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**BUILDING TRUST IN THE
UNITED STATES-CHINA RELATIONSHIP**

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Current Events and Future Consequences

The United States-China relationship lacks traction. There are neither sufficient sturdy hand holds (i.e., mutually perceived common interests) nor adequate solid footing (i.e., shared long-term goals) in the relationship that allow both countries to weather the inevitable buffeting produced by single episodes and incidents. Consequently, analysis and speculation about this critical relationship, and the dynamics of the relationship itself, orbit around an apparently never-ending series of contentious events and disagreements. In recent times that list includes U.S. objections to what it considers to be human rights violations within China, China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), U.S. charges of Chinese sales of weapons of mass destruction, the Hong Kong transition, the issue of Most Favored Nation (MFN) status for China, the ongoing exposure of Asian contributions to American political campaigns, and Chinese state enterprise investments and sales in the U.S. All of these issues do not only influence the relationship, they actually drive it. This is neither healthy nor normal.

An events-driven relationship threatens to turn the planned exchange visits of the countries' state leaders in the coming year into short-term tactical engagements — skirmishes which neither improve mutual understanding nor enhance management of the long-term relationship. Why is the U.S.-China relationship so events-sensitive? First, it is because of a lack of priorities concerning what are important and lasting issues affecting national interests, and what are transitory and marginal, but arousing widespread public interest. When all issues, ranging from China's entry into the WTO and weapons proliferation to COSCO purchasing port facilities in San Diego and campaign finance contributions, are considered equally important, none are important. Second, this inability to prioritize is the result of increasing domestic influences and a broadening of participation in the policymaking processes of the two countries. There are more constituencies to be managed on both sides now. And each of those constituencies has its own perceptions as well as perspectives on the bilateral relationship. Perceptions may be misinformed and misguided, but they count just as much as the facts in motivating a segment of the public to take positions on the bilateral relationship.

The reasons for the growing impact of domestic factors in determining the U.S.-China agenda are found in several developments: the end of the cold war and the consequent break down of foreign policy consensus; the information and communication technology revolution; the social pluralization resulting

from economic reform in China; and the nature of globalization as reflected in the economic restructuring of the United States. All of these developments, which are global in character, have brought the impact of world events home in a direct way that requires the governments of the two countries to accommodate new involved or opinionated constituencies.

Domestic factors always have been important in shaping U.S. foreign policy positions, but their influence in shaping U.S. relations with China is especially powerful. Although evidence is very limited, China observers tend to suspect the same trend is evolving within China. Under these conditions, even essentially sound and positive long-term policies, carefully crafted and well-managed by the American and Chinese governments, will not by themselves succeed in strengthening the bilateral relationship. The sets of domestic factors in the respective countries must be addressed both in internal debates and dialogues as well as in their bilateral engagements.

Two nations, each one considering itself exceptional, albeit for different reasons, and each carrying a heavy load of prior beliefs and attitudes toward one another, are both entering a transitional period in modern international history, a period when the nature of the U.S.-China bilateral relationship is widely considered the most significant issue in contemporary international relations. To begin doing what needs to be done to stabilize and enhance that relationship, the peoples and governments of the two countries should be more aware that their respective attitudes and policies toward one another are not simply the result of accumulating events and incidents. Rather, they are colored by the consequences of major contemporary global shifts such as those outlined above, and freighted with history. It is the first task of political leaders to lead, not simply reflect prevailing sentiments which, unfortunately, are often misinformed. And that kind of leadership is best exercised through clear and sustained public education.

The current U.S. government policy of comprehensive engagement with China, providing room for both accommodation as well as firmness, and the Chinese policies of openness, reform, and the pursuit of peace and stability as aims serving vital national interests, appear to have some of the ingredients for a new era of international goodwill and cooperation. But the absence of confidence in each other's motives and intentions is the main obstacle to implementing those policies. Confidence-building in the U.S.-China relationship thus takes on a special meaning, and a very basic one: the creation and maintenance of trust in each other's actions and the acceptance of each other's word as given in

good faith and at face value. Trust, the social capital theorists tell us, is built on the repetition of small concrete actions that produce positive results for both sides, i.e., an accumulation of modest win-win situations. There has been a perception by both China and the United States that the two countries are locked in a zero-sum game. In the contemporary post-cold war, economically globalized world, this simply is not so. But why do these perceptions exist, and how can they be changed? The starting point is a recognition of the historical and external forces at work affecting the bilateral relationship. It is not evolving in a vacuum, although there is a frequent tendency to overlook this critical point.

History's Momentum

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the U.S.-China relationship has never been normal nor in equilibrium. The shifts in public attitudes and official policies toward one another have been dramatic, relatively frequent, and usually quite sudden. From 1949 to 1971, the two countries were deadly enemies, fighting a bitter war in Korea and viewing each other with the most profound distrust across a massive ideological divide. The period beginning with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's visit to China in 1972 and ending with the onset of China's reform and opening-up in 1978 was an extremely pragmatic one in policy terms. Those pragmatic policies, based on relatively near-term national interests, were implemented in a climate of mutual popular fascination. The attitude of the American public in particular was one of extended curiosity. This allowed policies to be shaped and executed in a relatively benign domestic environment.

With formal diplomatic recognition, China-mania really took hold in the U.S. from 1979 to 1989, as contacts and exchanges between the two countries at every level and in every form exploded. The pace of change in China was beyond anyone's expectations, and the amount of information about and knowledge of each other increased exponentially. Anything seemed possible, both in the nature of the bilateral relationship and in China's domestic political institutions — or so Americans thought. This was a period of unrealistic euphoria.

The events of 1989 put an abrupt end to that phase. The end of the Berlin Wall and the appearance of tanks in Tien An Men square produced a complete about-face in American attitudes. The Chinese government was considered hostile and illegitimate, and the Chinese authorities were convinced the United States was seeking to undermine their domestic position and leadership. The seeds of a normal relationship which had been planted in the late 1970s and early to mid-1980s withered. In the early 1990s, neither side seemed willing or

able to craft any comprehensive strategy toward one another. This period of inconclusiveness and “policy drift” culminated in the 1995 Taiwan crisis, beginning with the issuance of an American visa to Lee Teng-Hui, and climaxing in the Chinese missile exercises in the Taiwan Straits. The events of the spring, summer, and fall of 1995 were a sobering wake-up call for the governments of both countries.

For close to two years now, China and the United States have been struggling to develop a new basis for their bilateral relationship and new strategic approaches toward one another. Both countries are articulating new strategies: bilateral comprehensive engagement and espousal of global adherence to the rules of international regimes by the United States; a Chinese bilateral policy of noninterference, expanding economic relations, and continuing stability coupled with a new emphasis on multipolarity (as a counter to perceived American unipolarity). While these policies are sound enough, few observers would conclude that either of those approaches truly captures what is needed in long-term strategies. Both emphasize measures and tactics more than long-term goals and defined national interests. And both are more strategies than policies. A comprehensive and coherent U.S. policy toward China would have easily assured China that it was not the target of the revised guidelines of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. A similarly intelligible Chinese policy toward the U.S. would have offered specific proposals for a multilaterally-based, confidence-building regional regime to replace the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, rather than just unrealistically argue for its abrogation.

The continuing search for a new foundation for the bilateral relationship must proceed at a fairly brisk pace and generate some momentum during the next five or six months. Otherwise, the relationship’s development runs the risk of stalling and going into a tailspin, determined largely by reactions to upcoming events. There are many obstacles to overcome: American and Chinese leadership uncertainty and lack of consistency and clarity in their behavior toward one another; the absence of anything like a consensus on China policy in the U.S.; the continuing fast pace of pluralizing change in China; and the necessarily domestic focus of the two governments. In addition, the sheer magnitude and volume of attention accorded the bilateral relationship magnifies and distorts all actions. The temptation, and the practical, politically wise course of action might be to temporize and conduct holding actions. But this is foreign policy management, not leadership. It does not well serve the interests of either country.

The history of the U.S.-China relationship has shown itself to lack continuity and to be singularly sensitive to defining events and actions, rather than the result of deliberately crafted strategies. The events of the next several months may hold that relationship hostage to circumstances and domestic politics. Or the planned exchange of visits by the presidents of the two countries can provide the opportunity for those leaders to stop the swing of the pendulum of opinion by displaying will and articulating attainable national goals with regard to one another. To take those steps will require addressing certain critical and fundamental problems both at home and in the bilateral relationship which usually are avoided. It will also require taking actions which demonstrate faith and trust in each other when such confidence is sorely lacking on both sides. President Jiang's October 1997 visit to the U.S. and President Clinton's China visit in April or May 1998 and the months in between offer an unprecedented opportunity for "new starts" and fresh initiatives. That opportunity must be seized, and it can be if the goals are realistic and envisioned to be achieved in small steps, taking into account the centrality of domestic factors on both sides.

Domestic Divisions and Public Perceptions: What is Wrong

The most fundamental and difficult-to-deal-with reason why the United States is unable to demonstrate the confidence in the Chinese government necessary to advance the bilateral relationship is found in that stream of public opinion which does not regard the U.S.-China relationship as a normal and permanent one. In the United States, there is a persistent notion found among a segment of the public as well as among some political leaders, that the government in Beijing is not legitimate. This inability to accept the current Chinese government on its own terms is partially the consequence of an American ideology that instinctively places greater value on foreign leaders who have gone through some form of open competitive election to achieve their place. Most Americans find it difficult to digest the idea of a legitimate and nonexpansive Communist state primarily concerned about the welfare of its citizens.

Of course, a government's domestic legitimacy can result from a number of factors other than elections. Good performance, efficiency, and accountability definitely contribute, as does the government's ability to represent and articulate deeply held public values and attitudes. But as long as there is a vocal element of the American policy community who consider Beijing unacceptably authoritarian, that element will criticize official U.S. policies of engagement and normalcy. That criticism will either hinder or impede the development of sustained normal relations unless dealt with directly and clearly by the proponents of

engagement and the majority who seek to put the U.S.-China relationship on a stable long-term footing.

There certainly are any number of other governments in the world which, if they think about them, portions of the American public consider unacceptable. But the point is, they do not think about them, and the media does not put them squarely before the American public as they do China. Perceptions and images have their own legacies. Tian An Men may have happened eight years ago, but the pictures of what many Americans perceived as democracy frustrated still prevail, overwhelming the facts which are much more complicated. The impact of images and what the American public thinks it knows (but is wrong about) shapes, perhaps to an excessive degree, what U.S. politicians do and say. In June 1997, before the annual Congressional debate on MFN for China, a CNN-Wirthlin poll found that 53 percent of those polled were opposed to MFN renewal for China. About the same time, a Committee of 100/Asia Society survey determined that while one-third of the surveyed American public was aware of the impending handover of Hong Kong to China, only 12 percent knew that Hong Kong was then governed by Britain. In other words, most of the American public thought that Hong Kong was an “independent place” being given back to China. With those inaccurate views, it is not surprising that a majority of the U.S. public was opposed to MFN renewal.

The sentiment among some Americans that it would be better if a democratically elected government were in place in Beijing and the current regime out of power, is neither official policy nor a majority opinion. But it is a significant obstacle to developing an American consensus for a healthy normal relationship with China.

The domestic American debate on China until recently was confined to those who argued for containing China, those who argued for engaging China, and mixed positions in between. Now, rather disturbingly, a new argument is being put forward that seeks to go beyond a passive containment role and proposes actively undermining the government in Beijing. Conservative commentary pieces in newspapers and periodicals during the spring and summer of 1997 have advocated the “subversion of the Chinese regime” and urged the U.S. government to state publicly that the U.S. hopes China will rid itself of communism. This strain of thinking prevents mature consideration of how a normal long-term relationship with China can be implemented.

On the Chinese side, the most fundamental reason why confidence is lacking in the U.S.-China relationship is the widespread belief within the Chinese

leadership, shared by many other Chinese, that the aim of the United States' China policy is to confound, contain, and delay China's emergence as a great global power. In this view, engagement is just a tactic to create immobilizing entanglements. A more extreme Chinese view which has also emerged again recently is the mirror image of the latest American conservative statements on undermining Beijing. There are a significant number of Chinese officials who believe the United States is attempting to do just that. Cautions against the threats of "peaceful evolution" and "bourgeois liberalization" are being issued again. Subsequently, new controls are being put in place to limit, screen, and monitor contact and cooperation with western principals. In effect, proponents of these views on both sides are playing into each other's hands. A normal state-to-state relationship is unlikely to develop when significant elements of each society simply do not trust the other.

These domestic perceptions and beliefs reveal the growing significance of domestic pressures in the shaping of each other's positions toward one another. But neither side fully grasps just how deeply and in what manner those domestic forces affect the bilateral relationship. While the Chinese government is knowledgeable about the dynamics of American domestic politics, it does not fully comprehend the power of public opinion in American politics. While the U.S. government acknowledges official Chinese statements about needing time to correct trade and investment problems, it does not fully appreciate Beijing's difficulties in making such corrections. Both sides harbor a latent suspicion that the other side may be using domestic pressures more as excuses rather than genuine obstacles to overcome.

The formation of policies toward one another has also been complicated by internal policy management difficulties. Both sides have had trouble keeping their bilateral policies coordinated among the various government agencies involved, and in keeping internal information flows circulating effectively. This is an organizational issue that can be rectified fairly effectively with clear management guidelines and an explicit indication by the leaders on both sides of the hierarchy of respective policy responsibility — something that has been lacking in the past.

More difficult to resolve is the issue of the increased number of actors in the policymaking process and the ensuing divisions of policy opinion in both countries. Currently, the United States is a divided government with a Democratic Administration and a Republican-controlled Congress. In interest group politics, an unusual informal alliance among conservative elements espousing family val-

ues and seeing China as a strategic threat, liberals advocating stronger human rights policies, fair trade groups, labor unions, and weapons nonproliferation groups has formed around the calls for tougher U.S. policies and actions toward China. Under these circumstances, the development of a coherent long-term strategic approach to China built on a stable consensus becomes a very daunting challenge.

It is interesting — perhaps instructive — to note that in this internal American debate, the China policy specialists, and Sinologists often are identified as “sinapologists,” to use a phrase by Douglas Paal, President of the Asia Pacific Policy Center. Within this community, very few argue for a hard-line approach to China. There does seem to be a consensus within the community about the value of a comprehensive engagement policy, even if that policy is criticized as not being either strategic or specific enough. Knowledgeable critics of that engagement policy still propose initiatives that would bring China into the world community as a responsible global player. But unlike the internal American debates over Japan in the 1970s and 1980s, the China policy debates are charged with emotion, and set against an ideological backdrop that makes consensus-forging and “normal” relations difficult. The China specialist community in the United States even is viewed sometimes with suspicion by segments of the American public, or obliquely accused of stifling divergent views by more extreme public affairs commentators.

But these U.S. experts have a role to play in contributing to the needed education of the American public on the facts. Many in this expert community think they perceive a more complex policymaking process in China, with new voices needing to be accommodated or managed. But this seemingly more pluralistic policy process is deduced through inference. China’s obsession with secrecy makes outside understanding of its policy processes and players very difficult. A deliberate effort by China to make that process a bit more transparent and intelligible to the outside world may well serve China’s own interests. Most U.S. critics of China see the government as fairly monolithic, with policy decisions determined by fiat and through a hierarchy. Some education and expanded explanation of the various and evenly divided interests that influence the policy process might temper that external criticism to some degree. For example, the debate within China over the pace and scope of external economic opening and liberalization has trade unions, certain state enterprises, and selected provincial governments on one side, with reformers, coastal provinces, and the growing private sector and their local bureaucratic allies lined up on the other side. A greater appreciation of the more pluralized policymaking scene by

outsiders will contribute to greater balance in the bilateral relationship and certainly will enhance China's image in the United States.

This more pluralistic and complex policymaking process on both sides is being conducted against a backdrop of rising nationalism, although of different types. Nationalism is not a dirty word. It is natural, can be healthy in defining national interests, and useful in building consensus. But in the United States, a unipolar view of the U.S. role retains a steady grip on an important segment of the American public and policy community. This is a self-assured and self-confident form of nationalism. In China, emerging nationalism expresses itself in more defensive and resentful ways, playing up the humiliations of modern history and being very sensitive to any perceived encroachments on national sovereignty. While American nationalism swaggers a bit, Chinese nationalism cries poor. This is not the basis for a constructive peer relationship.

These complexities in each country's respective policymaking processes and popular attitudes carry the dangerous potential for serious misreading and misunderstanding. There appears to be general agreement that China does not now have, nor will it possess any time soon, the capability to be a global great power. China itself declares this, and most external analysts concur. But China's intent seems clear: to achieve such great power status. The key question is how this status will be acquired: through cooperation, responsible international leadership and serious international regime participation over an extended period? Or through unilateral action, veiled intimidation, and a series of *realpolitik* maneuvers to achieve that status as quickly as possible? Obviously, most of us wish to encourage the former as being in China's interests. But there is the danger of an portion of the U.S. public misinterpreting China's desire — and probably the world's requirement — for great power status as a strategic threat. There also is little doubt that the American general public and the media already have attributed to China's capabilities and powers which it simply does not have nor will have for some years to come. China has declared that it will not be a threat to anyone. Some outsiders see China's actions as contradicting those declarations. This is where a combination of facts about China's capacities, trust concerning its intentions, and practical diplomatic confidence-building measures can have the greatest impact.

On the other side of the Pacific, the danger of misinterpretation has until recently been found in a prevailing analysis which concluded that in the long-term, the United States is in irreversible decline. Such a view has had great currency within the Chinese policy community, but now is being re-evaluated.

Despite earlier predictions, the U.S. has never been stronger in terms of strategic and defense capability, in terms of economic competitiveness, and even in terms of general domestic stability. New Chinese analyses of this resurgence appears to accept the fact that the U.S. economy is not in a temporary rise; it has restructured itself for the long-term, and U.S. military capability continues to go from strong to stronger, maintaining U.S.-single superpower status for the foreseeable future. But even these recent Chinese analyses still see the rise and decline of nations as an issue of zero-sum state-to-state competition. That is an inaccurate take on today's global dynamics.

So, while China has the intent of great power status, it does not yet have the capability, nor is it clear through what means it will pursue that status. While the United States has the capability of retaining its superpower status into the foreseeable future, the American intent with regard to this exercise of that power is uncertain, both within the U.S. as well as to the rest of the world.

The potential for Chinese policy misjudgments regarding the United States is heightened by the emerging views of a new generation of younger Chinese policy specialists and officials, both civilian and military. Americans need to understand that the new nationalism of China is a genuinely popular notion, and that it is especially strong among China's educated youth. For example, for the first time in a very long time, the younger generation of the Chinese foreign policy community is questioning the presence of the U.S. military in East Asia, suggesting that since there is no discernible threat now, U.S. presence is not needed, and may even be an impediment to confidence-building in places like the Korean peninsula. With the recent revised guidelines on the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, that Chinese view which portrays the U.S. military presence in East Asia as the threat to stability, is gaining popularity. But these Chinese need to understand that while there is no consensus within the U.S. on China policy, there is a very broad consensus, both in the region and within the United States, supporting the forward U.S. military presence in East Asia. To challenge that current arrangement without proposing specific and realistic options would only contribute to a further decline in not just relations with the U.S., but with other countries in the region as well.

Shared Interests and Common Concerns: What is Right

Given the foregoing discussion, the issue of the day is not simply China's emergence onto the world scene, and how other nations respond to that emergence, but the fact of that emergence coupled with the persistence of the United States as the only superpower. Both facts need to be recognized and incorporated into

new policies and world views.

The context or framework for seeking answers to how those new policies will be formed is **not** to be found in the ideas of unipolarity/hegemony versus multipolarity. Those are outdated and inaccurate notions of how the contemporary world is working, reflective of the zero-sum approach. There are two key dimensions for shaping a new relationship. The first is economic globalization and the accompanying rules and policies of the new liberal international economic order. If there has been any relative decline in the U.S. freedom of maneuver and exercise of sovereign power, it has not been at some other nation's gain or to some other country's advantage. Instead, in order to profit from the new economic order, the U.S. has agreed to abide by new rules of trade, commerce, and economic affairs that in effect limit it — and any other nation's — sovereign discretion to some extent. Those countries that have agreed to that rule-abiding are finding themselves with immense economic gains. China will need to do the same in due course, as will any country which seeks to make gains from the new global economy.

The second key dimension is the domesticating of foreign policymaking to a degree unprecedented in the past. Public opinion, local interests, and constituent pressures are no longer just the environment within which governments develop and manage foreign policies — they are part and parcel of the management process itself. Both the U.S. and the Chinese governments need to develop consensus-building skills domestically while recognizing that in order to achieve net economic and power gains internationally, they need to cede some sovereignty to new international regimes. The bilateral relationship needs to be reconceived as a matrix where the governments themselves are located within a multidimensional set of nonstate rules and dynamics. The bilateral relationship is not being played out on a chessboard where one player gains a piece and the other player loses one. It is increasingly clear the world does not work that way anymore.

Recognition of these facts by both countries perhaps is the single most important factor which will make possible a more long-term stable relationship. It is the desire of both the United States and China to maintain the *status quo* for the foreseeable future (i.e., at least the next decade or two). Both countries support continued economic interdependent activity which fosters the expansion of trade and markets. Both share an interest in preserving certain international organizations and regimes, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Both approach multilateral regimes and organiza-

tions from a roughly similar viewpoint. They do not wish to yield any more sovereignty than is absolutely essential to those entities. Yet, China has shown itself to be a responsible member of such global and regional bodies, and has moved much faster than either Japan or Korea at similar points in their economic development to open its economy. The United States has demonstrated its willingness from time to time to subordinate its superpower status to maintain multilateral momentum, and now is benefiting from subscribing to new, international liberal commerce rules. Though it may sound a bit strange in the face of the amount of coverage currently being given to “getting China to play by the world’s rules,” both the U.S. and China have approximately identical perspectives on the place of international regimes and organizations *vis a vis* their own countries, and on the necessity of participating in international economic regimes.

Both the United States and China have a very strong shared interest in preserving peace, calm, and stability in the international order. China’s actions have shown that it does not wish to upset or overthrow the existing order. Instead, it seeks to share in the leadership of that order. Its initiative with Russia to establish a multipolar security framework is best perceived as a recognition of the single superpower status of the U.S., and as a symbolic rather than substantive balancing act. Both countries seek to avoid any serious changes in Hong Kong after the transition, and both have worked conscientiously to maintain peace on the Korean peninsula. The vested interests which both China and the U.S. have in preserving things as they more or less are, internationally form the core of a mature and sustainable bilateral relationship.

Lost in the debate over containment versus engagement is the fact that a mainstream consensus does exist in the United States, which regards a destabilized, impoverished, and therefore unpredictable China as not being in any country’s interest. That view considers a rich and more powerful China as a major asset for the world in general if that status is obtained through China’s integration into international economic regimes and the concomitant international rules and norms. There is a recognition in the U.S. that China is rising to great power status in the decades ahead, and that this is a seminal moment in modern world history. China sees the U.S. as the single most important country capable of influencing its interests. Consequently, there is a growing appreciation on both sides of the Pacific that this bilateral relationship needs to be treated soberly, seriously, and responsibly. Too much is at stake to do otherwise.

These are shared interests between the two countries. There also are some

common concerns which have been almost completely overlooked in the relationship. Those concerns are parallel domestic issues regarding social policies and related fiscal arrangements, center-local relations, and community-government relationships. In some ways, these parallel domestic concerns which dominate the public affairs agendas of both countries, are symbolized by the current Chinese Spiritual Civilization campaign and the present U.S. interest in civility, civil society, and community renewal.

Both China and the United States have gone through wrenching socioeconomic changes in the past several years, and both are attempting to come to grips with the social consequences of those economic changes. More specifically, both are reforming their social service and social welfare programs and policies so that local governments have more authority and resources, social service delivery is placed more within the community and private sector, and community renewal is generated. Tax policies in both countries are being reformed around new relationships between central authorities and state and provincial governments that reflect the rise of the latter. Both China and the U.S. are paying greater attention to and attempting to devote more resources to the improvement of public education. Public safety and personal security are issues of prime concern among the general public, and therefore, are central subjects of official discourse and action. These parallels are just that: parallels. They are not leading to convergence, but they do provide an additional dimension for enhancing the bilateral relationship through cooperation and exchange.

From Engagement to Cooperation: What Needs to be Done and What Can be Done

The inclusion of common domestic policy concerns on the bilateral agenda creates the opportunity to move the U.S. policy of engagement toward actual cooperation. Both sides tend to benefit. The current comprehensive engagement policy is a bit misnamed anyway, since China cannot share in a wide range of U.S. development assistance and cooperative support programs. A well-thought-out program of and continuing dialogue on each country's social reforms and problems can produce the mutual learning and eventual change in attitude essential for constructing a more mature relationship.

This initiative would turn the emphasis on domestic considerations and concerns in both countries from an impediment to an asset in the bilateral relationship. A cooperative policy would go from beyond symptoms to causes. China and the United States will continue to disagree on human rights issues, weapons sales, and a host of trade and economic questions. But at the end of

the day, these policy problems are the results, not the causes, of policies distorted and unduly influenced by misperceptions and domestic forces. For example, the human rights positions of the United States can be revised to take a structural and longer-term approach, if China were prepared to allow additional openness and exchange in this field. Such issues can be better managed in a cooperative, positive, and problem-solving oriented domestic issues approach. Broader segments of the American and Chinese publics can be engaged in a cooperative domestic issues policy and program. In so doing, those publics will be better informed of the facts.

Domestic issues are paramount in both countries. A new set of initiatives for cooperation on social development and community-building in the form of policy dialogues (not negotiations), people and information exchanges, training and education, both professional and for a broader general public, will inevitably alter the way both countries consider one another. Certainly, few Americans are aware of both the progress and the problems local communities in the cities and villages of China have made in managing their needs on their own as a consequence of reform. Most Chinese are unaware of how the restructured U.S. economy has generated new social and class structures, driven welfare reform, and reallocated authorities from the federal to the state governments. These initiatives will reshape the discourse between the two countries. That dialogue tends to employ human rights and democracy vocabulary which too often misses the point. Instead, what is proposed here are dialogues and cooperative programs focused on the application of community responsibility and the exercise of citizenship in the U.S., China, and elsewhere.

When the domestic agendas of the two countries are considered, the United States and China have more in common than they realize. A bilateral relationship characterized by cooperation in parallel problem-solving, by responsible and coordinated policy management, and by the assignment of priorities to problems may help overcome the fundamental climatic and perceptual problems it now faces. It needs to be stated and restated that China and the U.S. are not debating the basic framework of the international order, but their respective roles in that order in the years to come. That should be both a manageable and productive long-term dialogue, not the cause for fear or anxiety driven by tomorrow's events. With the impending exchange of presidential visits, the time for initiating such a dialogue is now.

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