. is seen as being potentially harmful to U.S. economic interests. China’s rapid economic growth has made its mark on international trade through its impact on global prices, competition for market access, and the matter of its honoring global economic rules. The hedging group academics argue that this could have direct or indirect effects on U.S. economic interests. For example, China’s comparatively low labor costs, its global hunt for natural resources, and its huge reserve of U.S. treasury bonds, have all raised great concern in the U.S. With the heavy economic interdependence between the two countries, a possible slowing down of economic growth or financial crisis in China could have significant spillover effects in Asia, North America and Europe.

Fourthly, China’s development may reshape the established international order. China is a dynamic power, on a rising trajectory to assume a more important role in international affairs. Therefore, how its rise will affect the international system and international order is still unpredictable: will China aggressively challenge the U.S.-dominated international order, or will it be a responsible international actor, according to the U.S. definition? One young academic remarked, “Chinese leaders have not yet decided how to really use its newfound position: to bolster the international system with new resources, or to be a selfish inward-focused power.”² The U.S. has chosen not to contain China’s rise, although how it will adapt itself to a competitor’s re-emergence in terms of economy and diplomacy is still unknown.

Meanwhile, there are also great opportunities for the two countries to cooperate when their interests overlap. These areas include: the promotion of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific area, to be specific, maintaining a peaceful and nuclear free Korean Peninsula, as well as a peaceful and

¹ Interview with Leif-Eric Easley from the Harvard University Department of Government, February 21, 2007.

² Interview with a young U.S. State Department official, October 26, 2006.

stable Taiwan Strait; the promotion of free trade and economic growth in the Asia-Pacific area; to co-operate in bilateral and multilateral mechanisms in dealing with global issues such as prevention of pandemic disease (SARS, Avian Flu and HIV/AIDS), and natural disaster relief; and to co-operate in the combating of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, money laundering, human traffic and anti-piracy activities.

The engagement group academics pointed-out four areas where the two countries particularly need to make joint efforts:

Ensuring Energy Security

As the world's largest and third-largest oil importers, the U.S. and China should cooperate on diversifying energy resources, developing alternative energy, and the exploration and exploitation of oil fields.

Dealing with Global Warming

As the countries with the largest and second-largest levels of carbon dioxide emissions, the U.S. and China have a responsibility to address this very serious issue, which endangers all human life;

International Financial Stability

The Asian financial crisis was a wake-up call for the international community, and the recent sub-prime mortgage crisis alarmed it again. As the fourth largest economy in the world, China should cooperate with the U.S. as well as other international organizations in achieving international financial stability;

Reducing the Poverty in Developing Countries, Especially in Africa

Reducing the gap between the northern and southern hemispheres, between developed and developing countries, will help to eliminate potential conflicts between ethnic groups and 'breeding grounds' for terrorism.

On China's Domestic Development

On China's Political System and Political Reform

The ideological differences between the U.S. and China in terms of their political systems still play an important part in China watchers' perceptions of China.

While China no longer emphasizes the ideological rivalry between socialism and capitalism at home and abroad, most hedging group scholars still view it as a "communist party controlled state," though one which has no intention of spreading communism abroad. During the interviews, China was described as a "one-party ruled communist state," and an "emerging country with fundamentally different values from the U.S., namely the political system, individual rights, and views on international politics"¹. China is believed by some academics to have abandoned such goals and "is no longer an adherent to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology," but "remain[s] an authoritarian country, with a Leninist regime, if no longer a Marxist one."² However, some engagement group academics challenged these views, arguing that China is definitely not an authoritarian state as described by the U.S. media, and that the Chinese political system is very complicated and difficult for westerners to fully understand. For them, the Chinese Communist party is a party in transition, or at least, not a traditional Communist Party.

As a "non-democratic" and "non-transparent" "authoritarian state," the hedging group scholars believe China may behave aggressively at times of domestic crisis. They believe that there are "no checks and balances" within China's political system, and its policy-making process is non-transparent, meaning that its behavior could be unpredictable, and even dangerous, in times of political or economic crisis. Some hedging group academics even argued that the only way for the Chinese government to restore its legitimacy of rule is to turn to nationalism, which might lead to expansionist and regional hegemonic policies. Some also believe that democratic countries tend not to engage in war with one other, while China, not being a democracy, would find it much easier to go

¹ Interview with Derek Mitchell at the CSIS on November 10, 2006.

² Joshua Kurlantzick: "China's Charm Offensive in Southeast Asia," *Current History*, September 2006, p.276.

to war, if it so wished. They also believe that the situation could be even worse were China to go through the process of democratization.

With rapid economic liberalization, China is expected to reform its political system as well; however, members of both the engagement and hedging groups believe China's political reform will be slow and gradual. When asked whether they believed that, within 5 to 10 years, China would make significant progress in political reform, most of the young academics didn't believe so. One explained that "while democracy is a noble end in itself, it will not work in China in the near-term because China's populace is more concerned with its next meal than its right to vote". While some argue that there could be a scenario in which the Chinese economy continues to grow without further political development, others believe new lines of thought are developing among Chinese leaders; as shown, for example, by the recent article by Yu Keping, in which he argued that democracy is a positive thing.

It is a widely accepted view that China will develop its own model of democracy, rather than imitate that of the U.S. or any other country. While academics' opinions may differ on what model China will take in its political reform, most agree that the U.S. model may not be the best one to follow. Because of its turbulent history since 1840, China is sensitive about accepting any kind of political system originating from the West. At the same time, the Chinese believe any political system or arrangement should be adapted to fit China's unique situation.

The Most Serious Domestic Challenges for China

The most serious domestic challenges for China are: uneven development and income disparity; environmental degradation; and healthcare and social welfare reform. Other challenges include corruption, domestic unrest, rapid migration from the countryside to the cities, labor shortages in rural areas, energy security, a possible collapse of the financial sector, a weakened legitimacy of the ruling party, and the reform of state-owned enterprises.

Most young academics agree that the greatest challenge for China is sustaining stable economic growth in a way that maintains some acceptable pattern of income distribution, and improving the uneven development between the rural and urban areas and the east and the west of the country. Social and political stability, as well as further economic development all rest heavily on this. Meanwhile, they believe that social

welfare reform has been left far behind economic reform, meaning many ordinary people can hardly afford the high expense of healthcare, education, and housing. They believe the situation in rural areas to be even worse; with huge populations of working-age people flowing into cities, leaving the old and the young behind, without adequate care. This is believed to have led to a labor shortage in the countryside, and social problems in the cities.

Environmental degradation is believed to be another pressing issue facing the Chinese government. This problem is directly linked with water shortages, food security, and the spread of pandemic diseases such as SARS or Avian Flu. It is thought that an unsuccessful program of healthcare reform could make this situation worse. Some academics stated that the inner areas of China are seriously affected by malnutrition and disease, while inadequate infrastructure made providing aid almost impossible in some areas, especially during times of natural disaster.

China still lacks a mature civil society

Although the attitudes of the urban youth are becoming more diversified and open, China still lacks a mature civil society. In terms of social development — the attitudes which shape people's lifestyles and the growth of civil society — significant changes have taken place during the past twenty years. These include: the rise of consumerism, a decreasing emphasis on working for material reward and more emphasis on quality of life, increasing movement towards diversity and individualism, and more openness to foreign ideas and values, especially among the urban youth. Some engagement group scholars even argued that the “Chinese dream” is the “American dream”: achieving a better life through hard work.

Some academics believe that due to strong domestic control, and inadequate education about democracy, China still lacks a mature civil society. However, they believe there are signs of the growing impact of some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as the mass media. NGOs in China are playing an increasing role in environmental protection, and in helping disadvantaged groups, for example, rural laborers, and those affected by HIV/AIDS. However, with the increasing use of new technology, which made it possible for people to learn more about the world outside China, it is much-debated whether or not they may increase their demands upon the government. How the central government would handle these demand is seen as being of great importance.

On U.S. China Policy

The U.S. Lacks a Coherent China Policy

While U.S.-China relations are important, the U.S. lacks a coherent China policy. The engagement and hedging groups share the same view in this regard. Since 9/11, U.S. attention and resources have been largely focused on the “war on terror” and the Middle East. The reasons are as follows:

Although important in many ways, China remains a secondary issue in the Bush administration’s foreign policy agenda. It seems that most of the time the U.S.’ primary aim is to maintain a stable relationship making China a constructive factor rather than a troublemaker to its agenda. In one young academic’s words, “make China part of the solution, not part of the problem”.

In terms of their bureaucratic systems, different U.S. governmental agencies or departments may have different policy approaches. For example, the policy of the Department of Commerce could be different from that of the Department of Defense. Some academics stated that there is no real China expert at a senior level of the Bush administration. However, many senior officials experienced dealing with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. This may have negative implications for the making of U.S. policy towards China. Furthermore, U.S.-China relations are so complex that there is simply no one policy that can deal with all the related problems.

Remaining mutual suspicion originating from past events is restricting in-depth bilateral cooperation and exchange. The Bush administration is facing pressure from Congress to refrain from bilateral military and technological exchanges (such as joint military activities or space programs) which could facilitate Chinese military modernization. According to the survey, 50% of interviewees believe that differences in the two countries’ political systems are the main cause of U.S. distrust of China, which has resulted in China being accused of a lack of accountability, inadequate representation of its people, and insufficient respect for human rights, as well as a lack of transparency in policy making. Of the interviewees, 35% believe the main cause of distrust to be historical issues, such as the Korean and Vietnam wars, and the June 4 and EP3 accidents; 30% of those interviewed believe the PLA’s military

modernization to be a key factor, and 25% blamed the Taiwan issue — Americans are especially uneasy at China's refusal to rule out the use of force in its relations with Taiwan. Other reasons include China's relations with so called "rogue-states" and China's RMB and IPR issues.

“Engagement” plus “hedging”

The Bush administration's China policy is “engagement” plus “hedging.” The U.S. believes that helping China become integrated into the current world system is in its own interests, as well as China's. President Nixon's initiative was the first step to engagement, and China rejoined the United Nations in 1972. With the successful conclusion of World Trade Organization entry negotiations with the U.S., China joined the world trade system. The Bush administration believes that, if left to operate on its own, the liberalization of the economy will lead to democratization of politics and rule of law. So it has tried to separate economic and trade issues from political issues, as the U.S. did with Japan in the 1980s. In this way, the present administration hopes that trade friction will not undermine political and security relations.

Members of the engagement group argued that encouraging China to become a responsible stakeholder is a continuation of the engagement policy, although some clarification is required. Firstly, who should set the criteria of being “responsible”, the U.S., China or the UN? Secondly, who will supervise the participants' behavior? What would happen if one country acts responsibly, while the other violates such rules? Thirdly, what should be the punishment for behaving irresponsibly, economic sanctions or threats of military action? Finally, discussing responsibility without reference to concrete issues can be somewhat meaningless.

The engagement group academics even argue that “hedging” is not an accurate word to describe U.S. policy towards China.¹ They believe “hedging” is a loose term, which can be used for different purposes by politicians and academics, and that it should, therefore, not be used to

¹ At least two academics interviewed insisted that “hedging” is not a term officially used in government documents, and refers only to policy suggestions from academics close to the Department of Defense. The author found that President Bush declared in the 2006 National Security Strategy, the US “seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities”, which shows this argument may not be correct. See the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (2006), p.42.

refer to official policy. Still, they do agree that the U.S. is taking precautions against possible future aggression on China's part. To the hedging group, however, this is "hedging" — and their logic is, with the challenges and uncertainty that China's rise has imposed on the U.S. and Asia, that the U.S. needs to take precautions against China's development.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that increasing military and security cooperation with Japan or other U.S. allies, as well as non-alliance countries, is aimed at China alone. The hedging group strongly believed that, while the U.S. is enhancing ties with Asian countries, China is acting similarly by strengthening economic ties and providing aid throughout the region, thus increasing the possible costs for the U.S. in the case of future direct confrontation with China. The engagement group academics were especially concerned that such measures by both sides could result in deepening distrust, undermining the potential for further co-operation.¹

China's Role in International Community

With its economic growth, it is natural for China to play an active and meaningful role in international society. Since 2005, China's involvement in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East has increased greatly. With this involvement, China is believed to be aiming at securing energy resources, exploring foreign markets, improving its international image, and isolating Taiwan on the international stage. On this issue, many in the engagement group seem to have accepted Alastair Iain Johnston's view, that China's increasing participation in multilateral institutions is a process of socialization, the key factor behind it being a growing desire among Chinese leaders for China to be internationally recognized as a "responsible" power. However, the divergence between the U.S. and China's approaches towards African countries have exposed the conflict between their differing agendas. For example, the U.S. as well as

¹ Evan S. Medeiros once concluded that three problems that could undermine the stability of the US-Chinese bilateral relationship and of Asian security more broadly were: managing the Taiwan issue, regional reactions to mutual hedging of the U.S. and China, and domestic politics in each country. He stated that if these risks are not carefully controlled, they could result in a gradual drift from the current status quo to adversarial competition and perhaps outright strategic rivalry between the U.S. and China. Evan S. Medeiros: "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," *Washington Quarterly*, winter 2005-06, p. 158.

European countries focus more on democracy and good governance in these areas, while China emphasizes economic exchange and energy resources. A number of underdeveloped countries in Africa and Latin America have benefited from trade relations with China, whilst somehow being ignored by the U.S.

At the same time, many in the hedging group were quite critical of China's behavior in this regard, especially of its role in the Darfur crisis in Sudan. One stated that "China's willingness to deal with states that have autocratic or corrupt leaders (such as North Korea, Myanmar, Sudan, and Zimbabwe) without political conditions, will make it more difficult for the U.S. to isolate these regimes and press their leaders to undertake anti-corruption measures or political reform".¹ It is argued that China should give up or at least revise its "outdated" "no intervention in other countries' internal affairs" principle, and instead conform to current international norms and standards in arms sales and the provision of foreign aid.

To sum up, the young American China watchers' main perspectives on China's rise are as follows:

1) Their points of view regarding China's domestic development and foreign policy, and on U.S. policy towards China, are quite similar to those of the older generations. The reason for this may be either that these academics are still at an early phase of their research, and therefore have not yet developed their own opinions, or that American academia has reached a general consensus on China's future development and U.S. policy towards China. What needs to be pointed out is that both the engagement and hedging groups, and both the younger and older generations of academics are — in essence — American nationalists; they accept the traditional ideology of democracy, freedom and human rights as part of their beliefs and even their lives. The perspectives of China here are from the eyes of Americans; even if they are not very far from the truth, they are distorted in some way, and a number are significantly biased, particularly their views on China's political system and political development.

2) Ideological stereotypes against China still exist among the young

¹ Phillip C. Saunders: "China's Global Activism: Strategy, Drivers, and Tools," *Occasional Paper 4*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University Press, October 2006, p.28.

China watchers. Contrary to the assumption that the post-Cold War generation would be less influenced by the rivalry between socialism and capitalism, this generation have inherited the Cold War legacy, regarding China as a communist regime and/or authoritarian state. This has resulted from a lack of systematic study of Chinese history, political systems and political reality. Although many engagement group scholars believe China's free market economy will inevitably lead to political change, they do not understand that the complicated national situation will make this process far longer than they expect. They also fail to understand that China will pursue political and social development in its own way.

3) Their perceptions of China are either too idealistic or oversimplified, while China's domestic politics and foreign policy making are far more complicated than they perceive. Although the young academics have more experience of studying and working in China, and their perceptions are more objective than those of previous generations, their research still lacks an overall and comprehensive understanding. A typical example is one scholar's suggestion that China should deploy 2000 peacekeeping troops in Iraq, thus enhancing U.S.-China relations. However, he clearly ignores the very likely opposition of the Chinese people. Many young academics are critical of China's non-intervention principle, however they fail to understand that it has been a guiding principle of the People's Republic of China since its founding, and has won the support of most developing countries, who have suffered from western colonial rule.

Policy Implications

1. The engagement approach will be the mainstream policy choice of the new administration. Generally speaking, if we draw a line to show the young China watchers' policy preferences toward China, which range from co-operation to containment, with options such as "engagement" and "precaution" in-between, these young academics' preferences are closer to the co-operation end, meaning that more favor "engagement," rather than the comparatively-aggressive "hedging" approach.

As mentioned above, many engagement group academics regard the "responsible stakeholder" framework as a continuation of the last six administrations' engagement policy towards China. With the 2008 U.S. presidential election approaching, and friction in bilateral trade and

economic relations rising, many academics believe that policy towards China could be an important issue in the coming presidential campaigns. The new president may give up the “responsible stakeholder” framework. However, the engagement policy - having proved effective and beneficial for U.S. interests for more than three decades — will remain the mainstream policy choice. That is, unless: 1) the U.S. believes China to be undermining its economic and/or security interests in East Asia and/or the rest of the world; 2) China arbitrarily takes over Taiwan by force and without provocation from the Taiwanese side; 3) China establishes an anti-U.S. military alliance; or 4) a serious incident of human rights violation occurs within China.

2. Both the U.S. and Chinese governments need to take pro-active policy measures, in order to reduce mutual distrust and increase mutual understanding and confidence. As mentioned above, mutual distrust and suspicion is restricting in depth bilateral cooperation and exchange. Therefore, the Chinese side should:

1) Steadily put forward political reform to keep up with the pace of economic growth. China’s political reform has its own momentum. Some foreign academics have correctly pointed out that moving too quickly in this area will lead to instability and other problems. But moving too slow when the conditions are met might also hurt China’s own interests.

2) Continue with the economic reform and opening up policy, and gradually resolve the RMB issue, without damaging the Chinese economy. China is still a developing country, and many economic and social problems need to be resolved during the course of economic development. Some within U.S. policy and academic circles tend to have unhelpfully high and unrealistic expectations of China’s progress in these areas. Take the RMB issue as an example: many young China watchers agree that too fast and drastic an increase in the value of the RMB could badly damage the Chinese economy, and have a negative impact on that of the U.S. Therefore, it would be mutually beneficial for China to solve the issue at its own pace.

3) State clearly its vision for the international structure, and update its principles for foreign policies. China’s aim of establishing a harmonious world has received great international attention, but China now needs to consolidate this concept, and demonstrate how it is going to be realized. Meanwhile, in the new century, with changes in the international community, China should absorb more internationally recognized norms

and rules, in order to keep in step with the times, and better serve its national interests. China should also raise its voice in international society against human rights violations, and other breaches of international law.

For the U.S. side:

1) Resist the temptation to contain China's rise. As the former Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick said — and many young academics agree — China is not the Soviet Union, and is not seeking to revise the established international system. The resurgence of great power does not have to occur the “hard way,” as in the cases of Germany and Japan, before World War II. In a new century and new global environment, China's development needs U.S. accommodation and adaptation.

2) Avoid the politicization of economic and trade issues. Both the U.S. and China embrace free trade and are against protectionist policies. Politicians in the U.S. should behave more responsibly, and avoid manipulating economic and trade issues for political gain. As has been shown over the last three decades, normal trade relations benefit both sides. Considering the current economic interdependence, any trade war or irresponsible sanction measures could cause serious damage to both countries' economies.

3) Embrace multilateralism; support co-operation between great powers and international institutions in solving international disputes and regional issues. The Bush administration's unilateral approach has aroused wide criticism from international society, caused regional chaos and confrontation, and harmed the international image of the U.S. As the sole world superpower today, the U.S. has the responsibility to maintain world peace and economic development. As an American saying goes, “united we stand”: only when the whole world make joint efforts can it face the common threats of terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, pandemic disease, global warming and other emerging challenges.

For both countries, history has proved that exchanges at different levels between both sides will foster understanding and trust. Exchanges between young academics are of great importance. This is not only due to their being participants in the foreign policy debate, the educator of the public, but also their role in future policy making. Therefore, the author strongly suggests strengthening exchanges between young China and America watchers. For example:

1) making full use of the established foreign exchange channels within the embassies, universities, research institutes and think tanks, and

the encouragement of both sides to institutionalize such exchanges;

2) encouraging young academics from different organizations to co-operate in research. This would certainly improve young Chinese academics' research capabilities, and also serve as a second track for communications;

3) encouraging more members of the U.S. and Chinese legislative branches to visit the other country, and creating more chances for assistants to U.S. congressmen to visit China.