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US Diplomacy and Diplomats: A Chinese View

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Summary

This article presents mainstream views in China about US diplomacy in general and particularly US diplomacy towards China in the twenty-first century. In general, US diplomacy is seen as primacy-seeking, missionary pragmatism, hard power first, with persistent impulsive unilateralism, and only constrained by a disruptive power-sharing domestic political system. Chinese leaders and diplomats tend to favour those American counterparts who can demonstrate pragmatism, appreciation, commitment and professionalism. They believe that China needs to negotiate from a position of strength with normally over-demanding American counterparts, and to pay extraordinary attention to detail in negotiations. While the Chinese held a negative view about the overall diplomacy of US President George W. Bush, they welcomed his pragmatic diplomacy towards China and regarded it as his most positive diplomatic legacy. Although the Chinese have developed a more positive view towards President Obama's diplomacy, in considering the United States' persisting desire for primacy, its missionary tradition and highly pluralistic domestic politics, the Chinese are more cautious in embracing the Obama administration's charm-offense diplomacy than many US allies.

Keywords

China, United States, diplomacy, Bush, Obama

Introduction

The relationship between China and the United States has undergone dramatic changes during the last six decades: hostilities in the 1950s and 1960s; a semi-strategic alliance during the 1970s and 1980s; and deepening economic interdependence in the post-Cold War years, which even led some observers to claim that a 'Chimerica'¹ or a 'G2'² is emerging. In this context, dealing with the United States has always been a top priority for Chinese leaders and diplomats, which also necessitated and generated a great number of research works in China on the United States' diplomacy.

*) The author would like to thank Paul Sharp and Geoffrey Wiseman for their encouragement and careful advice in the writing of this article, as well as Wang Lei, a doctoral student at Fudan University, for his research assistance.

¹) Niall Ferguson, 'Team "Chimerica"', *Washington Post*, 17 November 2008, p. A19.

²) Fred Bergsten, 'A Partnership of Equals', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 4, July/August 2008, pp. 57-69.

This article does not seek to capture all of the different views within China about US diplomacy; rather, it aims to piece together a mainstream Chinese perspective about American diplomacy, which — the author believes — shapes China's diplomatic conduct of its relations with the United States. In doing so, the article mainly uses Chinese books, journal articles, newspaper reports and, occasionally, opinion polls. The article starts with a general Chinese view of US diplomacy and diplomats, followed by more specific discussions about US diplomacy towards China in the twenty-first century, during the eight-year Bush administration and the current Obama administration.

The US Diplomatic Tradition

The Chinese discern five key, recurring elements in the US diplomatic tradition:

1) *Quest for Primacy*

Chinese observers pointed out a contradictory feature of American behaviour: 'practising democracy at home while exercising hegemony abroad'.³ The quest for primacy has been seen as a central theme of US diplomacy, evolving from a search for regional primacy towards a global one. For Chinese researchers on American diplomatic history, the general view is that isolationism in the early stage of US diplomacy never rejected internationalism or the quest for primacy *per se*. On the contrary, the United States pursued a robust westward expansion in North America, and the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 showcased a perfect combination of isolationism and internationalism at an early stage of US history: 'Isolation from Europe is to safeguard its action for freedom of expansion in America'.⁴

The end of the Second World War made the quest for global primacy the dominating theme of US diplomacy. As Yang Jiemian, President of the Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS), asserted, 'as a superpower, the US international strategy can be summarized in one sentence: to maintain its leadership position in the world'.⁵ To go further, Zhu Mingquan, a professor at Fudan University, identified the two distinguishable fashions of the primacy strategy: leadership and dominance. A 'world leadership strategy' aims to pursue relative security, with more self-restraint and prudence about using military force; while a 'world domination strategy' pursues absolute security, placing more faith in the use of

³ Zi Zhongyun (ed.), *Lengyan xiangyang: bainian fengyun qishilu [Look at the World With a Cold Eye: The Revelations of the Ups And Downs Over A Hundred Years]*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian [SDX Joint Publishing House], 2000), pp. 21-22.

⁴ Wang Wei and Dai Chaowu, *Meiguo waijiao sixiang shi: 1775-2005 [The History of American Diplomatic Thinking: 1775-2005]* (Beijing: People's Press, 2007), p. 43.

⁵ Yang Jiemian, *Lengzhan hou shiqi de zhongmei guanxi: waijiao zhengce bijiao yanjiu [China-US Relations in the Post-Cold War Era: A Foreign Policy Comparative Study]* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2000), pp. 260-261.

hard power.⁶ In this view, the United States pursued a ‘world leadership strategy’ during US President Bill Clinton’s administration, and opted for a ‘world domination strategy’ during the first term of George W. Bush’s administration.

2) *Missionary Pragmatism*

Since establishing the first republic in the modern world to champion democracy, freedom and individual rights, the United States has tried to bring its three-fold mission to the rest of the world. There is a religious core to this mission, which gives rise to an ‘idealist impulse’ in the United States’ conduct of foreign affairs — in the name of ‘faith-based diplomacy’.⁷ More manifest in US diplomacy, however, is the political mission. As one Chinese scholar argued, ‘the United States always sees itself as the model for the world; believing that it has the best system in the world’. It feels that it has a responsibility to use its value system to reshape the world, mostly through its action to ‘export democracy’, including the American style of democracy, human rights, limited government and political system.⁸ In addition, the United States also developed an economic mission in the world, which is to spread the free-market system that made the United States the world’s biggest economy just one century after the founding of the new republic.

Chinese observers are quick to qualify this missionary zeal, however, by pointing out the strong tradition of pragmatism in US diplomacy. The pragmatist tradition connects the United States’ missionary diplomacy to the real world. It made the United States flexible in managing strategic relations, but also brought with it short-sightedness in foreign strategic decision-making, moral double standards, and a discrepancy between words and deeds. As a pragmatic state, when other issues become prominent, the United States could temporarily ignore its ideology and consider international relations ‘realistically’, for example US efforts to ally with China in order to contain Soviet expansionism when the Soviet Union posed threats. However, after the end of the Cold War, because of the improvement in its external environment, the United States had more opportunities to promote its values abroad, which explains why the Clinton administration made democracy promotion one of its top foreign policy agendas.⁹ Most other nations either do not develop strong missions about transforming the rest of the world,

⁶ Zhu Mingquan, ‘Lingdao shijie haishi zhiopai shijie? Fenxi meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue de yizhong shijiao’ [Leading or Dominating the World? An Angle to Analysing American National Security Strategy], *Guoji Guancha (International Survey)*, no. 1, 2004, p. 13.

⁷ Xu Yihua, ‘Zongjiao zai dangqian meiguo zhengzhi yu waijiao zhong de yingxiang’ [Religion’s Impact on American Policy and Diplomacy], *Guoji Wenti yanjiu [International Studies]*, no. 2, 2009, pp. 33-44.

⁸ Men Honghua, ‘Meiguo waijiao zhong de wenhua jiazhi yinsu’ [Cultural Values in American Foreign Policy], *Guoji Wenti yanjiu [International Studies]*, no. 4, 2001, p. 54.

⁹ Yang Jiemian, *Lengzhan hou shiqi de zhongmei guanxi [China-US Relations in the Post-Cold War Era]*, pp. 260-261.

or — if they do — would not feel so easy about managing the coexistence of ‘missionalism’ and pragmatism in its diplomacy.

3) *Rich in Soft Power but Quick to Use Hard Power*

US diplomacy is advanced through its self-perceived approach of offering a ‘shining city upon the hill’, which mostly relies on the attractiveness of US society (soft power), as well as its more aggressive and assertive way of using US hard power to induce or coerce other countries to meet US demands. For the Chinese, the United States is seen as a country that wields significant soft power, with its attraction of a developed economy, advanced technology, popular culture and democratic system of government. In 1995, the Beijing-based Horizon Research Consultancy Group (hereafter Horizon Group) conducted its first survey of Chinese attitudes towards foreign countries. The result was embarrassing for China, because the United States was regarded by Chinese people (35.3 per cent) as the most impressive country in the world; China only ranked in third place (13.1 per cent) after Japan (25.6 per cent). Although China surpassed the United States in 2003 — after a long period of rapid economic growth — as the most impressive country for the Chinese (37.4 per cent), the United States occupied a strong second place (26.5 per cent), followed by France in distant third (5.1 per cent).¹⁰

On the other hand, of more concern to the Chinese people is the United States’ propensity to use hard power to achieve its foreign policy goals. The United States’ superpower status, its missionary tradition of foreign policy and its desire to acquire global primacy have made the United States a country that fancies the use of force as a convenient tool of its foreign policy. As one Chinese observer argued,

... when conditions permit, the United States will use military means to achieve its foreign policy objectives without any hesitation, like the invasion of Grenada under the Reagan administration, the invasion of Panama and the first Gulf War under President George H.W. Bush, and the air strike campaign against Serbia during the Clinton years.¹¹

4) *Instrumental Multilateralism and the Unilateralism Impulse*

Building multilateral institutions became the main thrust of US diplomacy during the Cold War years, and has continued since the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, Chinese observers tend to argue that this multilateral endeavour reveals more an American instrumentalist view of multilateralism than a genuine belief in multilateralism. As Men Honghua, a professor at China’s Central Party School,

¹⁰ Shen Min, ‘Guojia yinxiang: zhongguoren zui ren zhongguo [National Image: Chinese Identify with China Most]’, Horizon Group, 14 November 2003, available online at http://www.horizonkey.com/showart.asp?art_id=273&cat_id=6.

¹¹ Yang Jiemian, *Lengzhan hou shiqi de zhongmei guanxi [China-US Relations in the Post-Cold War Era]*, p. 261.

argues, multilateral institutions were built to reinforce the 'institutional hegemony' of the United States. The United Nations (UN) is seen as the 'most important cornerstone' to sustain US institutional hegemony, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank forming its economic wing and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as its security wing.¹²

The United States' multilateralist approach is therefore mainly seen as a low-cost strategy to exert US leadership through the establishment of various institutions that reflect core US international interests and help to ensure the realization of those interests. If the institutions can perform to the United States' liking, then the United States will build and make use of the institutions. But if the institutions cannot deliver the desired ends, then the United States prefers to act alone and unilaterally. Even at the height of US multilateralism under the Clinton administration, the United States and NATO bombed Serbia during the 1999 Kosovo conflict without authorization from the UN Security Council.

5) *Annoying Pluralistic Politics of US Diplomacy*

Chinese observers also pay great attention to the fragmented US policy-making process. The various players in the foreign policy process are closely watched and analysed. Although Chinese observers think that US strategic goals show long-term stability, the change in the US domestic political processes often disrupts policy continuity. The US presidential election every four years and the mid-term congressional election every two years have often resulted in massive changes in the political, bureaucratic and legislative leadership. At the beginning of every new US president's administration, a transition period is required.¹³ During this period, a new US president comes to power having made campaign criticisms about the previous administration's more constructive China policy. The Chinese do not like this, but have no option but to accept the fact and to prepare for a dip in the relationship during this transitional period.¹⁴

The problematic process of different bureaucracies fighting for control of the foreign policy process is fairly well observed. It was well known that when US President Richard Nixon secretly sent Henry Kissinger, his national security adviser, to China in 1971 to explore the possibility of a rapprochement between the two adversaries, he intentionally left the US State Department in the dark, fearing that the State Department would undermine the initiative. In addition, under President George W. Bush, it was widely known to Chinese observers that

¹² Men Honghua, 'Meiguo baquan yu guoji zhixu' [American Hegemony and International Order], *Guoji Guancha* [International Survey], no. 1, 2006, p. 20.

¹³ Yang Jiemian, *Lengzhan hou shiqi de zhongmei guanxi* [China-US Relations in the Post-Cold War Era], p. 320.

¹⁴ The arrival of the Obama administration seemed to indicate a departure of this pattern from the continuation of the China policy of previous administration, but a dip in the bilateral relationship still occurred before the US Congressional mid-term election in November 2010.

the US Defense Department under Donald Rumsfeld pursued a more hawkish and pro-Taiwan China policy than the State Department under Colin Powell, which favoured more engagement with China.

Chinese observers tend to see the growing role of Congress in US foreign policy as a troublesome development. Particularly since the end of the Cold War, with the disappearance of bipartisan consensus on containment of the Soviet Union, Congress has become even more assertive in foreign policy issues, and this has been particularly manifested in US policy-making towards China. Nevertheless, Chinese observers also cautiously contend that the increase of Congressional activity in foreign affairs does not mean that the actual influence of the legislative branch has surpassed the executive branch. They tend to believe that the administrative branch will continue to take the lead in the foreseeable future, while Congress mainly performs the role of checking, monitoring and evaluating the executive branch.¹⁵

China's Preferences in US Leaders and Diplomats

During the confrontational period in US-China relations from 1950-1970, Chinese and US diplomats maintained few direct diplomatic contacts, and the view from the Chinese side was generally negative. The Chinese saw US diplomats as arrogant, hostile and rude, highlighted at the 1954 Geneva peace conference by the refusal of the head of the US delegation to shake hands with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. The visits to Beijing by Kissinger in 1971, and Nixon himself in 1972, were the defining moments for the shaping of later Chinese views of US leaders and diplomats. These visits ended the hostility between China and the United States, and started the rapprochement process that led to the formal establishment of bilateral relations in 1979.

From the accounts of Chinese encounters with US leaders and diplomats over the past four decades, a five-fold Chinese attitude towards the US diplomats can be identified.

First, the Chinese prefer to deal with pragmatic US leaders and diplomats who place real material interests (such as geopolitical and/or economic interests) above normative or ideological considerations. This started with China's change from an ideologically charged diplomacy to a more pragmatic diplomacy in the early 1970s. After the border war between China and the Soviet Union in 1969, the Soviet threat pushed China to improve its relations with Western countries. China's shift of policy priority to economic reform and opening up from the late 1970s made China's cooperation with the West even more important. Knowing that the political systems of China and the United States would continue to be

¹⁵ Zhou Qi (ed.), *Guohui yu meiguo waijiao zhengce* [Congress and American Foreign Policy] (Shanghai: Shanghai Social Sciences Press, 2006), p. 45.

different and cause problems between the two countries, the Chinese believed that a positive relationship could only be achieved when US leaders and diplomats acted pragmatically, focusing on the geopolitical and economic interests that might lead to recognition of the existence of common interests and hence the willingness to develop cooperation. The high praise that the Chinese gave to conservative Republican President Nixon and to realists like Kissinger is the perfect demonstration of such a Chinese preference.

Second, the Chinese appreciate those US leaders and diplomats who are willing to understand China and, more desirably, those who can appreciate Chinese culture. Living in a culture that could generally be categorized as 'high context', the Chinese tend to believe that 'negotiation is not an end in itself, to be treated in isolation, but simply one episode in an ongoing relationship'.¹⁶ Therefore, while the Chinese are seeking pragmatic partners to achieve concrete results, they also seek to build friendly relationships with foreign leaders and diplomats. They were glad to see Nixon and Kissinger as such pragmatic leaders and appreciated their willingness to reach out to the Chinese in 1971 and 1972. Nixon and Kissinger focused on US geostrategic interests, they talked positively of China as 'a great nation', they cited Chinese poems in the talks, and they appreciated Chinese food, drinks (such as the famous Chinese hard liquor, Mao-tai) and sites (such as the Forbidden City and Great Wall). This all contributed to building a long-lasting personal friendship with the Chinese leaders and the creative resolution of disputes between the two sides.¹⁷ As head of the US Liaison Office in the mid-1970s, future President George H.W. Bush was also appreciated by the Chinese for his willingness to understand everyday life in Beijing. Chairman Mao told US President Gerald Ford during his visit to China in December 1975 that he did not want Bush to leave Beijing to become head of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).¹⁸

Third, the Chinese appreciate those US leaders and diplomats who are committed to the improvement of Sino-US relations, and can thus display their political leadership. Since the Sino-US rapprochement of 1972, China has been seeking a cooperative relationship with the United States, in the beginning to thwart the Soviet security threat, and then for a mutually beneficial economic relationship. At the same time, Chinese leaders see that the smooth development of this relationship requires that US leaders and key diplomats are able to exert their leadership to overcome the tremendous obstacles from the influential Taiwanese lobby, human rights lobby and the US labour unions, and their supporters

¹⁶ Raymond Cohen, *Negotiation Across Cultures* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004 revised edition), p. 37.

¹⁷ See Chen Dunde, *Mao Zedong, Nixon zai 1972 [Mao Zedong and Nixon in 1972]* (Beijing: PLA Arts Publishing House, 1997).

¹⁸ Wang Li, *Meiguo zhuhua dashi chuanqi [The Legendary Career of American Ambassadors to the People's Republic of China: 1973-2005]* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 2005), p. 31.

in Congress. The Chinese understand that this is a difficult task for US leaders and diplomats, but if they can assume that role, they are highly appreciated in China. President Nixon's effort to reach out to communist China, President Carter's decision to establish full diplomatic relations with China and President George H.W. Bush's effort to resist some of the sanctions that were demanded by the US Congress in 1989 following the Tiananmen Square protests all resonated very well in China, and were seen as evidence of the US leaders' strong commitment to a positive relationship with China. At a lower level, many Chinese have talked positively about Leonard Woodcock, who served as the head of the US Liaison Office in Beijing from 1977-1981. Serving as a long-time auto workers' union leader before he came to China, Woodcock had no experience of China or diplomacy, a fact that was not appreciated at the beginning. However, Woodcock clearly had a strong commitment to improving the bilateral relationship. He managed to use his strong personal relationship with US President Carter to overcome reservations in the State Department, and negotiated successfully with Chinese Communist Party leader Deng Xiaoping for diplomatic normalization in December 1978. To show its appreciation of his contribution, the Chinese government arranged a high-profile farewell ceremony for Woodcock's departure in 1981, and China even sent its consul-general in San Francisco to receive him on his arrival home.¹⁹ Woodcock's case indicates that in the Chinese view, a functioning US diplomat does not need to be a China specialist or have previous China-related experience. If he or she can be open-minded, willing to learn about China and have political clout back in Washington, he or she can play a successful role in China, indeed a more fruitful role than experts on China without political weight in Washington.

Fourth, the Chinese respect those US diplomats who display genuine professionalism. With regard to the majority of US diplomats dealing with China who handle day-to-day business between the two countries, they could still earn the Chinese government's respect if they conducted their duties in China faithfully and honestly, even though they could be seen as tough negotiators. The Chinese know that tensions exist in the relationship, and that US diplomats have to follow the US government's directives and national interests, and then bargain hard accordingly with China. On the other hand, honest and capable US diplomats are required to perform the function of precise communication in order to avoid confusions and misunderstandings, to control the escalation of disputes and to facilitate the task of dispute resolution.

Chinese leaders and diplomats usually have problems with US diplomats who, through their own capacity, try to influence the United States' China policy in a direction that is not desired by the Chinese. As a China expert who was involved

¹⁹ Wang Li, *Meiguo zhuhua dashi chuanqi [The Legendary Career of American Ambassadors to the People's Republic of China: 1973-2005]*, pp. 73-89.

in the breakthrough diplomacy in the 1970s, Winston Lord, for example, was well regarded in China for his role in the development of a cooperative Sino-US relationship. However, as the US ambassador to China (1985-1989), he personally added leading dissident Fang Lizhi to the list of invited guests for the welcoming reception for President George H.W. Bush during his visit to Beijing in February 1989, and disclosed the list before he had informed President Bush. He triggered a diplomatic uproar between China and the United States and allegedly paid the price two months later when he lost his ambassadorial job.

Finally, the Chinese believe that they have to bargain forcefully with their US counterparts and pay extra attention to details. US diplomats tend to negotiate from a position of strength and to make exaggerated opening demands. To fend off these negotiating ploys, the Chinese seek to negotiate from a position of credible strength and show extraordinary patience to ensure some possibility of a mutually acceptable outcome. For example, during the armistice negotiations for the Korean War (1951-1953), the Chinese believed that negotiation had to be backed by military success on the ground, and that an armistice could only be attained when the two sides had reached a stalemate on the battlefield.²⁰ In addition, in 1995, US President Bill Clinton's administration allowed the leader of Taiwan — a breakaway province to be reunited with mainland China in the Chinese view and 'a part of China' recognized by the US government — to visit the United States. China responded strongly by summoning home the Chinese ambassador to the United States, suspending high-level official contacts, and conducting two military exercises near the Taiwan Straits. The strong reactions triggered an intensive policy debate on China in the United States, and led the Clinton administration, as (then) Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen argued, to:

... realize the sensitivity of the Taiwan issue and the importance of the Sino-US relations... Thereafter, Sino-US relations were able to attain relatively steady development during the second term of the Clinton administration, and advanced to a higher level.²¹

Chinese experiences with US diplomats also raised China's awareness of the need to pay extra attention to the details in negotiations. Since the 1950s, Chinese diplomacy has tried to secure recognition from other countries of the new Chinese state and government, together with Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan and Hong Kong. China has therefore developed a negotiation style of 'principle first, details afterwards', in contrast to the 'details first, principles afterwards' US style.²²

²⁰ Jin Guihua, *Waijiao moulue [Diplomatic Strategy]* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 2003), pp. 90-91.

²¹ See Qian Qichen, *Waijiao Shiji [Ten Episodes in China's Diplomacy]* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 2003), p. 315.

²² Wu Haimin, *Daguo de jiaoliang: zhongmei zhishichuanquan tanpan jishi [Power Contest: An On-the-Spot Report of the Sino-US Intellectual Property Rights Negotiations]* (Wuhan: Yangtze River Arts Publishing House, 2009), p. 106.

Principles such as 'one China' and non-interference embody the core Chinese interests in its relations with other countries. On the contrary, the results-orientated US diplomats tend to focus on the details, rather than the general principles. Coming from their legalist background, US diplomats are seen as much better at negotiating details. Their push for precise language and concrete commitments from the Chinese in final agreements often puts Chinese diplomats on the defensive, and has triggered growing awareness among Chinese diplomats of the importance of details in the negotiation. After being pushed by US negotiators over the proper wording of the final text of a 1992 Sino-US memorandum on intellectual property rights, the Chinese negotiators scrambled to dig out five improper wordings in the English text of the agreement, partly just to get even with their US counterparts.²³

Towards Growing Sophistication in China Diplomacy

When President George W. Bush came to the White House, he exhibited a radically different diplomatic style from his predecessor. In the view of most Chinese scholars, Bush's diplomacy had a neo-conservative ideational foundation and was characterized by 'pre-emptive strikes, regime change, unilateralism and the pursuit of benign hegemony'.²⁴

The Chinese government and observers were initially wary about the election of Bush as the US president instead of his Democratic rival Al Gore. In the second term of the Clinton administration, China had improved its relations with the United States. During Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States in 1997, the two states even announced that both sides 'are determined to build toward a constructive strategic partnership'.²⁵ In addition, although the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia was bombed by the US air force during NATO air strikes against Serbia in May 1999, causing public uproar in China, the two countries made a surprising move in November 1999 to conclude the bilateral agreement on China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). In a word, China felt comfortable in dealing with the Democratic administration at the time.

President George W. Bush criticized Clinton's China policy. Bush described China not as a strategic partner, but rather as a 'strategic competitor'. Bush's rhetoric about Taiwan was also aggressive, saying that he would 'do whatever it takes' to defend Taiwan, a dramatic change from Washington's traditional ambi-

²³ Wu Haimin, *Daguo de jiaoliang [Power Contest]*, pp. 107-108.

²⁴ Zhou Qi, "Bush zhuyi" yu meiguo xin baoshouzhuyi' ['Bushism' and American Neo-Conservatism], *Meiguo Yanjiu [American Studies Quarterly]*, no. 2, 2007, p. 21.

²⁵ See Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States, 'China-US Joint Statement', 29 October 1997, available online at <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zmgx/zysj/jzxfm/t36249.htm>.

guity on the question (designed in part to avoid emboldening Taiwanese leaders to declare independence). On 1 April 2001, a US reconnaissance plane collided with and destroyed a Chinese fighter jet in the air close to Chinese territorial waters near Hainan Island, causing the loss of the Chinese plane and pilot. The incident triggered a tense exchange of confrontational mutual charges, and the crisis was only defused on 11 April 2001, when US Ambassador to China, Joseph Prueher, presented a sorry letter to Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan. According to Tang's account, he and his colleagues had thirteen rounds of meetings and negotiations with Prueher to reach a final version of the letter. Under Chinese demands, the letter was revised six times. During the process, Ambassador Prueher was seen as an honourable, trustworthy and pragmatic diplomat who truthfully facilitated communications and helped in drafting the letter, which defused the biggest crisis of the Bush administration's early months.²⁶

Within a few months, however, a dramatic shift in US diplomacy towards China occurred. From the US perspective, the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks made terrorism a more urgent task than balancing emerging powers such as China. In the realm of US foreign policy, 'China was thus transformed from a "strategic competitor" requiring imminent attention to a potential partner in the war on terrorism'.²⁷ If the 9/11 attacks brought US unilateralist empire-building foreign policy to the forefront, for Beijing they injected pragmatism and even sophistication into the management of US-China relations. Feeling that China could offer assistance to the United States' 'war on terror' and its efforts to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) on the Korean Peninsula, President Bush made a U-turn in his China policy. He attended the Shanghai informal leaders' summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in October 2001, and made an official visit to Beijing in February 2002. During meetings with Chinese leaders, President Bush agreed to build 'candid, constructive, and cooperative' relations with China.

Nevertheless, the controversial US invasion of Iraq in 2003 was badly received in China, creating a negative image of the United States. According to a survey conducted by the Horizon Group, 90.5 per cent of Chinese people who were surveyed were very or somewhat unappreciative about the United States in 2003, a huge jump from 42.5 per cent in 2002. Some 51 per cent of those surveyed labelled the United States as 'hegemonic', along with other negative descriptions.²⁸

²⁶ See Tang Jiaxuan, *Jin Yu Xu Feng [Heavy Rains and Warm Breeze]* (Shanghai: shijie zhishi chubanshe [World Knowledge Press], 2009), pp. 266-283.

²⁷ Wu Xinbo, 'The Promise and Limitations of a Sino-US Partnership', *The Washington Quarterly*, no. 4, 2004, p. 121.

²⁸ Lin Zhi, 'Fangan Zhanzheng: Zhongguo renmin meideshuo!' [Averse to War: The Prevailing Chinese Public View], Horizon Group, 14 November 2003, available online at http://www.horizonkey.com/showart.asp?art_id=241&cat_id=6.

Pragmatism and the Notion of China as a 'Stakeholder'

As President Bush entered his second term in 2005, the United States developed a new concept of 'responsible stakeholder' in its China policy. According to then Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick, China's growing global influence posed an essential question for the United States: 'how will China use its influence?' Zoellick answered his own question: 'it is time to take our policy beyond opening doors to China's membership in the international system. We need to urge China to become a responsible stakeholder in that system'.²⁹ Chinese observers continued to see a containment element in US policy in the form of a 'hedging' strategy. However, as Zoellick's proposal indicated, seeing the growing influence of China in international affairs and the deepening of US-China economic interdependence, the United States has increasingly realized that engaging a rising China serves US interests.

President Bush voiced his opposition to Taiwanese independence, seeing the moves by Taiwan's leader, Chen Shuibian, in pushing towards independence as destabilizing and dangerous. US President Bush and China's President Hu Jintao decided in 2007 to launch a biannual China-US Strategic Economic Dialogue mechanism to coordinate US and Chinese economic policies. In a more symbolic move, despite vocal opposition from within the United States and Europe against the presence of Western leaders at the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, President Bush decided to attend. He explained his rationale: 'One of the reasons I'm going is because I want to show respect to the Chinese people, and this is a proud moment for China'.³⁰ His statement resonated well in China and strengthened relations considerably.³¹

Bush's Diplomatic Legacy

Chinese observers made an overall criticism of Bush's diplomacy, arguing that his war on terror destabilized the world, and that his unilateralism isolated the United States from the rest of world, draining US hard power and tainting the United States' image around the world. Nevertheless, these observers agreed almost unanimously that Bush's China diplomacy might be seen as his most positive foreign policy legacy. As Fu Mengzhi, a senior research fellow at China Institutes

²⁹ Robert B. Zoellick, 'Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?', remarks at the National Committee on US-China Relations, 21 September 2005. The full text of this speech can be accessed online at http://www.ncscr.org/files/2005Gala_RobertZoellick_Whither_China1.pdf.

³⁰ Michael Abramowitz, 'Bush Says It's "Important to Engage" China: A Mixed Appraisal on Eve of Visit', *Washington Post*, 5 August 2008, available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/04/AR2008080402460.html>.

³¹ Michael Abramowitz, 'China Rebuffs Criticisms as Bush Arrives in Beijing: Bush Tells US Olympians They Represent "the Finest Nation on Face of the Earth"', *Washington Post*, 8 August 2008, available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/08/AR2008080800615.html>.

of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) contended, after the 9/11 terrorist attack, a 'major shift' occurred in the Bush administration's China policy, which altered the often turbulent bilateral relations of the post-Cold War period so that they achieved their 'most sustainable and stable development'. The fact that US-China relations obtained their most lasting period of stable development in the post-Cold War era is surely the 'biggest legacy of the Bush diplomacy'.³² Fu's view is echoed by Tao Wenzhao, a senior research fellow at the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). In Tao's words, 'China-US relations maintained stability for seven and half years; it is the longest stable period in the 30-year-long bilateral relations, which constitutes a highlight of the Bush diplomacy'.³³

This sanguine view of Bush's China diplomacy was more or less shared by the general public in China. Forty-one per cent of the Chinese people surveyed in 2008 said that they had confidence in Bush doing the right thing in world affairs (compared with 45 per cent who said that they had little or no confidence). Among the United States' key allies, a majority of people (77 per cent in Britain, 85 per cent in France and 69 per cent in South Korea) had little or no confidence in Bush; while only a few people (18 per cent in Britain, 11 per cent in France and 30 per cent in South Korea) said that they had confidence.³⁴ Considering the unpopularity of President Bush around the world, the relatively higher level of Chinese confidence in Bush is quite unusual and could only be explained by his careful handling of the United States' China policy.

China's Cautious Welcome of the Obama Charm Offensive

The arrival in the White House of Barack Obama as the first African American president was a dramatic shift in American politics. Amid the setbacks of the Bush administration's foreign adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan, the tainted global image of the United States and the most severe economic and financial crisis that the United States has faced since the Second World War, President Obama declared a new set of foreign policy priorities. For the new administration, combating the economic crisis was the first priority of US diplomacy. President Obama would also shift US anti-terrorism efforts from Iraq to Afghanistan

³² Fu Mengzhi, 'Meizhong guanxi chengwei Bush zhengfu zuida de waijiao yichan' [US-China Relations Becomes the Biggest Diplomatic Legacy of the Bush Administration], *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu [International Studies]*, no. 1, 2009, p. 6.

³³ Tao Wenzhao, 'Bush zhengfu de waijiao yichan' [The Diplomatic Legacy of the Bush Administration], *Heping Yu Fazhan [Peace and Development]*, no. 1, 2009, p. 20. Tao enlisted four features of China-US relations during the Bush period: the unprecedented depth and extent of cooperation; maintaining stability across the Taiwan Straits; the further development of economic ties; and the institutionalization of the relationship.

³⁴ Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay, Stephen Weber and Evan Lewis, *America's Global Image in the Obama Era*, 7 July 2009, available online at WORLDPUBLICOPINION.ORG.

and Pakistan. He would also bring the climate change issue back on the foreign policy agenda. In addition, he wanted to reach out to Russia, even to Iran and North Korea, in order to deal with the security challenges.

More strikingly, President Obama adopted new approaches to pursue US foreign policy goals. As Tan Wenzhao argued, Obama would continue to seek global hegemony for the United States, while also using multilateral methods and improving the United States' international image.³⁵

In addition to a new emphasis on multilateralism, the United States would use its 'smart power' in diplomacy. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's notion of smart power was understood in China as the new American approach 'to use smartly all the policy tools that the United States possess, including diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal and cultural means, to restore American global leadership'. In the future, the United States 'would ally with its friends, at the same time reach out to its foes; consolidate the existing alliances, while opening up new cooperation. In a word, "smart" means not excessively dependent on hard power but a combination of the hard and soft'.³⁶

The new Obama approach is also pragmatic. President Obama and his foreign policy team understand that to achieve US foreign policy goals, the United States should not let its missionary goals deflect from the pursuit of more urgent and important national interests. In terms of democracy promotion and human rights diplomacy, as Secretary Clinton indicated, the United States would continue to press China on these issues, but they 'can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis, and the security crisis. We have to have a dialogue that leads to an understanding and cooperation on each of those'.³⁷ The sense of a new pragmatism also leads the Obama administration to pay more attention to engaging with the new emerging powers in an increasingly multi-polar world. No Chinese observer thinks that such developments represent an intention by the United States to cede its leading position in the world, but rather a new strategic approach to retain that position in a newly emerging multi-polarizing world, fashioned as the 'multi-partner world' by Secretary Clinton.³⁸

The Obama administration's new diplomatic posture has produced a much more positive public view about the United States in China. In 2009, more Chinese (55 per cent) had confidence in President Obama doing the right thing in

³⁵ Tan Wenzhao, 'Obama waijiao zhengce zouxiang' [The Future Trends of the Obama Foreign Policy], *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu* [International Studies], no. 1, 2009, p. 46.

³⁶ Ding Gang, 'Shuoshuo meiguo de "qiaoshili"' [Regarding American 'Smart Power'], *Renmin Ribao*, overseas edition, 23 January 2009.

³⁷ US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, 'Working Toward Change in Perceptions of US Engagement Around the World', roundtable with travelling press, Seoul, South Korea, 20 February 2009, available online at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/02/119430.htm>.

³⁸ Hillary Rodham Clinton, 'Interview on the Charlie Rose Show', Berlin, Germany, 9 November 2009, available online at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/11/131713.htm>.

world affairs than those who do not (25 per cent). Nevertheless, the improvement in positive views about US diplomacy is more moderate compared with the sea change of public attitudes among the United States' allies. While in 2008 an overwhelming majority disapproved of Bush's diplomacy, now a vast majority (93 per cent in Britain, 88 per cent in France and 88 per cent in South Korea) showed their confidence in Obama doing the right things in world affairs; only a tiny proportion (6 per cent in Britain, 10 per cent in France and 12 per cent in South Korea) said that they had little or no confidence in Obama.³⁹

G2 Diplomacy?

In the summer 2008 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Fred Bergsten, Director of the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington DC, first raised the idea of a US-China G2 to manage global affairs. This idea was subsequently echoed by Zbigniew Brzezinski, a foreign policy adviser to the new president and also former national security adviser to US President Jimmy Carter. Brzezinski wrote about 'an informal G2', suggesting that 'the relationship between the US and China has to be truly a comprehensive global partnership, parallel to our relations with Europe and Japan'.⁴⁰ While the notion of G2 is far from the official Obama government's China policy rhetoric, the initial steps that the Obama administration took with regard to China contributed to the possibility of such a scenario. In February 2009, Secretary Clinton made her first overseas visit to Asia; the China leg of the visit was seen as the most substantial or important. During the April 2009 G20 summit in London, President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao decided in their bilateral meeting that China and the United States would establish a 'Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED)', to continue the Strategic Economic Dialogue, while upgrading the senior dialogue from the vice-foreign minister level of the past to vice-premier level. In July 2009, before the first US-China S&ED, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner — co-chairs of the US delegation — jointly wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, claiming that 'few global problems can be solved by the US or China alone. And few can be solved without the US and China together'. Evoking a Chinese aphorism, 'When you are in a common boat, you need to cross the river peacefully together'. They added that 'Today, we will join our Chinese counterparts in grabbing an oar and starting to row'.⁴¹

³⁹) Kull, Ramsay, Weber and Lewis, *America's Global Image in the Obama Era*.

⁴⁰) Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Moving Toward a Reconciliation of Civilizations', *China Daily*, 15 January 2009.

⁴¹) Hillary Clinton and Timothy Geithner, 'A New Strategic and Economic Dialogue with China', *Wall Street Journal*, 27 July 2009.

In November 2009, President Obama made a four-day visit to China. In addition to his town hall event with Chinese youths in Shanghai, his visit to the Forbidden City and the Great Wall, his meetings with the Chinese leaders produced a lengthy 'US-China Joint Statement'. In the statement, the United States 'reiterated that it welcomes a strong, prosperous and successful China that plays a greater role in world affairs'; and China 'welcomes the United States as an Asia-Pacific nation that contributes to peace, stability and prosperity in the region'. The statement reconfirmed the commitments of China and the United States to build a 'positive, cooperative and comprehensive US-China relationship'; it further indicated their common will to 'steadily build a partnership to address common challenges'.⁴²

The rapprochement of the two giants of the international system raised eyebrows around the world. Trying to defuse concerns of a US-China condominium, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on several occasions expressed Chinese disapproval of the G2 concept. In the meeting with President Obama in November 2009 in Beijing, Premier Wen outlined three reasons why China rejected the idea: first, China is still a developing country; second, China pursues an independent foreign policy of peace and will not align with any country or blocs; and third, global issues should be decided by all nations in the world, rather than one or two countries. Nonetheless, Wen suggested that Sino-US cooperation could contribute uniquely to international peace and prosperity.⁴³

The G2 concept also had a cool response from the Chinese media and observers. While Chinese observers felt somewhat flattered that the concept reflected the importance of US-China relations and the enhanced international status and image of China, they quickly questioned the viability of the concept and the United States' true intention behind it. They doubted whether the United States had decided to share its leadership position with China, and were concerned that the world's other power centres, such as Western Europe and Russia, would feel uneasy with the concept. They also pointed out the partial cooperative nature of the US-China relations described above does not support a full-fledged cooperation between China and the United States on important regional and global issues. Finally, the Chinese sceptics saw in the concept a US move to exploit China's desire to be integrated into international society as an opportunity to 'co-opt' China into the American 'system of global dominance'.⁴⁴

⁴² The White House, 'US-China Joint Statement', Beijing, China, 17 November 2009, available online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>.

⁴³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Wen Jiabao Meets with US President Obama', 18 November 2009, available online at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t628181.htm>.

⁴⁴ Liu Yantang, 'Lengguan suwei Zhongmei "G2" shidai' [A Cool View of the So-called 'G2' Era], *Liaowang Weekly*, 14 March 2009.

Managing the Thorny Part of the Relationship

Compared with previous eras, 2009 was unusually positive and constructive for US-China relations. From the outset, the Obama administration had a clear vision of its China policy, which not only continued the pragmatic cooperation between the two countries that had been developed by the Bush administration, but was also committed to expanding bilateral cooperation and even globalizing it.

While welcoming the Obama administration, the Chinese government and observers remained cautious as the administration entered its second year. In late 2009, Shi Yinhong, a professor at Renmin University in Beijing, cautioned that Obama's China honeymoon may not last:

It [the Chinese government] knows that as the US emerges from financial crisis and reduces its financial dependence upon China, substantial trade disputes might raise their head again. The probability of Obama meeting with the Dalai Lama sooner or later, the possible new programme of arms sales to Taiwan, and the marginalisation of China in the North Korea problem all have the potential to make things worse.⁴⁵

Subsequent developments suggested that Professor Shi's prediction was largely correct. First, the Obama administration stepped up its pressure on China for the appreciation of the Chinese currency, the renminbi, under pressure from the US Congress. The US Treasury Department threatened that it might label China a 'currency manipulator' if China did not appreciate its currency at a fast pace. Second, the US government announced an arms' sale to Taiwan in January 2010. Third, President Obama met the Dalai Lama in White House in February 2010, although in a side room to reduce the official nature of this meeting, after having postponed it for a year. Furthermore, the Obama administration also pressed China to agree to tougher sanctions against Iran over its nuclear programme development, along with similar pressures on China in other areas, such as climate change.

The Chinese government reacted strongly to these perceived American challenges to Chinese interests. In response to the US arms' sale to Taiwan, China suspended high-level military exchange (since restored), and threatened to punish those US companies that sold weapons to Taiwan. After Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama, China refused to send senior officials to several UN Security Council meetings for the drafting of a new resolution to impose tougher sanctions against Iran. The rising tensions between China and the United States quickly shifted the international anxiety over a possible China-US G2 to concern over the escalation of China-US conflicts.

Aiming to manage the new rifts between the two countries, President Obama made a series of moves in March and April 2010. He dispatched Deputy Secretary

⁴⁵ Shi Yinhong, 'Obama's Chinese Honeymoon', *The Guardian*, 5 October 2009.

of State James Steinberg to China in early March 2010 to work out a concerted plan for getting the relationship back on track. On 30 March 2010, apparently following a previously agreed-upon script, President Obama used the occasion of accepting the credentials of the new Chinese Ambassador to the United States. Obama expressed his welcome of 'a China that is a strong, prosperous and successful member of the international community', and said that he wanted to take concrete actions to establish steadily a partnership with China to deal with common challenges.⁴⁶ On another occasion on the same day, Steinberg reaffirmed the United States' one-China policy; China immediately expressed appreciation over the 'positive remarks' made by US President Barack Obama and other officials on Sino-US relations, and announced that China's President Hu Jintao would participate in the April 2010 Nuclear Security Summit in the United States. With Hu's participation, the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington DC went smoothly. Presidents Obama and Hu held a 90-minutes bilateral meeting on the sideline of the summit, with goodwill displayed by both sides. For some Chinese observers, suddenly 'previous predictions of Sino-US conflicts have been replaced with warming Sino-US relations'.⁴⁷ On the renminbi currency issue, in April 2010 the US Treasury Department postponed its decision on whether China is a 'currency manipulator', and China responded by letting the renminbi appreciate in late June.

However, that optimism suddenly disappeared from late July 2010 when the United States opened two fronts in its efforts to reinforce its dominant role in Asia. In North-East Asia, the United States took advantage of the sinking of South Korea's Cheonan warship in March 2010, forced the Japanese government to abandon its plan to revise the US-Japan agreement on the reallocation of US military bases in Okinawa, and boosted its military alliance with South Korea. It also announced that it would conduct a series of large-scale naval exercises in the region and possibly sending the largest US aircraft carrier into the Yellow Sea, which lies between China and South Korea and close to China's coastal region, including Beijing. In South-East Asia, Secretary Clinton proclaimed that the United States would be willing to act as a mediator in talks over the islands in the South China Sea that were disputed by China and several ASEAN countries, an obvious support for those ASEAN countries in their attempts to 'internationalize' the disputes over the Nanshan (Spratly) Islands. Her remarks were followed immediately by the visit of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington to Vietnam in August 2010, and the talk about an agreement to allow the United States to share nuclear technology with Vietnam. These moves by the United States triggered vocal opposition and distrust in China.

⁴⁶ Xinhua, 'US-China Relationship Comprehensive, Important: Obama', Washington, 29 March 2010, available online at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-03/30/c_13230526.htm.

⁴⁷ Wang Wen, 'Sino-US Relations Echo Delicate Office Politics', *Global Times*, 13 April 2010.

The United States' new moves were widely perceived as renewed attempts to regain US influence in the region and to push back China's growing influence in Asia. As one scholar at China Foreign Affairs University argued,

America's soft moves are more aggressive, and are aimed at weakening China's influence during the possible integration of East Asia, breaking any cooperative framework that excludes the US and playing down the efforts East Asian countries have made to build a regional community. Its eventual aim is to establish a system in Asia Pacific that is dominated and led by the US.⁴⁸

As to how to respond to these new US counter-balancing acts in 2010, internal division was apparent within China. Some Chinese realists, such as Professor Yan Xuetong at Qinghua University, argued that China had to see the United States as an 'adversary engaging in active competition, and partner of passive cooperation', believing that 'the conflicting interests between the two countries are much larger than their shared and complementary interests', so the relationship is 'more adversary than friendly'.⁴⁹ Others believed that the United States has not changed its overall policy towards China, which focuses on building a constructive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship with China. Containment has always been an element in the United States' policy towards China. Recent US moves, particularly the frequent display of US military power in Asia, revealed the United States' much weakened economic power. China should be confident that, with its growing economic power and careful neighbourhood diplomacy in Asia, the United States would not be able to form a containment alliance against China in Asia. China should therefore adopt a cool-minded approach, avoiding strategic misjudgement.⁵⁰

The latter view apparently prevailed when China's President Hu Jintao paid a state visit to the United States in January 2011. The Obama administration offered full courtesies to President Hu, with a grand welcoming ceremony and state dinner. After a 'candid, pragmatic and constructive' meeting between the two leaders, Presidents Obama and Hu agreed in a joint statement that:

China and the United States are committed to work together to build a cooperative partnership based on mutual respect and mutual benefit in order to promote the common interests of both countries and to address the twenty-first century's opportunities and challenges.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Su Hao, 'Games Americans Play', *China Daily*, 7 August 2010.

⁴⁹ Deng Yuan, 'Guoji wenti zhuanjia: zhong mei shi "didayuyou" de guanxi' [International Experts: Sino-US Relations are 'More Adversary than Friendly'], *Guoji Xianqu Daobao* [International Herald Leader], 22 March 2010.

⁵⁰ Yuan Peng, 'Xuanyao shili beihou de xinli jiaolv' [The Psychological Anxiety behind the Massive Show of Force], *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], 17 August 2010.

⁵¹ Xinhua News Agency, 'China, US to Build Cooperative Partnership of Mutual Respect and Mutual Benefit', 20 January 2011, available online at <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7266237.html>.

After a year of diplomatic difficulties, it seems that the two sides have managed to reinforce the positive tone in the relationship, and perhaps this time on a more solid basis.

Conclusion

Chinese perspectives on US diplomacy might not vary too much from those of other countries. However, the Chinese experience does point to some distinctive themes. The strong presence of pragmatism in US diplomacy towards China over the past decade is one such theme. Faced with a rising China, which is extending its influence around the world and is economically interdependent with the United States, the US government of either party tends to adopt a pragmatic policy towards China, trying to seek economic benefits from a growing economic relationship and to tap tacit Chinese support for a US-led world order. Such a pragmatic approach has always run into conflicts with other aspects of US diplomacy, such as the United States' quest for primacy, its missionary tradition, and its pluralistic political system. The pursuit of pragmatic engagement diplomacy towards China was hence never easy.

On the other hand, while the United States is unlikely to abandon its propensity to use coercive power in its China diplomacy, recent US leaders and diplomats appear more sensitive to Chinese preferences in dealings with China. Increasingly, they display pragmatism, professionalism, a certain level of cultural sensitivity in dealing with China, and commitment to a cooperative bilateral relationship. Along with its timely reaffirmation of key principles such as the one-China principle, and the appointments of Mandarin-speaking cabinet ministers such as US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and US Ambassador to China Jon Huntsman,⁵² the United States is able to win China's support for tougher UN sanctions on Iran, to relax the tying of China's renminbi to the US dollar and to manage generally its conflicts with China. In a more recent move, President Obama nominated US Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, a Chinese American, to be the United States' new ambassador to China to replace Huntsman. His Chinese and commercial background and high profile indicated that President Obama is attaching high priority to US relations with China, and aims to bring the two nations closer together.

As recent diplomatic stand-offs indicate, the problem is that while the United States would continue to adopt pragmatically a diplomacy of engagement towards China, it has also been taking measures to consolidate its global and regional leadership position and continues to aim to advance its missionary goals towards China. Considering the complicated nature of Sino-US relations, the Chinese

⁵² Jon Huntsman resigned as US ambassador to China in January 2011, to take effect on 30 April 2011.

expect the relationship to be constantly plagued by competition between the two countries, along with opportunities for cooperation on a wide-range of issues. What is new from China's side is that, as China continues to rise — having overtaken Japan as the second largest economy in the world in 2010 — China's expectations about US diplomacy towards China are also rising. It seems that China wants the United States not only to talk nicely, but also to treat China nicely. In other words, what China now demands is that 'the United States needs both wisdom and determination to recognize and accept China, a country that is totally different from its own, as a power on the world stage'.⁵³

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⁵³) Zhong Sheng, 'Meiguo zhunbei hao zhongguo zuowei daguo dengchang ma' [Is the US Ready to Recognize China as a World Power?], *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily], 29 July 2010.

