

CHINA AND AMERICA: THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL EQUATION

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GOOD EVENING. I'M DELIGHTED TO BE BACK AT ST. NORBERT'S COLLEGE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GREAT DECISIONS LECTURE SERIES. EIGHT YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE I CAME TO ST. NORBERT'S COLLEGE TO SPEAK ON CHINA'S RISE AND ITS SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR US FOREIGN POLICY. WHILE THERE ARE STILL MANY CONTINUITIES IN US-CHINA RELATIONS, THE GEOPOLITICAL EQUATION HAS MADE TECTONIC SHIFTS.

- IN 2013, CHINA'S GLOBAL SHARE OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) SURPASSED THAT OF THE US FOR THE FIRST TIME (WORLD BANK).
- UNDER PRESIDENT XI JINPING'S LEADERSHIP, CHINA HAS EMBARKED ON A "GREAT POWER" FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA, WHICH INCLUDES TRILLION-DOLLAR INITIATIVES SUCH AS THE ONE BELT ONE ROAD INITIATIVE AND THE ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT BANK.
- IN 2016, CHINA BECAME THE LEADING TRADE PARTNER OF 124 COUNTRIES, COMPARED WITH THE US'S 76, A COMPLETE REVERSAL FROM 10 YEARS EARLIER.

TWO ADDITIONAL EVENTS EXACERBATE THESE SHIFTS: THE UNITED STATES ELECTED PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP, AND HE HAS UPENDED TRADITIONAL AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY BASED ON THE NEOLIBERAL ORDER. AND MOST RECENTLY, CHINA AMENDED ITS CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW XI JINPING TO REMAIN PRESIDENT FOR LIFE.

BEFORE I ADDRESS HOW THE WORLD HAS CHANGED, LET ME GET TO KNOW YOU ALL A BIT BETTER.

HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE BEEN TO CHINA OR STUDIED CHINESE? HOW MANY OF YOU SPEAK CHINESE?

HOW MANY OF YOU BELIEVE CHINA IS NOW THE WORLD'S LEADING POWER, OR WILL BE IN THE NEXT DECADE?

DO YOU THINK CHINA IS A FRIEND, COMPETITOR OR ENEMY?

AS WE ARE NOW IN THE YEAR OF THE DOG, I'D LIKE TO ASK, "WHO'S GOING TO BE TOP DOG?" CHINA OR THE US IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

CAPITALIST PEACE DIES IN CHINA

SINCE I WAS LAST HERE AT ST. NORBERT'S IN 2010, CHINA WATCHERS IN THE US AND THE WEST HAVE COME TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WERE WRONG ABOUT CHINA'S RISE. VOICES WHICH HAD ARGUED THAT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND A GROWING MIDDLE CLASS WOULD DRIVE CHINA TOWARDS WESTERN VALUES HAVE FADED. AND HOPES FOR REFORM HAVE BEEN DASHED

AS THE COMMUNIST PARTY SCRAPPED TERM LIMITS AND ANOINTED XI JINPING PRESIDENT FOR LIFE. THIS PIVOTAL MOMENT SPELLS THE DEATH KNEEL OF THE "CAPITALIST OR DEMOCRATIC PEACE" THEORY, WHICH POSITS THAT FREE ENTERPRISE AND TRADE PRODUCE DEVELOPED ECONOMIES WHICH DO NOT GO TO WAR WITH EACH OTHER.

THE IDEA THAT ENGAGEMENT AND RISING PROSPERITY WOULD DRIVE CHINESE CONVERGENCE WITH WESTERN VALUES WAS SHARED BY WASHINGTON POLICY MAKERS ON ALL SIDES. GEORGE H. W. BUSH'S 1990 NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY DESCRIBED ENHANCED TIES WITH THE WORLD AS "CRUCIAL TO CHINA'S PROSPECTS FOR REGAINING THE PATH OF ECONOMIC REFORM." FOR DECADES, THIS ARGUMENT DROVE US DECISIONS TO GRANT CHINA MOST-FAVORED-NATION TRADING STATUS IN THE 1990s, TO SUPPORT ITS ACCESSION TO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION IN 2001, TO ESTABLISH A HIGH-LEVEL ECONOMIC DIALOGUE IN 2006, AND TO NEGOTIATE A BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATY UNDER US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA.

- I WAS AT THE DINNER IN WASHINGTON, DC, IN 2005, WHEN THEN-DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE ROBERT ZOELICK URGED CHINA IN HIS KEYNOTE SPEECH TO BECOME A "RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDER", EXPLAINING WHY CHINA SHOULD JOIN THE WEST IN A RULES-BASED GLOBAL ORDER. ZOELICK ADVISED: "CLOSED POLITICS CANNOT BE A PERMANENT FEATURE OF CHINESE SOCIETY. IT IS SIMPLY NOT SUSTAINABLE—AS ECONOMIC GROWTH CONTINUES, BETTER-OFF CHINESE WILL WANT A GREATER SAY IN THEIR FUTURE, AND PRESSURE BUILDS FOR POLITICAL REFORM." HE POINTED TO VILLAGE AND GRASSROOTS ELECTIONS AND SUGGESTED THAT "THEY MIGHT BE EXPANDED—PERHAPS TO COUNTIES AND PROVINCES—AS A NEXT STEP."
- IN 2000, PRESIDENT CLINTON PUSHED FOR CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR CHINA'S ENTRY INTO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO) BY DRAWING A DIRECT LINE BETWEEN FREE ENTERPRISE AND PRESSURE FOR ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT. WHEN INDIVIDUALS HAVE THE POWER TO REALIZE THEIR DREAMS, HE SAID, "THEY WILL DEMAND A GREATER SAY."
- LATER, GEORGE BUSH CAMPAIGNING FOR THE PRESIDENCY, PREDICTED THAT CHINA'S WTO ENTRY WOULD CREATE MORE JOBS AS AMERICAN GOODS WOULD GAIN ENTRY TO CHINA'S VAST MARKET, AND CHINA WOULD ENJOY "MORE OPEN CONTACT WITH THE WORLD OF FREEDOM."

IT IS AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH, BUT IT IS UNDENIABLE THAT THE WEST'S OWN ECONOMIC POLICIES HAVE ENABLED CHINA'S ECONOMIC SUCCESS. DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY HAVE NOT ENCOURAGED REFORM, AS AMERICANS BELIEVED. CHINA IS HEADED TOWARD MORE, NOT LESS AUTOCRACY, AND CAPITALISM AND DEMOCRACY DO NOT NECESSARILY GO TOGETHER, AS CHINA FURTHER CHALLENGES THE POST-WAR LIBERAL ORDER THAT HAS GOVERNED THE GLOBE FOR THE LAST SEVEN DECADES.

PROponents OF THE INTERDEPENDENT TRADE EXPLANATION FOR THE US AND CHINA KEEPING THE PEACE ALSO HAVE GROWN SILENT. CORPORATE CHIEFTAINS AND BIG BUSINESS, LONG CHEERLEADERS FOR CHINA, HAVE BECOME FED UP. FACED WITH CONTINUED CHINESE SUBSIDIES,

UNFAIR COMPETITION FROM STATE-BACKED RIVALS, LIMITED MARKET ACCESS AND THEFT OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND GLOBAL CLIENT LISTS, THE GROWING INTERDEPENDENCE THAT HAS BOUND THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP EVER SINCE DENG XIAOPING'S REFORMS OF THE CHINESE MARKETS, BEGUN IN 1978, HAS COME UNGLUED.

AFTER 40 YEARS OF STEADILY DEEPENING ECONOMIC TIES, THE US IS SUFFERING PROMISE FATIGUE. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE TO SHOW FOR CHINA'S MANY PROMISES TO OPEN ITS ECONOMY MADE SINCE AT LEAST THE THIRD PLENUM IN 2013. AND DISILLUSIONED BY THE FACT THAT BEIJING HAS DEFIED AMERICAN EXPECTATIONS WITH ITS INCREASINGLY AUTHORITARIAN TURN, THE US HAS REACHED A TIPPING POINT. WITH THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE US WOULD APPLY TARIFFS ON CHINESE STEEL AND ALUMINUM AND IMPOSE TARIFFS ON ABOUT \$60 BILLION WORTH OF CHINESE IMPORTS, TRUMP MAY HAVE NOT ONLY LAUNCHED A TRADE WAR, BUT ALSO UPENDED THE POLICIES THAT HAVE GOVERNED THE US-CHINA RELATIONSHIP SINCE NIXON'S OPENING TO CHINA IN 1972.

INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT BEIJING'S AMBITIONS TO OVERTAKE THE US

XI JINPING'S CONSOLIDATION OF POWER AT HOME SIGNALS THAT THE CHINESE ARE NOW SET ON REALIZING XI'S VISION OF TURNING CHINA INTO A LEADING GLOBAL POWER BY 2050 (OCTOBER 17, 2017 PARTY CONGRESS). IT MEANS THE END OF DENG XIAOPING'S DICTUM, WHICH HAS GUIDED CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY UNTIL XI, THAT TO THRIVE, CHINA WILL "HIDE ITS CAPABILITIES AND BIDE ITS TIME (MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE)." FOR XI, CHINA'S TIME HAS ARRIVED, AS HE DECLARED IN OCTOBER 2017 THAT "THE CHINESE NATION HAS GONE FROM STANDING UP, TO BECOMING RICH, TO BECOMING STRONG."

ANY DOUBTS ABOUT XI'S INTENTIONS HAVE BEEN DISPELLED BY THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS. AT ITS CLOSING CEREMONIES ON MARCH 20, XI GAVE WHAT HAS BEEN CALLED HIS "THRONE SPEECH," AND SAID, "CHINA'S MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY HAS COME. THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION FAVORS US. I AM THE MAN TO LEAD THE CHINESE PEOPLE TO THEIR GREAT NATIONAL RENASCENCE."

XI'S MUSCULAR ASSERTION OF CHINESE POWER HAS AROUSED INCREASING CONCERN, IF NOT ALARM, IN WASHINGTON OVER CHINA'S AMBITIONS TO OVERTAKE US PRIMACY WHEREVER IT CAN. OF GREATEST CONCERN TO WASHINGTON HAS BEEN CHINA'S CHALLENGE TO THE US-LED SECURITY ORDER IN ASIA, WITH THE AIM OF PUSHING AMERICA TO THE REGION'S PERIPHERY; ITS ACTIONS TO DISPLACE CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF THE POST-WORLD WAR II LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER, BUILDING ITS OWN SET OF REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS; AND ITS AIM TO CATCH UP WITH SILICON VALLEY AND OVERTAKE THE US, PARTICULARLY IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE NEXT-GENERATION MOBILE TECHNOLOGY, 5G, USING WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY, INCLUDING STEALING TRADE SECRETS AND COMPELLING AMERICAN COMPANIES TO SURRENDER THEM AS THE PRICE OF DOING BUSINESS IN CHINA.

CHINA IS NOT ONLY MOUNTING CHALLENGES TO THE US IN SPECIFIC AREAS; XI JINPING'S 19TH PARTY CONGRESS MADE CLEAR THAT CHINA IS NOW OFFERING A DIFFERENT MODEL FOR OTHER NATIONS TO FOLLOW.

IN THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S FIRST NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY, CHINA HAS REPLACED TERRORISM AS AMERICA'S CENTRAL SECURITY CHALLENGE. THE STRATEGY REFERS TO CHINA AS AN ADVERSARY MORE THAN PREVIOUS REPORTS. IT ALSO PORTRAYS CHINA AS A "REVISIONIST POWER" BENT ON OVERTHROWING THE EXISTING INTERNATIONAL ORDER. THE ADMINISTRATION, IN ADDITION, CHARACTERIZES THIS COMPETITION AS ONE OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS AS WELL AS NATIONS, AND THE IMPLICATION IS THAT AMERICA'S FUTURE SECURITY AND FREEDOMS HANG IN THE BALANCE.

THIS RAISES THE QUESTION WHETHER THE US AND CHINA HAVE CROSSED A DANGEROUS THRESHOLD INTO SUPERPOWER COMPETITION, AND WHETHER THE TWO POWERFUL COUNTRIES WILL FALL INTO THE "THUCYDIDES TRAP." THIS TERM, POPULARIZED BY HARVARD PROFESSOR GRAHAM ALLISON, REFERS TO WHEN AN ESTABLISHED POWER GOES TO WAR WITH A RISING POWER OUT OF FEAR, AS SPARTA DID WITH ATHENS. IT IS ONE OF HISTORY'S DEADLIEST PATTERNS. OF THE 16 CASES IN HISTORY WHEN A RISING POWER THREATENED TO DISPLACE A RULING ONE, 12 ENDED IN WAR.

TO EXPLORE THIS QUESTION, LET'S BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CHANGES IN THE GEOPOLITICAL EQUATION, BEGINNING WITH CHINA'S GROWTH AS AN ECONOMIC POWER.

CHINA AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST ECONOMY

WHILE CHINA BECAME THE WORLD'S LARGEST ECONOMY, ADJUSTING FOR PURCHASING POWER PARITY IN 2013, CONSIDERING STANDARD OF LIVING AND IN PER CAPITA GDP TERMS, THE US STILL LEADS CHINA BY A VERY CONSIDERABLE MARGIN. CHINA STILL HAS TO GROW SIGNIFICANTLY TO ESCAPE THE SO-CALLED "MIDDLE-INCOME TRAP," THE SITUATION THAT CHARACTERIZES MANY COUNTRIES UNABLE TO MOVE BEYOND THE MIDDLE-INCOME LEVEL TO REACH A PER CAPITA GDP OF AROUND \$12,000 (CHINA HAS A PER CAPITA GDP OF AROUND \$8100). NEVERTHELESS, GIVEN CHINA'S ASTRONOMICAL GROWTH IN THE LAST DECADE AND ITS CONTINUING GROWTH RATE OF 6 PERCENT COMPARED WITH THE US AT JUST OVER 2 PERCENT, IT WILL ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE CHINA TAKES OVER AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST ECONOMY – SOME ESTIMATE BY 2030.

UNDER XI JINPING, CHINA HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO FLEX ITS ECONOMIC MUSCLES TO TAKE ACTIONS CHARACTERISTIC OF MAJOR POWERS. WITH ITS TRILLION DOLLAR BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI, PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS ONE BELT ONE ROAD) AND THE ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK (AIIB), CHINA IS BOLSTERING ITS TRADE TIES WITH 68 COUNTRIES BY LAND AND BY SEA. THEY HAVE LAUNCHED ONE OF THE LARGEST INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN HISTORY. FORETELLING A NEW WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER, 57 COUNTRIES JOINED THE AIIB DESPITE STRONG US OPPOSITION – INCLUDING ALMOST ALL OF AMERICA'S ALLIES.

CHINA HAS ALSO STEPPED UP ITS PROVISION OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA), GIVING AN ESTIMATED \$354 BILLION BETWEEN 2004 AND 2014 (COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY AIDDATA). CHINA'S AID FOCUSES ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD, IS ALMOST ALWAYS BILATERAL, AND HAS NO POLICY OR HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONALITY.

WITHOUT QUESTION, CHINA IS CONTRIBUTING INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC GOODS AND SHOULDERING SOME GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY. BUT IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT CHINA'S BRI, AIIB, AND INCREASED FOREIGN AID ADD UP TO STRONGER GEO-ECONOMIC AND GEO-STRATEGIC CLOUT, EMPOWERING CHINA TO SHAPE GLOBAL RULES AND STANDARDS TO SUIT ITS INTERESTS.

WHILE CHINA SPENDS, THE US CUTS

AS BEIJING IS MAKING SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS IN PORTS, RAILWAYS, HIGHWAYS, PIPELINES AND BRIDGES FROM KENYA TO KAZAKHSTAN THROUGH BRI AND AIIB, THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN PUSHING FOR CUTS. IT PROPOSED CUTTING THE BUDGET OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, THE US FOREIGN AID ARM, BY ONE THIRD. IT WOULD SLASH FUNDING FOR THE FULBRIGHT FELLOWSHIPS BY MORE THAN 70 PERCENT, FROM ABOUT \$270 MILLION TO \$83 MILLION. CONGRESS, HOWEVER, REJECTED WHAT THE SENATE CALLED A "DOCTRINE OF RETREAT," AND PASSED THE BUDGET BILL INCREASING THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PROGRAMS BY 4 PERCENT.

WHILE THE RECENTLY FIRED SECRETARY OF STATE REX TILLERSON DID NOT FIGHT TO PREVENT THE PROPOSED CUTS TO HIS DEPARTMENT, HE CRITICIZED CHINESE COMPETITION FOR GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE IN AMERICA'S BACKYARD FOLLOWING A JANUARY TRIP TO LATIN AMERICA. HE SAID:

"JUST THINK ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHINA MODEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE UNITED STATES VERSION. CHINA'S OFFER ALWAYS COME AT A PRICE – USUALLY IN THE FORM OF STATE-LED INVESTMENTS, CARRIED OUT BY IMPORTED CHINESE LABOR, ONEROUS LOANS, AND UNSUSTAINABLE DEBT. THE CHINA MODEL EXTRACTS PRECIOUS RESOURCES TO FEED ITS OWN ECONOMY, OFTEN WITH DISREGARD FOR THE LAWS OF THE LAND OR HUMAN RIGHTS."

CRITICISMS, HOWEVER, RING HOLLOW WHEN YOU ARE NOT IN THE GAME. AS THE US CUTS AND RETRENCHES, CHINA SPENDS WITH THE INTENTION OF OVERTAKING THE US. CAN YOU BLAME CHINA?

AS IF CRIPPLING AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC AND FOREIGN AID CAPABILITIES WERE NOT ENOUGH, PRESIDENT TRUMP WITHDREW THE US FROM THE TRANS PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (TTP) SHORTLY AFTER TAKING OFFICE. THE TPP, WHILE DOMESTICALLY UNPOPULAR, WOULD HAVE OFFERED AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE CHINA-CENTRIC ECONOMIC INTEGRATION INITIATIVES. IT ALSO WOULD

HAVE ENABLED THE UNITED STATES TO SET THE AGENDA AND WRITE THE RULES OF TRADE IN THE ASIA PACIFIC ACCORDING TO WESTERN VALUES AND INTERESTS.

THE ELEVEN REMAINING SIGNATORIES TO THE TPP DID NOT LOSE ANY TIME TO MOVE FORWARD AND SIGN THEIR OWN AGREEMENT, THE COMPREHENSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE AGREEMENT FOR TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (CPTPP), WITHOUT THE UNITED STATES. ADDITIONALLY, THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PLUS CHINA, INDIA, JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, AND NEW ZEALAND ARE PRESSING FORWARD WITH THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RCEP), WHICH IS SEEN AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE TPP THAT CONTAINS NO HUMAN RIGHTS OR LABOR STANDARDS. THESE AGREEMENTS WILL PROVIDE ENHANCED MARKET ACCESS FOR MEMBERS TO KEY ASIAN MARKETS.

CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY AT THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM IN HIS MAIDEN SPEECH IN DAVOS LAST YEAR TO OFFER A VIGOROUS DEFENSE OF FREE TRADE, MAKING A CASE FOR CHINESE LEADERSHIP. IN THE WAKE OF TRUMP'S RETREAT FROM TPP, HE POSITIONED CHINA AS A CHAMPION OF GLOBALIZATION AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND WOWED THE AUDIENCE SAYING, "WE MUST REMAIN COMMITTED TO PROMOTING FREE TRADE AND INVESTMENT THROUGH OPENING UP AND SAY NO TO PROTECTIONISM."

TRADE IS NOT THE ONLY AREA WHERE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP IS NOW ABSENT. PRESIDENT TRUMP WITHDREW THE US FROM THE PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT, A GLOBAL PACT OF NATIONS WHO VOLUNTARILY REDUCE THEIR GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IN AN EFFORT TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE. THE US, THE WORLD'S SECOND-LARGEST CARBON EMITTER AFTER CHINA, IS NOW THE ONLY NATION IN THE WORLD NOT IN THE ACCORD. ON THE HEELS OF THE US WITHDRAWAL, CHINESE PREMIER LI KEQIANG SAID AT A SPEECH IN BERLIN THAT FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE IS A "GLOBAL CONSENSUS" AND AN "INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY." CHINA IS TOUTING ITS LEADERSHIP ROLE AS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE ACCORD AND ANNOUNCED A MASSIVE CARBON MARKET TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE.

PULLING BACK ON TRADE AND CLIMATE CHANGE, THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S "AMERICA FIRST" FOREIGN POLICY HAS ALIENATED THE US FROM THE WORLD AND DIMINISHED ITS STANDING AS A GLOBAL LEADER. CHINESE LEADERS HAVE BEEN HAPPY TO TAKE THE UNITED STATES' PLACE AND EXPAND THEIR COUNTRY'S INFLUENCE IN THE REGION AND THE WORLD.

IT IS AXIOMATIC THAT AS THE UNITED STATES LOSES ITS DOMINANT GLOBAL ECONOMIC POSITION AND ABDICATES ITS LEADERSHIP ROLE, THAT IT WILL WIELD RELATIVELY LESS INFLUENCE OVER INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, CONSTRAINING AMERICA'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN THE GLOBAL ORDER ON TERMS MOST FAVORABLE TO WESTERN VALUES AND INTERESTS.

THE MILITARY – US STILL No. 1

THE US, HOWEVER, STILL FAR OUTSPENDS CHINA IN ONE AREA – WHO CAN TELL US WHAT AREA THAT IS?

ACCORDING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, THE UNITED STATES DEFENSE BUDGET FOR 2018 EXCEEDS 700 BILLION, WHILE CHINA'S MILITARY EXPENDITURES ARE ESTIMATED TO HAVE EXCEEDED 180 BILLION DOLLARS IN 2016 (LATEST FIGURES AVAILABLE). BUT CHINA IS FAST TRACKING ITS MILITARY DEVELOPMENT, GROWING ITS MILITARY BUDGET BY 7 PERCENT EACH YEAR FROM 2007 TO 2016. THE GLOBAL FIREPOWER INDEX, IN ITS 2017 MILITARY STRENGTH RANKING BY COUNTRY, PLACES CHINA AT NO. 3, WITH THE US AT THE TOP AND RUSSIA IN SECOND POSITION.

- CHINA, BOASTS THE LARGEST GROUND FORCE IN THE WORLD – MORE THAN 2.3 MILLION ACTIVE SERVICE MEMBERS, AND ANOTHER 1.1 MILLION IN RESERVES AND MILITARY POLICE, WHILE THE US HAS ABOUT 1.4 MILLION ACTIVE SERVICE MEMBERS.
- CHINA HAS MORE IN TOTAL LAND AND NAVAL FORCES, WHILE THE UNITED STATES BEATS CHINA IN THE AIR. BUT ON CAPABILITY IN EQUIPMENT, THE US HAS FOUR TIMES MORE FIGHTER JETS AND ATTACK HELICOPTERS, 10 TIMES MORE ARMORED FIGHTING VEHICLES (AFVs), AND THREE TIMES MORE DESTROYERS THAN CHINA. THE US ALSO HAS 19 AIRCRAFT CARRIERS TO CHINA'S ONE ALTHOUGH TWO DOMESTICALLY PRODUCED CARRIERS ARE UNDER CONSTRUCTION.
- IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AS OF JANUARY 2018, THE US HAS 6,800 WARHEADS TO CHINA'S 270. CHINA HAS AN ESTIMATED 143 LAND-BASED BALLISTIC MISSILES AND A FEW SUBMARINE-LAUNCHED BALLISTIC MISSILES (SLBM) WHILE THE US HAS 660 INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES.

AMERICA UNQUESTIONABLY STILL LEADS IN MILITARY STRENGTH, BUT CHINA'S MAJOR REORGANIZATION OF ITS MILITARY, LAUNCHED IN 2015, IS SPENDING HEAVILY TO MODERNIZE ITS NAVY, INCLUDING NUCLEAR-POWERED SUBMARINES, TO BE AT PARITY WITH THE UNITED STATES SHOULD THERE BE A CONFLICT IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT AND TO CREATE A MARITIME SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEAS. IGNORING A 2016 PERMANENT COURT OF ARBITRATION RULING THAT CHINA'S CLAIMS TO CONTROL THE BULK OF THESE WATERS HAVE NO LEGAL BASIS, CHINA CONTINUES TO STEADILY EXPAND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MILITARY OUTPOSTS ON CONTESTED ISLETS IN ONE OF THE BUSIEST TRADING ROUTES IN THE WORLD. AT THE SAME TIME, THE US NAVY CONTINUES TO CARRY OUT FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION OPERATIONS (FONOPS), SENDING WARSHIPS NEAR CHINA'S OUTPOSTS IN WHAT IT CLAIMS ARE INTERNATIONAL WATERS.

CHINA CONTINUES TO LAG FAR BEHIND THE UNITED STATES IN FORCE PROJECTION. THE UNITED STATES HAS AROUND 600 OVERSEAS MILITARY BASES, AND CHINA JUST COMPLETED ITS FIRST OVERSEAS MILITARY BASE IN DJIBOUTI IN 2017. HOW MANY OF YOU KNOW WHERE DJIBOUTI IS? YES, IT'S IN THE HORN OF AFRICA AND PROVIDES CRITICAL ACCESS TO THE INDIAN OCEAN SEA LANES. CHINA'S MILITARY IS ON THE MOVE, BUT ITS EFFORTS ARE STILL AIMED PRIMARILY AT A REGIONAL FOOTPRINT TO UPGRADE ITS FORCE UMBRELLA TO ENABLE IT TO CONTEST US MILITARY SUPERIORITY IN THE EVENT OF A REGIONAL CONFLICT, PARTICULARLY IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT.

THE DEFENSE BUDGET OF THE UNITED STATES, WHICH IS FOUR TIMES LARGER THAN CHINA'S, ENSURES THAT IT SHOULD REMAIN AHEAD OF CHINA MILITARILY FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. BUT ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, I BELIEVE OUR COUNTRY'S RESPONSE TO THE GREAT POWER CHALLENGE MUST GO BEYOND RELIANCE ON A STRONGER MILITARY. THE US STILL HOLDS A LARGE EDGE OVER CHINA ON SOFT POWER, ALTHOUGH IF LEFT UNTENDED, THE ADVANTAGE WILL DISSIPATE.

SOFT POWER

"SOFT POWER," A TERM ORIGINALLY COINED BY HARVARD PROFESSOR JOSEPH NYE, REFERS TO A COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO INFLUENCE OTHER COUNTRIES THROUGH ATTRACTION, RATHER THAN THROUGH COERCION.

AS EXPECTED, CHINA'S INFLUENCE AROUND THE WORLD IS ON THE RISE, AND THE US, THANKS TO TRUMP'S AMERICA FIRST AGENDA, IS LOSING GROUND. ACCORDING TO THE 2017 SOFT POWER 30 INDEX, AN ANNUAL GLOBAL RANKING OF SOFT POWER, CHINA'S INFLUENCE HAS RISEN FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW, UP TO 25TH WORLDWIDE FROM 28TH, WHILE THE US DROPPED FROM FIRST PLACE TO THIRD AFTER FRANCE AND GREAT BRITAIN. STILL, THE GAP BETWEEN THE US AND CHINA'S SOFT POWER IS HUGE, AND THE TOP TEN COUNTRIES IN THE SOFT POWER INDEX ARE ALL WESTERN, EXCEPT FOR JAPAN WHICH RANKS 6TH.

COMPARATIVE RESOURCES: RECOGNIZING IT HAS SOME CATCHING UP TO DO, IN THE LAST DECADE CHINA HAS INVESTED VAST SUMS TO ESTABLISH PROGRAMS TO ENHANCE THE COUNTRY'S IMAGE. THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (CCP) OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED ITS AGENDA FOR SOFT POWER UNDER PRESIDENT HU JINTAO IN 2007. XI JINPING ACCELERATED THE AGENDA, DECLARING IN 2014: "WE SHOULD INCREASE CHINA'S SOFT POWER, GIVE A GOOD CHINESE NARRATIVE, AND BETTER COMMUNICATE CHINA'S MESSAGE." ACCORDING TO GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR DAVID SHAMBAUGH, CHINA SPENDS \$10 BILLION PER YEAR ON ITS SOFT POWER INITIATIVES, NOT COUNTING ITS TRILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENTS IN BRI, AIIB AND AID PROGRAMS.

ACCORDING TO THE 2017 ANNUAL REPORT ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING, IN 2016 THE UNITED STATES SPENT ONLY \$2 BILLION ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY – WITH A MERE \$591 MILLION APPROPRIATED FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND \$752 MILLION FOR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING. THIS ACCOUNTED FOR LESS THAN ONE-FIFTH OF ONE PERCENT OF THE GOVERNMENT DISCRETIONARY BUDGET.

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES: AS A CENTERPIECE OF ITS SOFT POWER STRATEGY, BEIJING HAS ESTABLISHED MORE THAN 500 CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES IN MORE THAN 140 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD SINCE 2004. THESE INSTITUTES OFFER CHINESE LANGUAGE COURSES, COOKING AND CALLIGRAPHY CLASSES, AND CELEBRATIONS FOR CHINESE NATIONAL HOLIDAYS. THEY ARE SIMILAR IN FUNCTION TO THE UNITED KINGDOM'S BRITISH COUNCIL, FRANCE'S *ALLIANCE FRANÇAIS* AND SPAIN'S *INSTITUTO CERVANTES*. UNLIKE THESE ORGANIZATIONS, CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES ARE HOUSED WITHIN UNIVERSITIES TYPICALLY WITH A MINIMUM OF \$100,000 IN

ANNUAL SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS. CHINA HAS ALSO BUILT MORE THAN 500 CONFUCIUS CLASSROOMS IN THE UNITED STATES ALONE; THE CLASSROOMS PERFORM SIMILAR FUNCTIONS AS THE INSTITUTES, BUT ARE HOUSED IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

WHEN USIA SHUT DOWN IN 1999, THE US ALSO CLOSED ITS "INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTERS" AND LIBRARIES AROUND THE WORLD. IN THE FACE OF THE CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES' GROWTH, THE US EMBASSY IN BEIJING LAUNCHED THE AMERICAN CENTERS FOR CULTURAL EXCHANGE (ACCEX) IN CHINA IN 2010, OFFERING ONE-TIME \$100,000 GRANTS TO AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES TO SPONSOR THESE CENTERS. USCET IS THE ONLY NON-UNIVERSITY TO HAVE BEEN AWARDED TWO OF THESE CENTER GRANTS. TO-DATE, 19 CENTERS WERE FUNDED FROM 2011-2012. BUT LACKING FUNDING AND FACING PRESSURES FROM TIGHTENING CHINESE RESTRICTIONS ON THE SPREAD OF WESTERN IDEAS, SEVERAL CENTERS HAVE SHUT DOWN AND ACCEX'S FUTURE IS IN DOUBT. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ACCEX ILLUSTRATES THE HUGE ASYMMETRY IN THE US-CHINA PUBLIC DIPLOMACY RELATIONSHIP. AS A STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL SAID AT THE LAUNCH OF ACCEX, "THE CHINESE HAVE A LOT OF THINGS GOING ON OVER HERE (IN THE US), AND HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REALLY LIMIT WHAT THE UNITED STATES IS ABLE TO DO IN CHINA."

WHILE CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES HAVE BEEN OPERATING FREELY ACROSS THE US, IT HAS DRAWN HEAVY CRITICISM FOR THEIR ATTEMPTS AT CENSORSHIP. FOR EXAMPLE, IN 2009, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY CANCELED ITS INVITATION TO THE DALAI LAMA AT ITS CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE'S BEHEST. THIS MONTH, U.S. REP. JOE WILSON OF SOUTH CAROLINA INTRODUCED A MEASURE TO MANDATE REGISTRATION OF THESE INSTITUTES WITH THE FBI AS FOREIGN AGENTS, ACCUSING THEM OF BEING PROPAGANDA OUTLETS. THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT, PERHAPS UNAWARE OF THE TERM'S NEGATIVE CONNOTATION, OPENLY REFERS TO THE INSTITUTES AS "AN IMPORTANT PART OF CHINA'S OVERSEAS PROPAGANDA SET-UP."

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA: AS PART OF ITS SOFT POWER PUSH, CHINA HAS SPENT VAST SUMS TO BOOST ITS OVERSEAS MEDIA PRESENCE. XINHUA, THE COUNTRY'S MAIN NEWS AGENCY, HAS GROWN TO MORE THAN 162 BUREAUS WITH PLANS TO REACH 200 BY 2020. IN 2016 CHINA REBRANDED ITS MAIN INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTER AS "CGTN," CHINA GLOBAL TELEVISION NETWORK, BROADCASTING FROM SIX CHANNELS IN MORE THAN 70 COUNTRIES IN ENGLISH, ARABIC, FRENCH, RUSSIAN, AND SPANISH. AND CHINA RADIO INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTS IN MORE THAN 60 LANGUAGES THROUGH AFFILIATES AROUND THE WORLD.

JUST THIS WEEK, THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY ANNOUNCED THE NEXT STEP IN ITS PLAN TO PROJECT A MORE POSITIVE IMAGE ABROAD AND TO COMPETE WITH WESTERN MEDIA IN GLOBAL NEWS COVERAGE – IT WILL CONSOLIDATE CCTV, CHINA RADIO INTERNATIONAL AND CHINA NATIONAL RADIO UNDER A SINGLE NETWORK NAMED VOICE OF CHINA, ANSWERABLE DIRECTLY TO THE PARTY'S PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT. MOVIES, TELEVISION, BOOKS AND RADIO PROGRAMS WILL NOW BE UNDER THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THE PARTY. ACCORDING TO THE CCP-CONTROLLED PAPER, *GLOBAL TIMES*, THE MERGER WILL "CONCENTRATE THE RESOURCES AND

AUTHORITY TO IMPROVE CHINA'S INFLUENCE OVERSEAS AND PROMOTE CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE."

STATE CONTROL OF THE MEDIA IS NOTHING NEW. CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION HAVE BEEN CENTRAL TO THE PARTY'S STRATEGY SINCE MAO, AND CHINESE MEDIA HAVE ALWAYS FOLLOWED THE BIDDING OF THE STATE. UNTIL NOW, IT SEEMED INCONCEIVABLE THAT BEIJING COULD EVER HOPE TO MANAGE THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF INFORMATION, AS CONVENTIONAL WISDOM HELD THAT THE FORCE OF THE INTERNET WAS UNSTOPPABLE. BUT CHINA IS MOBILIZING INFORMATION RESOURCES LIKE NONE OTHER BEFORE IT. AT THE LEAST, CHINA'S GROWING COMMAND OF THE GLOBAL INFORMATION MARKETPLACE IN THE SHORT TERM IS LIKELY TO RESULT IN THE PROMOTION OF NORMS AND STANDARDS UNFAVORABLE TO DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND FAVORABLE TO AUTHORITARIAN PRACTICES WORLDWIDE.

US GLOBAL IMAGE IN STEEP DECLINE: US IMAGE AROUND THE WORLD HAS BEEN SLIPPING SINCE THE INVASION OF IRAQ IN 2003, REBOUNDED AFTER THE ELECTION OF PRESIDENT OBAMA. PRESIDENT TRUMP'S BROAD UNPOPULARITY HAS LED TO STEEP DECLINES IN US FAVORABILITY RATINGS AROUND THE WORLD. AMERICA'S WEAKENING IMAGE HAS TAKEN A TOLL ON THE COUNTRY'S ONCE-SOLID LEAD OVER CHINA. THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S MOST RECENT POLL SPANNING 37 NATIONS FOUND THAT US FAVORABILITY RATINGS SLUMPED TO 49 PERCENT FROM 64 PERCENT AT THE OF BARAK OBAMA'S PRESIDENCY. THE NUMBER OF NATIONS IN WHICH THE US HOLDS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN FAVORABILITY OVER CHINA, MOREOVER, HAS DROPPED BY HALF FROM 25 TO 12. IN SIX NATIONS – SPAIN, MEXICO, TURKEY, AUSTRALIA, PERU AND SENEGAL, CHINA HAS OVERTAKEN THE US IN FAVORABILITY.

THE FACT REMAINS, HOWEVER, THAT AMERICAN SOFT POWER REMAINS STRONG. WHILE THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE RELATIVE POWER OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE WORLD IS LOSING GROUND, AS THE PERCENTAGE CONTRIBUTION OF THE US ECONOMY TO GLOBAL GDP IS FALLING AND SOME OF AMERICA'S MAJOR EUROPEAN ALLIES INCREASINGLY SEE CHINA AS THE WORLD'S ECONOMIC LEADER, THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE FROM OPINION SURVEYS WHICH SUGGEST THAT THE UNHAPPINESS WITH THE US IS NOT A REJECTION OF US VALUES. 58 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED BY PEW STILL HAD A POSITIVE VIEW OF AMERICANS IN GENERAL. ALTHOUGH AMERICA'S IMAGE HAS GONE UP AND DOWN IN THE LAST FIVE DECADES, IT HAS TYPICALLY BOUNCED BACK BECAUSE OF A RESERVOIR OF GOOD WILL AND THE RESILIENCE OF AMERICAN VALUES.

THE SUPPORT FOR AMERICAN VALUES HAS DEEP ROOTS THAT GO BACK TO THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY AFTER WORLD WAR II. AT THAT TIME THE US WAS SO OVERWHELMINGLY POWERFUL RELATIVE TO THE REST OF THE WORLD THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO IMPOSE AN AMERICAN EMPIRE. INSTEAD, THE US CHAMPIONED A LIBERAL WORLD ORDER THAT HAS BECOME WIDELY ACCEPTED, BASED ON INTERNATIONAL LAW, DEMOCRACY, FREE ENTERPRISE, FREE TRADE AND HUMAN RIGHTS. BACKED BY AMERICAN POWER, THE SYSTEM FLOURISHED, SUPPORTING SEVEN DECADES OF PROGRESS, GREAT-POWER PEACE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE IDEA OF AMERICA HAS REMAINED RELATIVELY CONSTANT BECAUSE THE GENERALLY POSITIVE INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN IMAGE FROM THE 1950'S TO 2000 STILL RESONATES. POLLING RESULTS SHOW THAT COUNTRIES SURVEYED VIEWED THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUCH MORE POSITIVELY THAN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE, EVEN IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES – BECAUSE THE US DERIVES MUCH OF ITS SOFT POWER NOT FROM THE GOVERNMENT, BUT FROM CIVIL SOCIETY. PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD HAD PROBLEMS WITH US POLICIES, NOT ITS VALUES.

LIMITATIONS OF CHINA'S SOFT POWER: CHINA MEANWHILE FACES AN UPHILL BATTLE IN ACHIEVING ITS SOFT POWER ASPIRATIONS – NO MATTER HOW MUCH IT INVESTS IN BURNISHING ITS IMAGE ABROAD. AS NYE AND OTHERS HAVE POINTED OUT, SOFT POWER CANNOT BE BOUGHT. IT MUST BE EARNED – THROUGH MAKING OR DOING THINGS WITH GLOBAL APPEAL, NOT BY GOVERNMENT FIAT. AND IT IS BEST EARNED WHEN A SOCIETY'S CITIZENS ARE ALLOWED TO INTERACT FREELY WITH THE WORLD, RATHER THAN BEING CONTROLLED AND CENSORED BY AUTHORITIES.

ULTIMATELY, THE DISSONANCE BETWEEN THE IMAGE THAT CHINA STRIVES TO PROJECT AND THE REALITY OF ITS AUTHORITARIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM POSES THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO CHINA'S SOFT POWER AGENDA. LIMITATIONS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND POLITICAL REPRESSION UNDERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHINA'S SOFT POWER. AS THE *ECONOMIST* PUT IT, "WITHOUT THE FREE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND THE ABILITY OF CHINESE CITIZENS TO ENGAGE IN OPEN DEBATE, THE GAP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT'S PORTRAYAL AND CHINA'S REALITY WILL LIKELY GROW.....CHINA WILL FIND IT HARD TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE NATIONS AS LONG AS IT MUZZLES ITS BEST ADVOCATES."

THESE CRITIQUES ARE BORNE OUT BY LOOKING AT PUBLIC OPINION POLLS THAT ASSESS GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS OF CHINA. CHINA'S SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT IN BOOSTING ITS SOFT POWER APPEARS TO HAVE HAD LITTLE EFFECT IN RAISING ITS FAVORABILITY RATINGS. GRANTED THAT PEW POLLS SHOW THE OVERALL STANDING OF THE US ON THE WORLD STAGE HAVING DROPPED FROM 64 PERCENT AT THE END OF THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION TO 49 PERCENT IN 2017, BUT THE VIEW OF CHINA AT THE SAME TIME REMAINED RELATIVELY FLAT, DROPPING FROM 50 TO 47 PERCENT.

(PEW RESEARCH POLLS FROM 2005 TO 2016 SHOW THAT CHINA'S FAVORABILITY HAS NOT RISEN SIGNIFICANTLY IN ANY COUNTRY BESIDES RUSSIA OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS. CHINA GENERALLY ENJOYS HIGHER FAVORABILITY IN AFRICA, WHERE AROUND 75% OF RESPONDENTS IN COUNTRIES LIKE NIGER AND GHANA VIEW CHINA FAVORABLY. TO A LESSER EXTENT CHINA ALSO ENJOYS HIGH FAVORABILITY IN LATIN AMERICA, RANGING FROM 66% IN CHILE TO 47% IN MEXICO. DESPITE CHINA'S BEST EFFORTS, ITS FAVORABILITY HAS DROPPED PRECIPITOUSLY IN COUNTRIES LIKE THE UNITED STATES, JAPAN, AND GERMANY).

CONCLUSION: INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND EXCHANGE NEEDED

NEVERTHELESS, CHINA OVERTAKING THE US AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST ECONOMY ADJUSTING FOR PURCHASING POWER PARITY IS STILL THE BIG NEWS IN THE CHANGING GEOSTRATEGIC EQUATION. BUT IT WILL BE SOME YEARS YET BEFORE CHINA WILL BE AS RICH AS THE US, CATCHING UP TO AMERICAN LIVING STANDARDS. AND IT WILL TAKE EVEN LONGER BEFORE THE CHINESE YUAN CAN DISPLACE THE DOLLAR AS THE GLOBAL CURRENCY.

WHILE THE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES THAT SEE CHINA RATHER THAN THE US AS TOP DOG HAS DOUBLED, MORE STILL NAME THE US AS THE WORLD'S LEADING ECONOMIC POWER. INTERESTINGLY, IT IS AMERICA'S ALLIES – 7 OF THE 10 EUROPEAN NATIONS PLUS CANADA AND AUSTRALIA –WHICH SEE CHINA AS #1.

ECONOMIC POWER, MOREOVER, IS NOT THE ONLY PARAMETER TO DETERMINE WHO IS TOP DOG. TRADITIONALLY, A SUPERPOWER WIELDED DOMINANCE AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE IN ALL SPHERES – ECONOMY, MILITARY, POLITICS AND CULTURE. RECENTLY, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION HAVE BEEN ADDED. AS NOTED, CHINA IS FAR FROM BEING ON TOP OF ALL THE REQUISITE SPHERES.

THE BIGGER STORY IN THE CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL EQUATION, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE POST-WORLD WAR II LIBERAL GLOBAL ORDER THAT AMERICA HAS CHAMPIONED AND UPHELD FOR SEVEN DECADES IS IN CRISIS. WE ARE FACED WITH THE DECLINING CONFIDENCE, CAPACITY, AND WILL OF THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD, AND ESPECIALLY OF THE UNITED STATES, TO MAINTAIN THE DOMINANT POSITION IT HAS HELD IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM SINCE 1945. WITH THE ELECTION OF DONALD TRUMP, A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS HAVE SIGNALLED THEIR UNWILLINGNESS TO SHOULDER THE BURDENS OF AMERICAN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN GUARANTEEING THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER.

WHILE TRUMP'S "AMERICA FIRST" POLICY IS HARDLY A RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM AMERICAN TRADITION AS THE US HAS FOR DECADES SWUNG BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM, AMERICA FIRST AND, EVEN, ISOLATIONISM, TRUMP HAS UNLEASHED POLICIES THAT HAVE SHARPENED THE CRISIS OF THE WESTERN-CENTERED ORDER. IN PURSUIT OF AMERICA FIRST, TRUMP HAS CHALLENGED LONG-STANDING US ALLIANCES, RIPPED UP FREE-TRADE DEALS, IMPOSED PROTECTIONIST TARIFFS, AND GENERALLY RETREATED FROM THE POST-COLD WAR STRATEGY OF THE UNITED STATES UPHOLDING LIBERAL NORMS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AND PRESERVING AN OPEN ECONOMIC ORDER.

TRUMP HAS OPENED THE DOOR TO THE END OF WESTERN-LED GLOBALIZATION AND THE UNIPOLAR WORLD OF A US-LED GLOBAL ORDER. WE MAY BE RETURNING TO A PERIOD OF MAJOR POWER COMPETITION FOR SPHERES OF INFLUENCE IN WHICH NON-WESTERN POWERS, ESPECIALLY CHINA, WILL PLAY A BIGGER ROLE IN SUSTAINING A NEW GLOBAL ORDER.

CHINA DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE ALL THE ATTRIBUTES NECESSARY TO BE TOP DOG, NOT RIGHT NOW. BUT THE US SHOULD PREPARE FOR A MULTI-POLAR CENTURY UNLIKE THE AMERICA-CENTRIC ONE THAT HAS DOMINATED THE WORLD SINCE THE END OF WWII. THE KEY POINT TO

REMEMBER, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE VERY QUESTION OF "WHO'S GOING TO BE TOP DOG" LIES AT THE HEART OF WHAT IS DRIVING THE US-CHINA RELATIONSHIP IN A FAR MORE ADVERSARIAL, ZERO-SUM DIRECTION, RAISING THE DANGER OF THE TWO COUNTRIES FALLING INTO THE "THUCYDIDES TRAP."

UNFORTUNATELY, THE DOWNTURN IN RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND THE US THIS TIME AROUND IS NOT A TEMPORARY PHENOMENON, LIKE PREVIOUS CYCLICAL UPS AND DOWNS. THERE ARE TOUGH STRUCTURAL CAUSES THAT CONSTITUTE REAL CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP, WHICH WILL NOT SOON RIGHT ITSELF. TO PREVENT THE INEVITABILITY OF WAR, THE US, CHINA AND CHINA'S NEIGHBORS WILL NEED TO UNDERSTAND AND MANAGE THE STRUCTURAL FORCES IN PLAY.

I FOUNDED THE US-CHINA EDUCATION TRUST (USCET) ON THE CAMPUS OF PEKING UNIVERSITY 20 YEARS AGO BECAUSE I HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED THAT MUTUAL MISUNDERSTANDING AND DISTRUST WERE FEEDING AN UNTENABLE VOLATILITY IN US-CHINA RELATIONS. I SAW THE NEED TO BUILD STRATEGIC TRUST BETWEEN THE TWO DOMINANT POWERS TO HELP EACH COUNTRY BETTER UNDERSTAND THE OTHER'S ACTIONS, PREVENTING MISCALCULATIONS FROM TURNING INTO CATASTROPHIC ARMED CONFLICT. SINCE 1998, USCET HAS BEEN PROMOTING EDUCATION AND EXCHANGE, TWO OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY'S MOST EFFECTIVE TOOLS, TO STRENGTHEN AMERICAN STUDIES AND SUPPORT MEDIA EDUCATION IN CHINA. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IS AT THE HEART OF WHAT USCET DOES.

TO CONCLUDE, EVERY ONE OF US HAS A STAKE IN CHINA AND THE US LEARNING TO LIVE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN PEACE. LET ME LEAVE YOU WITH THESE WORDS, WHICH I WROTE IN 2011 TO DESCRIBE USCET'S WORK. "MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, WE STRIVE FOR BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND CHINA TO AVOID LAST CENTURY'S CONFLICTS. WE STRENGTHEN COOPERATION SO AS TO UNDERMINE OUR RELIANCE ON HARD POWER. BY UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER, WE SAP OUR COUNTRIES' NEED TO COMPEL EACH OTHER PRIMARILY THROUGH FORCE." AND WE HELP TO ENSURE THAT THE US AND CHINA AVOID THE "THUCYDIDES TRAP."