



SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

Recent turbulence in U.S.-Chinese relations stems from China's umbrage at what it perceives to be the United States' attempts to harm China's core interests. Strident rhetoric from within China has prescribed retaliatory targeting of alleged U.S. core interests. However, U.S. efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and stabilize the international financial environment are also in China's own national security interests. A sustainable relationship should be based on the pursuit of mutual interests in building cooperation between the two countries. In addressing these topics, Professor Thomas Christensen presents a distinct perspective on U.S.-China relations that emphasizes the dangers in interacting in an environment of mistrust and polarization.

This Special Report was written in July 2010. The views expressed in it do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions. The USIP's Center for Conflict Management commissioned it as part of a series on the evolving U.S.-China relationship. This series will focus on avoiding crises and exploring opportunities for U.S.-China cooperation.

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Thomas J. Christensen

The Need to Pursue Mutual Interests in U.S.-PRC Relations

Summary

- Sino-U.S. cooperation should be based on the pursuit of mutual interests rather than on a framework of mutual respect for "core interests," as pledged in the 2009 Joint Statement.
- There is a perception in Beijing that when China assists the United States with problems on the international stage it is doing the United States a favor, and thus it expects returns in kind. This is inaccurate since almost everything that the United States asks of China is directly in China's own interest.
- If the Six-Party Talks process fails permanently, many countries, including China and the United States, will suffer costs. The biggest losers will be the North Korean people, but second will be China, not the United States.
- The Chinese government has been increasingly sensitive to a domestic political environment of heated popular nationalism, expressed in the media and on the blogosphere. China suffers from a stunted version of a free press, in which most criticism of government policy is from a hawkish, nationalist direction.
- A cooperative U.S.-China relationship should be built around the pursuit of mutual global interests. The two countries have worked together successfully on several projects, including antipiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, and there is potential for further cooperation on issues such as climate change, nuclear nonproliferation, and counterterrorism, to name a few.

Introduction

After an inaugural year of very smooth U.S.-China relations for the Obama administration, 2010 began with some turbulence, at least on a rhetorical level. When Washington opted to maintain several long-standing U.S. policies on Taiwan's security, human rights, and

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freedom of expression, many elite Chinese commentators and official news sites and some high-ranking officials suggested that the United States had done severe damage to U.S.-China relations.¹ The administration called for Internet freedom during Google's dispute with the Chinese government over hacking and censorship, notified Congress on the sale of a \$6.4 billion arms sales package to Taiwan, and arranged for the Dalai Lama to visit with President Barack Obama. Many in China seemed surprised and unusually offended by these rather standard U.S. policies.

In articles, academic conferences, and track II dialogues, some Chinese commentators, including uniformed military officers, called for sanctions against the United States. The critics often cited the Joint Statement that the two governments penned on the occasion of President Obama's first visit to China in November 2009. In particular, they focused on two paragraphs in which the two nations pledged to respect each other's "core interests" and each other's sovereignty.² As defined by Chinese elites, China's core interests include maintenance of domestic stability (including suppression of dissent) and territorial integrity (including prevention of the permanent and legal separation of Taiwan from the mainland, and suppression of so-called splittist forces in Tibet). Since, in some Chinese elites' opinion, the Obama administration broke its promise by violating China's alleged core interests and sovereignty in Taiwan and Tibet, as well as its domestic suppression of dissent, it is only logical, they argue, that Beijing should return fire by harming U.S. core national interests. Those Chinese elites define those core U.S. interests to include preventing nuclear proliferation in Iran and North Korea and stabilizing the international financial environment. For reasons outlined below, such a formulation is intellectually incorrect and politically unhelpful.

Chinese commentators who prescribed the retaliatory targeting of alleged U.S. core national interests offered various methods. Some suggested that Beijing refuse to buy additional U.S. Treasury bonds or, perhaps, sell off a chunk of the many hundreds of billions of dollars of such bonds that it now holds, thus slowing or halting the U.S. recovery from the financial crisis. Others called for reduced cooperation on international issues that the United States considers vital to national security—multilateral nonproliferation efforts aimed at preventing North Korea and Iran from developing nuclear arsenals. Some even went so far as to say that China should sell weapons to U.S. enemies. Others proposed more targeted sanctions on U.S. companies, such as Raytheon and Boeing, that manufacture the weapons sold to Taiwan.³

This report will explore how Chinese domestic politics and elite misperceptions about international politics led to the harsh rhetoric against the United States and why, in the end, Beijing's top leadership apparently did not adopt the prescribed punitive methods. By all reports, the leadership takes seriously the opinions of lower-level cadres and politically mobilized segments of the broad public. But it also knows it must protect China's interests on the international stage and cannot react too rashly toward other powers, especially major economic partners from whom China has received so many benefits in the reform period beginning in 1978.

The report will conclude by presenting an intellectually more accurate and politically more sustainable framework for stabilizing and improving U.S.-China relations than the concept of respect for each other's allegedly distinct core interests. More emphasis needs to be placed on cooperation in the management of global problems that simultaneously challenge the United States, China, and most of the rest of the international community. In other words, the *pursuit of mutual interests*, not mutual respect for allegedly distinct sets of national core interests, should be the centerpiece of the relationship. This prescription is rooted in a famous speech by Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations in September 2005, in which he stated that the United States called for China to be a "responsible stakeholder" in more proactively helping other states

manage problems faced by the entire international community, including the United States and China.⁴ The list of such mutual interests is long and includes countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, protecting freedom of the seas and the free flow of energy resources, addressing global warming, and combating international terrorism.

Something quite akin to the responsible-stakeholder approach stands alongside the statements about mutual respect for core interests and sovereignty in the November 2009 U.S.-China Joint Statement. For reasons outlined below, the former seems a much better formulation than the latter for building cooperation and reducing mistrust between the two sides and should be emphasized in the future. While seemingly unobjectionable on its face, the concept of mutual respect for each other's core interests mainly served to raise unrealistic expectations in some Chinese circles of fundamental changes in U.S. policy on Taiwan, Tibet, human rights, and freedom of expression.

Why the Strident Chinese Reaction?

The policies carried out early in 2010 by the Obama administration toward Internet freedom, Taiwan, and the Dalai Lama are laudable, but they are not really new. They sustain decades-old policies that are deeply founded in U.S. legal, moral, and strategic principles. This continuity makes it all the more puzzling that the Chinese reaction in 2010 was so strong.

The promotion of freedom of expression, of human rights, and protection of intellectual property are hardly new U.S. ideals, and these were all evident in Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's speech on Internet freedom and the administration's expression of concern about the persistent hacking into the operations of Google China. Previous presidents have met the Dalai Lama, usually in private settings and always in his capacity as a religious rather than a political leader. The Dalai Lama met with President Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, during both terms, and the president even presented him personally with a Congressional gold medal in 2007. The United States has long recognized Tibet as part of China, and Beijing as the sole legitimate government of China. Washington has, however, urged China to allow Tibetans more civil liberties, freedom of religion, and autonomy within the PRC. The U.S. government has also called for meaningful dialogue between Beijing and the Dalai Lama's representatives. After all, the Dalai Lama has eschewed Tibetan independence as a goal and has rejected violence as a means to achieve Tibetan goals, despite frequent accusations in China that he is a "splittist," who promotes violence and even terrorism for the purpose of gaining full independence for Tibet. Thus from a U.S. perspective, there are no reasons to avoid, and many reasons to embrace, the idea of presidential meetings with the Dalai Lama.

Similarly, the United States has also sold defensive arms to Taiwan on occasion to bolster the island's defenses against coercion or invasion. This policy, codified in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, has been carried out faithfully by Democrat and Republican administrations alike. In fact, just a few months before Obama took office, the Bush administration notified Congress on the intention to sell Taiwan a large tranche of weapons—the second such notification in eighteen months. That weapons package was similar in value to what the Obama administration presented in early 2010. The United States has made it very clear in recent years that such arms sales do not signal support for Taiwan's independence. Nor does Washington oppose unification of Taiwan and the mainland if Beijing is able somehow to succeed, through peaceful dialogue, in convincing Taiwan's democracy that unification is in Taiwan's interest. In fact, the common charge in China that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan somehow encourage unilateral moves toward formal, de jure independence by Taiwan is clearly refuted by recent facts on the ground. The executive branch has notified Congress on approximately \$16 billion in arms sales to Taiwan in the past three years, yet cross-Strait

relations have never been better since the founding of the PRC in 1949. Moreover, there is no sign that either Taiwan's current leadership or the Taiwanese public is eager to take provocative actions in the direction of unilateral assertions of permanent, legal independence from China.

If these moderate and constructive U.S. policies were not new, neither was the phenomenon of Chinese protest over those policies. There were some similarities between 2010 and the few years prior. Taiwan arms sales have been followed by the PRC's suspension of various military-to-military contacts in 2007 and 2008, as they were in 2010. But the rhetorical tone of the Chinese government and media response seemed to be harsher and more strident in 2010 than in the past. This has been the judgment not only of foreign observers but of Chinese experts themselves in dialogues and conversations in which I participated during the past year.

So what explains this increased stridency? According to my Chinese interlocutors, purely domestic factors explain part of the puzzle. Popular nationalism, growth in the number of media outlets in which Chinese citizens can express their views, and the government's increasing sensitivity to public opinion led to a combination of published attacks on the United States and, by association, criticism of Beijing's U.S. policy, including pieces by military officers and scholars in government think tanks and universities calling for a tougher policy against the United States.⁵ Government officials appear nervous about labeling these nationalist viewpoints as erroneous, as do more moderate academics. The result is a dangerously stunted version of a free press, in which one may relatively safely criticize government policy, but only from a strident, nationalist direction. We often see articles calling for tougher policies, but much more rarely do we find articles that criticize policy for being too harsh toward the United States or other great powers, and when such articles appear, they sometimes seem so subtle as to be in code.

From the perspective of managing U.S.-China relations, fortunately the problem is not rooted entirely in China's domestic politics. Supplementing and catalyzing these domestic forces are international factors—or, to be more accurate, perceptions among elites and the attentive public of international factors. According to several of my interlocutors, several reasons account for why Chinese observers were particularly upset to see "business as usual" in China policy this year from the Obama Administration. First, there is the global financial crisis and the perception that China is much stronger compared with the United States now than before the crisis. The argument runs that the United States needs China much more now than in the past to help manage international economic affairs and, in particular, to help the United States by purchasing more Treasury bills to finance Washington's skyrocketing debt. China's relatively quick recovery from the crisis, and the U.S. government's perceived need to finance its deficit by selling more Treasury bills give many in China the image of a PRC with enormous newfound leverage in Washington. Additional factors signaling U.S. weakness to these observers are the prolonged, expensive, and still unsuccessful wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this view, Beijing no longer needs to tolerate U.S. policies that violate China's self-defined "core interests," as it has in the past.

Finally, according to my interlocutors, there was a perception throughout 2009 that the Obama administration was more accommodating toward China than previous administrations, as a matter of either political orientation or simply hardheaded realism that flowed from the factors mentioned above. The administration had eschewed arms sales to Taiwan in its first year and had avoided a visit from the Dalai Lama before President Obama's trip to China in November. Even before the Joint Statement's reference to respect for each side's core interests, Deputy Secretary James Steinberg made a much noted speech on Washington's China policy, in which he called for building mutual trust between the two nations through concrete acts of "strategic reassurance" by both sides.⁶ Some in China apparently

exaggerated the importance of this speech and believed it might be a harbinger of a shift in U.S. security policies toward Taiwan and the rest of the region.

Why Mutual Respect for Core Interests Is the Wrong Foundation for U.S.-China Relations

To my knowledge, the term “strategic reassurance” has not been used by senior U.S. officials since Steinberg’s speech. Also, while Chinese officials and observers often referred to “core interests” in the months after the November Joint Statement—usually to criticize U.S. policy—one rarely if ever hears high-ranking U.S. government officials using the term. This strongly suggests that the section of the Joint Statement containing the concept of core interests was drafted by the Chinese and that the Obama administration quickly understood the problems with its inclusion. This is very much to the administration’s credit. There is much more than just politics and rhetoric at work here. There is a basic intellectual problem with the view that U.S.-China cooperation is built on a horse trade of sorts, between policies by the United States that respect China’s core interests, and reciprocal policies from China that respect U.S. core interests and “assist” the United States in meeting some of its international goals.

The most basic problem with the concept of mutual respect for core interests is that almost everything that the United States is asking of China is directly in the interests of the PRC itself. So China is not *assisting* the United States by helping curb nuclear proliferation or policing international waters for pirates off the coast of Somalia. It is serving its own interests as well, as are all the other countries involved in these joint efforts. So those calling for a punitive reduction of China’s cooperation with the United States on such issues are calling for China to do severe harm to its own foreign policy portfolio. This is why the lens of *joint pursuit of mutual interests*—also found in the November 2009 Joint Statement—is a better and more realistic foundation on which to build U.S.-PRC cooperation. One important example illustrates this.

The Six-Party Talks: Why China’s Cooperation on North Korean Nuclear Weapons Is in China’s Interest

It is odd indeed to consider Beijing’s past cooperation in the Six-Party Talks process on North Korean denuclearization as somehow being “assistance” in handling one of Washington’s core national interests. If the Six-Party Talks fail permanently, there will be many losers, the biggest of whom will be the North Korean people, since their nation has been offered so much in economic opportunity and diplomatic opening if Pyongyang complies with the international community’s demands to give up its nuclear programs. But after North Korea, arguably the biggest loser in a failed Six-Party Talks process will be China. Even though this outcome would also be very bad for the United States, the notion that by preventing it China is helping the United States rather than itself is, frankly, absurd.

China justifiably gained considerable diplomatic prestige by taking a leadership role in the Six-Party Talks process, and the United States and other governments were quick to give it credit for taking a more proactive stance on the issue than many could earlier have expected from the more traditionally cautious and insular Chinese leadership. Ten or fifteen years ago, few observers could have predicted that China would take such a leadership role and join the international community in adopting sanctions against its longtime ally. In the process, Beijing gained prestige—something sought by all Chinese leaders and regimes in the modern era—and promoted its more recently stated goal of reassuring others that the rise of its regional and global influence should be welcomed, not feared.

The most basic problem with the concept of mutual respect for core interests is that almost everything that the United States is asking of China is directly in the interests of the PRC itself.

But just as China gained credit for the progress in the Six-Party Talks in periods such as 2006–07, it also suffers a great loss of prestige when North Korea refuses to abide by the demands of the international community. How can China portray itself as a great power when it cannot even positively influence the behavior of its weak neighboring ally, which is entirely dependent on its economic ties to China? Since China maintains basically normal economic and diplomatic relations with North Korea despite the UN Security Council sanctions it helped create, its relationship with North Korea raises real suspicions in regional capitals about its long-term intentions. In particular, since the inauguration of President Lee Myung-bak in South Korea in February 2008, Seoul has reduced economic assistance programs for the North, holding out growth of economic ties as a carrot tied to the North's moves toward denuclearization. Under these circumstances, many across the political spectrum in South Korea view China with great mistrust because its trade and investment policies toward the North are viewed as moving into the vacuum left by the South's tougher policies.⁷ This, they believe, comes at the long-term expense of the greater Korean nation. In conversations in Seoul, my interlocutors accused China of everything from cynical exploitation of North Korea's economy to neocolonialism on the Korean Peninsula. Such a negative impression of China, exacerbated greatly by Beijing's agnostic reaction to the sinking of the Republic of Korea (ROK) naval ship *Cheonan* in March 2010, has undercut fifteen years of very successful diplomacy toward South Korea that had reassured many about the meaning of China's rise.

North Korean nuclear developments can have a catalytic effect on the military modernization of U.S. allies in China's region and on the degree of coordination and cooperation between those allies and the United States.

North Korean nuclear developments can also have a catalytic effect on the military modernization of U.S. allies in China's region and on the degree of coordination and cooperation between those allies and the United States. The development of deliverable nuclear weapons by North Korea is considered a real threat in Japan, for example. In the most dramatic scenario, North Korean nuclear developments might cause Japan to abandon its nuclear taboo and develop nuclear weapons of its own—something China certainly would not want to see. Even if we do an objective analysis and say that there are so many domestic and international constraints on Japan's nuclear development that it remains unlikely, there is little doubt that North Korean nuclear developments make such an outcome much more likely than it would otherwise be. What is less appreciated, however, is how North Korean nuclear weaponization might affect Japan's conventional programs in ways that China would like to avoid. One could very realistically expect enhanced cooperation from Japan in the ongoing program to jointly develop regional missile defense with the United States—something that China believes hurts its own deterrent capabilities. Moreover, it would seem very reasonable if Japan were to overcome its earlier reluctance to build offensive conventional capabilities and to invest in a large arsenal of fast, conventionally tipped strike weapons. The cheapest and most effective way to defend against North Korean missiles in a war or crisis would be to destroy them on the ground. Since such strike weapons would have multiple uses and their development would potentially have symbolic meaning for the future of Japan's military posture overall, China would certainly not want to see such an outcome.

North Korean nuclear weapons development, if left unchecked, will also likely lead to much greater and more active maritime cooperation between the United States and its regional allies over time. Many of these outcomes will be unwelcome in Beijing. Not only will North Korean nuclear development catalyze U.S.-Japanese missile defense cooperation, it might also spark South Korea to join a regional missile defense program. More generally, the United States and its allies have to be concerned about nuclear proliferation not only *in* North Korea but also *from* North Korea. As we saw in the revelations about North Korean nuclear cooperation with Syria in 2007, an irresponsible regime such as North Korea's possessing nuclear weapons carries the real risk of transfer to other irresponsible state and nonstate actors. So we should expect enhanced naval cooperation, exercises, and inspections of North Korean

shipping by the United States, Japan, South Korea, and other U.S. regional allies and security partners as part of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Beijing will likely be concerned about the side effects of this cooperation on the alliances and security partnerships overall and about the potential for instability or war on the neighboring Korean Peninsula if North Korea were to overreact to the enhanced allied actions against its ships at sea.

This last scenario should not seem at all far-fetched. After the sinking of the *Cheonan*, which an international panel confirmed as resulting from a torpedo attack by a North Korean submarine, Beijing objected rather stridently to the U.S. and ROK response: a round of exercises including joint antisubmarine warfare exercises in the waters off of the Korean Peninsula. Not just the commentators on the blogosphere but the Foreign Ministry spokesperson objected to the exercises for precisely the two reasons offered above.⁸ The exercises were seen as destabilizing given the existing tense post-*Cheonan* standoff between Seoul and Pyongyang, and seen as a challenge to China's own security interests in the region given the contiguity of the Korean Peninsula with China.

For all these reasons, in addition to the most straightforward one—countries generally do not relish the acquisition of nuclear weapons by their neighbors—after the North Korean people themselves, Beijing is almost certainly the biggest loser from the continuation of Pyongyang's nuclear program and the tensions in the region that flow from that program. The notion that Chinese cooperation should be seen as assistance to the United States, which should be withheld if Beijing is unhappy with unrelated policies in Washington regarding Taiwan or Tibet, is therefore simply unrealistic.

What is true for North Korea policy is true for other policies. Iran may be more distant from China than North Korea, but China is a net importer of energy with a large export sector that would be greatly affected by sudden, sharp price increases, which would raise the costs of both production and shipping. Properly considered, China's energy security, like the energy security of all net importers, is in stable prices, the avoidance of shocks, and the free flow of energy resources. Iran is a major destabilizing force in the energy-rich Middle East and Persian Gulf, even though it does not enjoy the added confidence that nuclear weapons might supply. One can only imagine how destabilizing its revolutionary regime might become if it should come to believe that it holds a credible nuclear deterrent against retribution from others. Moreover, the development of Iranian nuclear weapons is considered an existential threat in Israel, since the current leadership in Tehran has publicly called for the annihilation of Israel. It seems quite probable that if international diplomacy fails to alter Iran's current trajectory, eventually Israel will take some series of overt and covert actions against Iran that could lead to massive instability in the Middle East and Persian Gulf regions, regardless of how successful those actions might prove to be. It therefore behooves the Chinese, the United States, and the Europeans to more tightly coordinate activities to prevent such an outcome, since the resulting instability would hurt all net importers of energy very badly.

A similar interest-based argument can and should be made for Chinese purchase of U.S. Treasury bills. China does not buy these as an act of charity or diplomacy but because the PRC runs a rather large current-account surplus with the world and is looking for safe and liquid instruments into which to place large parts of that surplus. Despite all the problems in the U.S. economy, Treasury bills still remain an attractive place to park such money. Of course, Chinese purchases of Treasury bills are important to the United States, but if China were to stop purchasing bills or sell existing holdings, it would be harming itself badly in the process. On a broader level, bilateral and global interdependence determine that the last thing China wants to see is a severely damaged U.S. economy. The United States is still China's biggest single export market. Moreover, U.S. economic woes have a strong impact on the overall global economy, on which a fully integrated Chinese economy strongly depends.

Emphasizing Mutual Global Interests over Core National Interests

For a long time to come, the United States and the PRC are not going to see eye to eye on cross-Strait relations, Tibet, or Internet freedom, among other issues. So it seems that if China and the United States want to build a cooperative relationship despite those persistent differences, the spirit of Robert Zoellick's September 21, 2005, speech to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations is a much better starting place than the concept of mutual respect for each other's distinct core national interests. To the Obama administration's credit, such language is also included in the 2009 Joint Statement: "The United States and China have an increasingly broad base of cooperation and share increasingly important responsibilities on many major issues concerning global stability and prosperity. The two countries should further strengthen coordination and cooperation, work together to tackle challenges, and promote world peace, security, and prosperity."⁹

Despite real differences and mutual suspicions, the United States and China have many more points of common interest than of conflict.

It is often said that despite real differences and mutual suspicions, the United States and China have many more points of common interest than of conflict. I wholeheartedly agree with this proposition. Nothing builds bilateral trust and cooperation better than the two nations working together on common problems, as they did a few years ago in the Six-Party Talks process and as they have more recently by contributing naval assets to battle pirates off the coast of Africa.¹⁰ It is very important, not just for global security but also for healthy long-term bilateral relations, for there to be increased coordination on North Korean and Iranian nuclear issues.

There are many other areas of potential cooperation, including the three briefly mentioned below.

Freedom of the Seas from Piracy

As two of the world's larger trading nations and the two largest importers of energy resources, China and the United States have a strong incentive to cooperate and coordinate their activities in fighting piracy and terrorist attacks on shipping. The Gulf of Aden operation, which China decided to join in the waning weeks of the Bush administration, is a good start. It demonstrates in concrete terms the common interests between the two sides, and it allows a level of military-to-military contact that cannot be replicated in defense ministry meeting rooms or classrooms at military academies.

The existing cooperation in the Gulf of Aden mission could be enhanced further and could become a precedent for more frequent tactical-level meetings between the two nations' militaries. Such a constructive meeting took place aboard a Chinese navy flagship in the Gulf of Aden on November 1, 2009. The U.S. commander of Combined Task Force 151, Rear Admiral Scott Sanders, met with his Chinese counterpart, Rear Admiral Wang Zhiguo. On that occasion, Admiral Sanders stated, "It is clear that China is a reliable partner and that our efforts are mutually beneficial."¹¹ Such concrete reminders of the two nations' common interests provide a stronger foundation for the overall U.S.-China diplomatic relationship than abstract statements about mutual respect for allegedly fully distinct core national interests.

Climate Change

It is obvious to natural scientists and social scientists alike that any effective global response to climate change will require coordination and cooperation between China and the United States, the two largest greenhouse-gas emitters on the planet and, as our Chinese friends often point out, the largest developing economy and the largest developed economy in the world. The two nations' behavior sets the standard for other states in those classes, and frankly speaking, the standard they have set to date is very low indeed.

To improve performance on this score, both nations will have to make more impressive commitments to reduce emissions than either offered at the 2009 Copenhagen Summit. But the most effective solutions to these problems will almost certainly be technological in nature and will require enhanced cooperation on the development of clean energy production. For this to be successful, both countries will need to think past short-term economic gains, and China, in particular, will need to provide significantly better protection of intellectual property than it has in the past.

Nonproliferation and Counterterrorism

This issue was discussed at length above, but one further point remains. Keeping weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists should be a high priority for both the United States and China. In a globalized and highly integrated international economy, a major terrorist attack on a business center anywhere in the world would negatively affect the entire global economy. More specifically, if shipping and other forms of transportation for commerce were involved in a terrorist attack, especially one involving a nuclear explosion, this would likely paralyze global commerce. Although China is not among the more likely direct targets of such an attack, its national interest is still very much rooted in helping prevent one. Imagine, for example, the devastating effect on the economies of major container ports such as Shanghai and Hong Kong if a nuclear device in a shipping container were detonated anywhere in the world.

Conclusion

There are many additional areas of potential U.S.-Chinese cooperation, including global financial stability, disease control, and product safety. This is why U.S. Embassy Beijing is and should be one of the busiest buildings in the entire U.S. government system. The examples above are only illustrations of areas where cooperation has taken place and must be enhanced if the two nations' national security interests are to be served. If we succeed in achieving real results together and along with other concerned countries, we will have done a great deal toward building confidence and trust between the two governments. If, instead, China and the United States start with issues on which they simply cannot fully agree now or for the foreseeable future, such as Taiwan and Tibet, then they are likely to hit a wall with negative repercussions for their bilateral relationship and for their mutual ability to contribute to solutions to these global problems.

If China and the United States start with issues on which they simply cannot fully agree now or for the foreseeable future, then they are likely to hit a wall with negative repercussions for their bilateral relationship and for their mutual ability to contribute to solutions to these global problems.

Notes

1. I base my conclusions in large part on research trips to China in March and May 2010, and on interactions with Chinese scholars, government think-tank researchers, and officials at conferences in Washington in 2010. For a good overview of initial Chinese official government and scholarly reaction to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, see Li Xiaokun, "Beijing Furious at Arms Sales to Taiwan," *China Daily*, Feb. 1, 2010, www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-02/01/content_9404199.htm.
2. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "U.S.-China Joint Statement," Nov. 17, 2009. For an example of the citation of this specific passage in the official Chinese media, see Xinhuanet, "Arms Sale Causes Severe Damage to Overall U.S.-China Cooperation," *Xinhuanet English News*, Jan. 30, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-01/30/c_13157364.htm. Major General Luo Yuan and his colleagues called for economic, military, and diplomatic retaliation against the United States, including the dumping of U.S. government bonds. See Chris Buckley, "China PLA Officers Urge Economic Punch against U.S.," Reuters, Feb. 9, 2010.
3. See, for example, Buckley, "China PLA Officers Urge Economic Punch"; and Rowan Callick, "China Goes Ballistic over Taiwan Arms Sale," *The Australian*, Feb. 2, 2010.
4. See Robert Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?" Sept. 21, 2005, www.ncuscr.org/files/2005Gala_RobertZoellick_Whither_China1.pdf.
5. Buckley, "China PLA Officers Urge Economic Punch"; Callick, "China Goes Ballistic."
6. For the transcript of Deputy Secretary James Steinberg's Sept. 24, 2009, speech at the Center for a New American Security, see U.S. State Dept., "Administration's Vision of the U.S.-China Relationship," www.state.gov/s/d/2009/129686.htm.
7. Based on extensive discussions with scholars, government officials, and legislators in Seoul, Korea, Oct. 2008.
8. For the unusually strident official response from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, see PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Remarks on the ROK-U.S. Joint Military Exercises," July 21, 2010, www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/t718571.htm.
9. White House, "U.S.-China Joint Statement."
10. For a more detailed explication of these views, see Thomas J. Christensen, "Shaping the Choices of a Rising China: Some Recent Lessons for the Obama Administration," *Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 89-104.
11. See United States Central Command Combined Task Force, "CTF 151 Commander Visits Chinese Counter-Piracy Flagship" (press release, Nov. 2, 2009), www.centcom.mil/news/ctf-151-commander-visits-chinese-counter-piracy-flagship.

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