

Secretary Panetta meets with then-Vice President Xi Jinping of China to discuss ways to advance communications



DOD (Erim A. Kirk-Cuomo)

THE EFFECTS OF 9/11 ON CHINA'S STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT ILLUSIVE GAINS AND TANGIBLE SETBACKS

By MARC KOEHLER

The clear victor of the global war on terror appears to be China.¹

—Anatol Lieven

Some Chinese grand strategists are said to have breathed sighs of relief on September 12, 2001. Relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) had been heading downhill in the months and years leading up to that day, with increasing prospects for a significant clash. But even before the fires at the World Trade Center and Pentagon were completely out, it was immediately clear—to Chinese experts and to most of the world—that Washington's strategic focus would be shifting 3,000 miles to the west, away from East Asia and the Taiwan Strait and onto the mountains and deserts of Afghanistan. U.S. strategists who had been increasingly concerned about China's rising power would now be engaged around the clock on what would become known as the war on terror.

China, therefore, would lie within a strategic penumbra for a number of years, offering it a chance to develop quietly a variety of coercive military capabilities intended to expand its power in East Asia. This, in turn, would allow it to pressure pro-independence forces on Taiwan and raise substantially the projected cost to U.S. forces that might be called on to react to PRC military provocations in the region. Such, at least, was the initial thinking among many PRC experts and international observers.

But after a year or two, strategists across the globe started to have second thoughts. By the end of 2001, after a handful of U.S. special operations forces ousted the Taliban regime in a matter of weeks, global assessments of U.S. power started shifting. Governments throughout the region scrambled to accommodate the aggressive and determined entry

of U.S. forces into Central Asia, and the exploding U.S. military footprint suggested plans for a more enduring American presence in China's rear areas. It appeared to be too soon, therefore, for leaders across Eurasia to resign themselves to the Chinese hegemony that had seemed inevitable before 9/11.

As the second decade of the 21st century begins, the global landscape is changing once more. China is rapidly expanding a wide variety of military capabilities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which in turn is bringing about a new level of assertiveness in PRC foreign policy. Despite the multiyear efforts of U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) soldiers and civilians, success in Afghanistan remains in question.

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U.S. influence in the Middle East is diminished after the Iraq invasion. The measurable costs to the United States from the war on terror include at least \$1 trillion and more than 6,000 U.S. dead; less quantifiable are the global costs to the U.S. reputation and soft power. But at the same time, U.S. alliances with Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Australia are robust and expanding, a nascent U.S.-India friendship is deepening, and the U.S. military footprint in Central Asia remains significant. There are several drivers of these relationships, the most important of which is strategic mistrust over China's intentions. In short, the PLA military buildup, coupled with Beijing's recent foreign policy aggressiveness, seems to be driving Eurasian nations closer to the United States.

How, then, should one assess the impact of 9/11 on China's strategic environment? Ten years after the terror attacks against New York City and Washington, DC, is China better off strategically? Or do the gains and losses balance out? This article examines these questions, first by outlining the history of Sino-American relations to illustrate the downward spiral that marked the period up to 9/11. Next it discusses the strategic gains that PRC scholars and others thought would accrue to China in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, and the PLA military buildup that ensued. The strategic costs to China that became evident in the years that followed

had identified with Clausewitzian precision as the center of gravity of Taiwan's defense). Later that year, Deng Xiaoping became the first communist Chinese leader to visit the United States. His pragmatism and apparent moderation impressed U.S. audiences, sparking popular support for enhanced bilateral ties.³ China's soft power was growing.⁴

But Sino-American ties ruptured severely on June 4, 1989, when PLA troops in and around Beijing's Tiananmen Square opened fire on unarmed students and other civilians protesting against corruption and in favor of democracy. Western media coverage of China switched overnight, portraying the Chinese leadership as barbaric and backward.⁵ Parliamentarians and nongovernmental organizations expressed revulsion at the massacre and demanded their governments cease business as usual with "the butchers of Beijing." Western governments responded with all instruments of national power including canceling existing arms deals, ceasing military-to-military exchanges, imposing sanctions on the regime and travel bans on high-level PRC officials, suspending loans and export credits, and tightening controls on exports of military hardware and advanced technology to China.⁶ U.S. public opinion of the PRC government declined sharply, to this day never returning to the positive levels that prevailed before 1989.⁷

During the Clinton years, Sino-American ties continued to be a target of critics in both countries. Beijing's coercive population control policies were attacked by Christian groups while organized labor raised concerns over goods produced by PRC prisoners for sale in U.S. markets. Tibet became a cause célèbre in Congress and on college campuses across the country. But in addition to concerns about human rights, U.S. worries about security issues now became much more pronounced. For example, despite intensive diplomacy, the Clinton administration failed to prevent Chinese proliferation of missile and nuclear technology to Iran and Pakistan. Washington imposed sanctions on PRC entities for violations of international regimes.¹⁰

PRC strategists assessed that U.S. and Western attacks on Moscow's human rights practices had been instrumental in weakening the foundation of Soviet control, so they worried about the same with regard to China. They viewed the imposition of sanctions as part of an effort to "contain" China. Starting in 1985, PRC leaders ordered the PLA to downgrade preparations for a major war with the Soviet Union and begin planning for fighting local, limited wars on China's periphery, such as a conflict over Taiwan.¹¹ After the 1991 Gulf War, PLA planners also began to concentrate on the possibility of war with the United States; war games against "the American 'enemy'" became standard.¹² The Taiwan Strait Crises in 1995 and 1996 and the accidental U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 exacerbated an increasingly antagonistic relationship.¹³

Debate about "the China threat" heated up globally. Congress reacted by directing the Secretary of Defense to begin submitting annual reports on "the current and future military strategy" of the PRC.¹⁴ Congress also established in 2000 the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission to "monitor, investigate and submit to Congress an annual report on the national security implications" of Sino-American trade, and to focus as well on Chinese proliferation practices and restrictions on free speech.¹⁵ Congress also set up the Congressional-Executive Commission on Human Rights to "monitor human rights and the development of the rule of law in China" and to report annually on these topics.¹⁶

Against this backdrop, George W. Bush entered the White House in 2001 promising

from the depths of the Korean War to the heights of President Richard Nixon's groundbreaking visit to China in 1972, Sino-American relations have been complicated

are analyzed in the subsequent section. This article concludes with an assessment of the situation as of 2011, arguing that ultimately China lost more than it gained in the aftermath of 9/11.

Strategic and Historical Context

From the depths of the Korean War to the heights of President Richard Nixon's groundbreaking visit to China in 1972, Sino-American relations have been complicated. The shared perception that Soviet power was growing, and threatening, brought the two sides together in the early 1970s and kept frictions to a minimum for nearly two decades.² Diplomatic ties were established in 1979, which necessitated the termination of the U.S.-Taiwan defense treaty (which Beijing

During the same period, two other global events had significant impacts on Sino-American relations. First, Taiwan's authoritarian regime began to give way to representative democracy. In 1989, as PRC authorities unleashed the crackdown in Tiananmen, Taiwan held its first multiparty elections, increasing support for Taiwan in the United States—especially in Congress.⁸ Second, the dramatic collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe starting in 1989, and of the Soviet Union itself in 1991, undercut the strategic rationale for collaboration with China. Absent an existential threat from the Soviet Union, the ability of the White House to cite national security concerns to override pluralistic U.S. domestic interests eroded.⁹

to treat China not as the “strategic partner” that his predecessor had talked about, but as a “strategic competitor.”¹⁷ Bush was determined to raise the profile of U.S. allies in Asia while downgrading the role of China.¹⁸ Senior administration officials also departed from historical practice by intimating greater willingness to consider significant arms sales and diplomatic support for Taiwan.¹⁹

But these early events in the Bush administration paled in comparison to what happened on April 1, 2001, when a PLA fighter jet attempting to buzz a U.S. Navy EP-3 surveillance plane inadvertently crashed into the EP-3. The PLA pilot was killed. The EP-3 made an emergency landing on a PLA airfield. China released the American aircrew after 11 days, but kept the aircraft longer to examine fully the sensitive electronics on board.²⁰ Administration officials were furious, which no doubt helped inform the decision 3 weeks later to announce the offer of a significant U.S. arms package to Taiwan. Asked 2 days later what he would do to defend Taiwan, President Bush responded, “whatever it took to help Taiwan defend herself.”²¹ Beijing was stunned.

Thus, three decades after Nixon’s strategic breakthrough, Sino-American relations were quickly spiraling downhill. On the eve of 9/11, there was little reason for optimism that bilateral relations would recover anytime soon.

9/11 and Strategic Gains for China

In the days and weeks after September 11, 2001, observers in China and around the world saw the possibility of at least three strategic gains accruing to China.

Easing of Tensions. First, Sino-American tensions quickly relaxed as the Bush administration began working to build an international coalition against terrorism and PRC officials began stressing a common interest in fighting terrorism. That China was a veto-wielding member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council was also a consideration to the extent the administration was planning to gain global support for its military response through UN resolutions.

For Beijing, 9/11 was quickly seen as an opportunity to put Sino-U.S. relations “back on the healthy development track” and to halt the steady deterioration in relations that had accelerated during 2001.²² Among the benefits that Beijing hoped for were diminished U.S. support for Taiwan,

U.S. backing for Chinese efforts to control its own “terrorists”—ethnic Uighurs living in Muslim-majority regions of western China—with the additional benefit of U.S. attacks against extremists in Afghanistan who were believed to be aiding Uighur separatist groups,²³ and a generally more stable relationship with the United States,

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which by 2001 was both the largest market for Chinese exports and the largest source of foreign direct investment to China.²⁴

Perhaps sensing an opportunity to shift the bilateral relationship into a more positive direction, President Jiang Zemin was among the first world leaders to contact the White House, sending a telegram on September 11 and calling President Bush on September 12. Jiang’s message termed terrorism “a common scourge” and offered sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims.²⁵ President Bush wrote in his memoirs that Jiang had pledged during his phone call “to help in any way he could.”²⁶

Chinese support took several forms. Before the year was out, China had voted in favor of four UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) dealing with Afghanistan and global counterterrorism efforts, including UNSCR 1368, which justified a vigorous international response to those who carried out the 9/11 attacks. As Beijing had only 2 years earlier strongly protested U.S. “interventionism” in the 1999 Kosovo campaign, its first-ever endorsement of U.S. military action against another state was seen in Washington as a significant, and welcome, departure from past practice.²⁷

For its moral support and lack of obstructionism, Beijing was quickly upgraded in status within the Bush administration. The President traveled there within a month of 9/11 and again in February 2002; he would travel twice more before the end of his second term, including to the 2008 Olympics. In contrast, no other President had visited China more than once.²⁸ Moreover, by the end of 2003, Washington acted on several PRC priorities. For example, it declared a dormant Uighur entity, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a terrorist group in August 2002; despite opposition from Congress, Bush pledged in 2003 not to repeat the

annual exercise of submitting an anti-China resolution at the annual meeting of the UN Human Rights Committee;²⁹ and on China’s top concern, Taiwan, the administration began to apply diplomatic pressure on Taipei not to take symbolic steps toward independence, such as by holding a referendum on the question.³⁰

America Restrained? A second strategic benefit that PRC strategists thought would accrue from the 9/11 attacks was that their chief geopolitical rival, the United States, would become mired down in Afghanistan. Soon after 9/11, commentators in official PRC media expressed expectations that Afghanistan would turn into “another Vietnam.” Some argued that this expectation lay behind Beijing’s expression of support for the U.S. military response.³¹

Moreover, even where it was not engaged in armed conflict, the United States was suffering from a fast degradation of its soft power. Negative attitudes toward U.S. policy among Muslims were already high by 2002.³² After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, hostility increased, spreading for the first time beyond the Middle East to Muslim nations such as Indonesia.³³ For influential Chinese scholar Wang Jisi, director of the Institute of International Strategic Studies at the Central Party School of the Communist Party, the Iraq invasion had resulted in “international isolation” of the United States, providing China with “new, albeit limited, opportunities for maneuver. So long as the U.S. image remains tainted, China will have greater leverage in multilateral settings.”³⁴

Strategic Blind Spot. The third benefit for China flowing from 9/11 involved the strategic shift that occurred throughout the U.S. national security community. Indeed, informed observers termed 9/11 a “miracle” and a “heaven-sent opportunity” for Beijing. Hong Kong scholar Frank Ching wrote in 2011 that, “from China’s point of view, the [9/11] attacks were a blessing in disguise. . . . China owes a huge debt of gratitude to Osama bin Laden.”³⁵ Writing 4 years after the event, Wang Jisi noted that “the readjustment of the center of gravity of U.S. global strategy has determined that for several years

to come it will not regard China as its main security threat.³⁶

Although it is hard to quantify, the fact is that the 9/11 attacks effectively shifted the focus of U.S. strategists and decisionmakers away from China.³⁷ For example, in their recently published memoirs, top Bush administration officials mentioned China much less often than their predecessors.³⁸ The frequency of congressional action on China also dropped significantly. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held 11 hearings on China during 106th Congress (1999–2000), including on its military buildup,

Significantly, it appears that Beijing drastically increased its already high rate of defense expenditure immediately after 9/11. By some estimates, China's defense spending more than tripled between 2001 and 2011.⁴⁶ Why PRC leaders decided to ramp up spending after 9/11 is a matter of debate, although it would appear to be a rational response to an assessment that other global actors would not be paying attention.

In any event, China's expanding military capability and booming economy⁴⁷ seem to have emboldened many of its national security decisionmakers. PRC diplomats

could compete toe-to-toe with the United States.⁵⁴ All Central Asian states quickly offered U.S. forces overflight rights, while Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan also opened their bases to U.S. troops and aircraft. These states had multiple interests in a robust U.S. presence, but they generally shared a desire to see a third global power present in what had largely been contested ground between China and Russia, something that allowed Central Asian governments more latitude in balancing against Moscow and Beijing.⁵⁵

South Asia. U.S. ties to China's key South Asian ally, Pakistan, deepened right after 9/11. U.S. forces quickly deployed to air and naval bases in the country, albeit on a small scale to avoid creating political problems for Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.⁵⁶ By September 22, Washington had lifted all sanctions imposed since 1990; a month later, it was starting to provide nearly \$700 million in budgetary support and security assistance.⁵⁷ On the diplomatic front, President Bush invited Musharraf to the White House in 2002 and to the more prestigious destination of Camp David in 2003, during which he declared Pakistan a "major non-NATO ally" and offered a \$3 billion aid package.⁵⁸

Despite the initial post-9/11 warmth, U.S.-Pakistani ties cooled as the decade wore on. In the last 60 years, the two countries have seen their strategic interests overlap only when the shared perception of the Soviet threat was high. At other times, threat perceptions diverged. Islamabad fears India's superior military power, and its security services have supported Islamic extremist networks whose perceived value lies in their ability to launch attacks in Kashmir, tying up large numbers of Indian troops in locations away from the Pakistani border. Islamabad also wants a Pakistan-friendly regime to its rear in Afghanistan and supports at least some extremist groups there. But in the post-9/11 era, state support for extremism ensures a clash of vital interests with Washington.

Pakistan's support for terrorism affects China, too. Islamic extremists are angry over Beijing's repression of Chinese Muslims,⁵⁹ and there are indications that some terrorist networks in Pakistan are supporting Uighur separatists.⁶⁰ But while concerned, PRC strategists remain focused on their larger interest in South Asia: keeping potential

despite gains they perceived after 9/11, by 2002 PRC observers also started to focus on strategic setbacks

human rights practices, trade disputes, and security of Taiwan. But no subsequent session of Congress has held even half that number.³⁹

And what did China do with its time in the strategic shadows? It quickly accelerated and broadened its military buildup, most aggressively in pursuit of "the world's most active land-based ballistic and cruise missile program"—the military instrument of power most effective at altering the strategic balance across the Taiwan Strait and at putting U.S. forces in the region at risk.⁴⁰ In 2002, China was assessed to have 350 short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) deployed opposite Taiwan,⁴¹ and by 2011, it had 1,000–1,200 SRBMs opposite Taiwan, along with hundreds of other new longer range missiles targeting U.S. and allied bases throughout Asia.⁴² In other areas, it rushed forward production and purchase of fourth-generation fighter jets, modern air defenses, conventional and nuclear-powered attack and ballistic missile submarines, a range of space-denial capabilities, and the ability to attack U.S. computer networks.⁴³

Since at least 2005, China's political-military goal has been described as the development of antiaccess/area-denial capabilities to restrict the U.S. freedom of action in the western Pacific and threaten U.S. bases in the region with missiles capable of overwhelming missile defenses.⁴⁴ China's broader political-military strategy, experts argue, includes "reducing the salience of U.S. power to support allies in the region, and undercutting the credibility of the U.S. extended deterrent" so that allies and other regional actors may feel compelled, over time, to accommodate Chinese interests.⁴⁵

were sent across Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America in what multiple scholars termed a "charm offensive," seeking to assure counterparts of China's "peaceful rise."⁴⁸ By 2007, public opinion surveys in Asia showed Beijing was more trusted to wield global power than Washington.⁴⁹

Strategic Setbacks

Despite the gains they perceived in the weeks and months after 9/11, by 2002 PRC observers also started to focus on strategic setbacks—setbacks that are evident when examining the reaction of key nations on China's periphery.

Central Asia. Checked to the north by Russia, to the south by India, and to the east by U.S. allies Japan and South Korea, Beijing since the early 1990s had viewed Central Asia as an opening to expand its influence, trade, and access to energy resources.⁵⁰ It also saw potential threats in the region from growing Islamic extremism.⁵¹ In 1996, China organized what became known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which included Russia and the Central Asian states and was formed primarily to promote security cooperation against "extremists and separatists," and secondarily to expand trade.⁵² Hope and fear motivated Central Asian states to join the SCO—hope for an active PRC role in a region historically dominated by Russia, and fear of Islamic extremism.⁵³

But the speed with which U.S. forces crushed the Taliban in the fall of 2001 served as a vivid illustration that the SCO was ineffective in comparison, and that China still had a long way to go before it

rival India tied down on the subcontinent.⁶¹ Beijing must perform a delicate balancing act. If it gets too close to Islamabad, it drives New Delhi into a tighter relationship with Washington; too much distance from Islamabad, however, creates an opening for better U.S.-Pakistani ties.

As for India, U.S. relations with New Delhi continued to improve during the last decade, even as Sino-Indian ties deteriorated. After 9/11, New Delhi immediately offered assistance to Washington, including the use of its bases for staging operations in Afghanistan and intelligence on regional terrorist organizations.⁶² President Bush aggressively sought to deepen ties in pursuit of a “strategic partnership” based on shared values and converging geopolitical interests.⁶³ His administration signed deals with India on civilian nuclear cooperation and on a defense framework agreement, leading to major U.S. arms sales and combined military exercises.⁶⁴ Moreover, 2012 strategic guidance for the Department of Defense released by the Obama administration asserts that “the United States is . . . investing in a long term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to serve as a regional economic anchor

and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region.”⁶⁵

All of this only added to Sino-Indian tensions. Experts on Asian affairs note that the “Chinese are increasingly wary over the growing strategic relationship between the United States and India, and Beijing has expressed concern over potential alignments in Asia that could result in the ‘encirclement’ of China.”⁶⁶ At the same time, writes former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, the China-India relationship itself “is inherently competitive and antagonistic.”⁶⁷ The result is that both China and India are rushing to rearm their frontier regions, while India is now conducting more military exercises with the United States than with any other country.⁶⁸ Washington’s ties to India—the world’s largest democracy, second most populous state, third largest army, and fourth largest economy—are deepening.⁶⁹ In contrast, Beijing is paired with a terror-exporting Pakistani state in internal turmoil. The net benefits of this relationship for China are decreasing.⁷⁰

East Asia. U.S. ties to its principal Asian ally, Japan, expanded rapidly after 9/11. On September 19, Japanese Prime Minister

Junichiro Koizumi announced that his nation would provide military support to U.S. forces in Afghanistan by deploying naval vessels to the Indian Ocean—the first time since the end of World War II that Japan had sent troops overseas.⁷¹ As the decade wore on, Washington and Tokyo worked productively to resolve alliance issues involving U.S. bases in Japan, ultimately taking steps to increase interoperability and cooperation between Japanese forces and the 40,000-plus U.S. troops stationed there.⁷²

Sino-Japanese ties worsened over the same period. Since the 1950s, Beijing has been consistently wary about the resurgence of Japanese power and expanded U.S.-Japan military cooperation.⁷³ Flexing its new muscles, the PLA navy has increasingly harassed Japanese fishing and oil exploration vessels in contested waters over oil and gas fields in the East China Sea.⁷⁴ Japanese views of China have dropped steadily since 1989, displaying a growing concern over China’s rise; a 2009 survey of Japanese elites saw 51 percent identify China as posing a threat to Japan.⁷⁵ In contrast, surveys showed strong and growing inclination to retain the security alliance with the United States.⁷⁶



U.S. admiral greets Chinese soldiers aboard USS *Gravely* at Naval Station Norfolk during visit by PLA chief of general staff

U.S. Navy (Tom Ouellette)

As for the Republic of Korea, its reliance on the United States to deter conflict with nuclear-armed North Korea means that bilateral security ties will remain close, anchored by a 1953 mutual defense treaty and the presence of 28,500 U.S. troops.⁷⁷ Beijing, in contrast, saw its ties to Seoul weaken after a series of impolitic moves related to ancient Chinese territorial claims. After a North Korean submarine torpedoed an ROK naval vessel in 2010, killing 46 sailors, China was the only regional player that refused to condemn the North.⁷⁸ South Korean favorable views on China dropped to 38 percent in 2010, an 8-year low.⁷⁹ Among elites surveyed in 2009, 56 percent identified China as the ROK's principal threat; only 24 percent identified North Korea.⁸⁰ As with Japan, South Koreans strongly favor maintaining a security alliance with the United States.⁸¹ In contrast, China is allied to North Korea, a broken, backward regime whose

military ties, and the first-ever joint U.S.-Vietnamese naval exercises.

U.S. alliances in the region are strong and growing. The U.S.-Thai mutual defense treaty is six decades old, and the two sides engage in an average of 40 joint exercises annually.⁸⁴ The U.S.-Philippines mutual defense treaty is older, and both sides have agreed to increases in military exercises and joint efforts to combat extremist groups.⁸⁵ U.S.-Singapore security ties deepened steadily since the 1990s, and the latter recently expanded its naval base to accommodate U.S. Navy vessels.⁸⁶ U.S.-Australia ties are deepest of all. The two nations have fought together in every war since 1900, and Australia has the largest non-NATO contingent in Afghanistan. President Obama announced in November 2011 that U.S. Marines will begin deploying to Australia for 6-month rotations, with total size of the deployment reaching 2,500 by 2018.⁸⁷

These actions created the dreaded security dilemma in which an increasingly powerful nation finds it is not more secure because of growing strategic mistrust among its neighbors, which respond by working to enhance their own security.⁸⁹ The common response of states on China's periphery has been to take steps to balance China's growing power. Existing U.S. allies (Philippines, Japan, Korea, Australia, and Thailand) and long-term friends (Singapore, New Zealand) have doubled down on their security ties to Washington by looking for ways to build up the U.S. presence inside their borders and enhance interoperability with U.S. forces. Emerging partners (India, Vietnam) have increased the tempo of joint exercises, strategic dialogues, and purchases of U.S. defense articles. Fence sitters (Central Asian states) are not necessarily looking for deeper security relations with the United States, but neither are they anxious to see the U.S. presence in their region diminish anytime soon. "Few countries, if any, would want to join China in an anti-U.S. alliance," rues Chinese scholar Wang Jisi.⁹⁰

Beijing likely would have acted differently over the last decade if 9/11 had not occurred. It would have wanted to build its military power in any case, but might have tried to do so more slowly in order to gain real capability before encountering the possible need to use it. However, the apparent jump in defense spending right after 9/11 suggests that PRC leaders thought they saw an opportunity—and acted on it. If true, then they lurched forward too soon. Everyone is now watching, and the PLA is not yet prepared to go toe-to-toe with any but the smallest of its neighbors.

In sum, Beijing's actions over the past decade led to widespread fear of China's rise, the emergence of balancing coalitions by its neighbors, and a more complicated security environment than it enjoyed before 9/11. China's crowning as the "clear victor" of the global war on terror is certainly premature.

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¹ Anatol Lieven, "China the Quiet Winner in War on Terror," *The Australian*, August 29, 2011.

² Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (New York: Norton, 1997), 43.



Marines board C-17 Globemaster III in Kyrgyzstan to support Operation *Enduring Freedom*

reckless behavior could pull the region (and its patron) into an unwanted war.⁸² Washington's ally is a strategic asset; Beijing's is a strategic liability.

Southeast Asia. Finally, Beijing's recent resumption of assertive diplomacy over its disputed claims to the entire South China Sea—and its harassment of U.S. Navy reconnaissance ships, Vietnamese trawlers, and Philippine vessels—have "managed to sour relations with virtually every Asian country and every advanced industrial nation."⁸³ In the last 2 years, widespread regional concern over China's "spiraling domestic confidence" has led to expanded U.S.-Indonesian military cooperation, the reestablishment of full U.S.-New Zealand

Conclusion

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, China's security environment is not what Beijing hoped for in 2001. A number of tactical benefits did accrue immediately after the 9/11 attacks—including a lessening of tensions with the United States—but they were of limited duration. Most significantly, PRC decisionmakers may have assessed, correctly, that other global actors would not be paying close attention to the PLA military buildup while war was raging elsewhere. They quickly ratcheted up defense spending, leading to significant increases in the quantity and quality of a wide range of PLA armaments. Concomitantly, China became more aggressive in its diplomacy.⁸⁸

³ *Time* magazine named Deng “Man of the Year” in 1979.

⁴ Harvard University’s Joseph S. Nye defines *soft power* as “the ability to get preferred outcomes through the co-optive means of agenda setting, persuasion, and attraction.” See Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 16.

⁵ Robert G. Sutter, *U.S.-Chinese Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 95.

⁶ All but the latter were soon lifted; so-called Tiananmen sanctions on arms exports remain in place in both the United States and Europe.

⁷ Sutter, 96.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Robert M. Hathaway, “The Lingering Legacy of Tiananmen,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2003.

¹⁰ Frank J. Gaffney, Jr., “China Arms the Rogues,” *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1997.

¹¹ Aaron Friedberg, “11 September and the Future of Sino-American Relations,” *Survival* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2002).

¹² Allen S. Whiting, “The PLA and China’s Threat Perceptions,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 146, Special Issue: “China’s Military in Transition,” June 1996.

¹³ Sutter, 105–107, 187.

¹⁴ Department of Defense (DOD), *Annual Report on the Military Power of the People’s Republic of China 2000* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2000), available at <www.defense.gov/news/jun2000/china06222000.htm>.

¹⁵ See <www.uscc.gov/about/facts.php>.

¹⁶ See <www.cecc.gov>. Congress also passed in 2002 the Tibet Policy Act, requiring the U.S. Government to treat Tibet separately from China in annual reports and appoint a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues to “promote substantive dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama.”

¹⁷ Sutter, 151; Bonnie Glaser, “First Contact: Qian Qichen Engages in Wide-ranging, Constructive Talks with President Bush and Senior U.S. Officials,” *Comparative Connections* 3, no. 1 (April 2001), available at <<http://csis.org/program/pacific-forum-csis>>.

¹⁸ Frank Ching, “Why China Needed Bin Laden,” *The Diplomat*, May 26, 2011, available at <<http://the-diplomat.com/2011/05/26/why-china-needed-bin-laden/>>.

¹⁹ David G. Brown, “Wooing Washington,” *Comparative Connections* 3, no. 1 (April 2001), available at <<http://csis.org/program/pacific-forum-csis>>.

²⁰ David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006), 416–417.

²¹ Ann Compton et al., “Bush Vows Taiwan Support,” ABC News, April 25, 2001,

available at <<http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=93471&page=1>>.

²² Ruan Zongze, “Sino-U.S. Ties Back on Healthy Track,” *Chung kuo jih pao [China Daily]*, February 11, 2002, 4. Dr. Ruan served as Minister Counselor for Political Affairs at the PRC Embassy in Washington 2007–2011. He is now Vice President of the China Institute for International Studies, a think tank associated with the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

²³ Michael Hirsh, “Bush and the World,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2002.

²⁴ Mohan Malik, *Dragon on Terrorism: Assessing China’s Tactical Gains and Strategic Losses Post-September 11* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2002), 18, available at <www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=57>.

²⁵ “Press Release of Chinese Mission to the United Nations: Chinese President Jiang Zemin Expressed Condolences by Telegraph over Terrorist Attacks in America and Talked with President Bush on Telephone to Show China’s Position against Terrorism,” September 13, 2001.

²⁶ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Random House, 2010), 141.

²⁷ Malik, 7, 15. Princeton scholar Aaron Friedberg points out that because Beijing did not recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, U.S. attacks against the group might not have been seen as constituting a violation of national sovereignty. See Aaron Friedberg, “11 September and the Future of Sino-American Relations,” *Survival* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2002).

²⁸ Office of the Historian of the U.S. Department of State, “Presidents Travel to China,” n.d., available at <<http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/china>>.

²⁹ Office of Congressman Frank Wolf, “China’s Human Rights Record Should Be Addressed by Administration,” available at <<http://wolf.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=34&parentid=6§ionid=8&itemid=379>>.

³⁰ Rothkopf, 417–418; Zakaria, 140–141.

³¹ Malik, 12–13.

³² Peter G. Peterson, “Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2002.

³³ “Views of a Changing World 2003: War with Iraq Further Divides Global Publics,” Pew Global Attitudes Project, Pew Research Center, June 3, 2003, available at <www.pewglobal.org/2003/06/03/views-of-a-changing-world-2003/>.

³⁴ Wang Jisi, “Searching for Stability with America,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2005.

³⁵ Ching; Jacques DeLisle, “9/11 and U.S.-China Relations,” *E-Notes*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, September 2011, available at <www.fpri.org/enotes/2011/201109.delisle.911.pdf>.

³⁶ Qtd. in Aaron Friedberg, “Going Out: China’s Pursuit of Natural Resources and Implications for the PRC’s Grand Strategy,” *National Bureau of Asian Research* 17, no. 3 (September 2006).

³⁷ Sutter, 97, 123.

³⁸ President Bush discussed China on 9 pages of his 477-page memoirs (less than 2 percent of the book); Vice President Cheney hit China on 18 of 527 pages, but 12 of those pages related to discussions of China’s role in North Korea (3.5 percent of his book, unless the China-on-North Korea discussion is cut, in which case 1 percent). In contrast, despite their busy days managing the end of the Cold War and the 1991 Gulf War, President George H. W. Bush and his National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft mentioned China on 74 of 567 pages (13 percent, 6 times more than his son), while President Bill Clinton mentioned China on 58 of nearly 1,000 pages (6 percent). See Bush, *Decision Points*; Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011); George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998); and William Jefferson Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005).

³⁹ In the 107th Congress, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) held one hearing before 9/11, and none afterward. The SFRC held four hearings on China during both the 108th and 109th, three in the 110th, and four in the 111th. In other words, a decade after 9/11, Congress’s foreign policy focus remains fixed on a multiplicity of issues related to the war on terror—and not on China or East Asia.

⁴⁰ “China’s Military Build-up: Implications for U.S. Defense Spending,” The Defending Defense Project, March 2011, available at <www.defensestudies.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/03/DefendingDefenseChina1.pdf>.

⁴¹ DOD, *Annual Report on the Military Power of the People’s Republic of China 2002* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2002), available at <www.defense.gov/news/Jul2002/d20020712china.pdf>.

⁴² DOD, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2011* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2011), available at <www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/2011_cmpr_final.pdf>. PRC strategic missile forces went from 20 silo-based, liquid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) in 2002 to a total force of at least 55–65 in 2011, including road-mobile, solid-fueled ICBMs.

⁴³ Shirley Kan, *China’s Military and Security Developments* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 20, 2011), available at <<http://forbes.house.gov/UploadedFiles/Forbes-China-Security-Developments.pdf>>.

⁴⁴ Andrew Krepinevich, “China’s ‘Finlandization’ Strategy in the Pacific,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 11, 2010, available at <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704164904575421753851404076.html#>>. The message is

"clear," according to Dr. Krepinevich of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments: "China has the means to threaten the forward bases from which most U.S. strike aircraft operate."

⁴⁵ The Secretary's International Security Advisory Board (ISAB), "China's Strategic Modernization," 2009. ISAB provides the Secretary of State with independent insight and advice on all aspects of arms control, international security, and related aspects of public diplomacy. The board has up to 30 members, all national security experts with scientific, military, diplomatic, or political backgrounds.

⁴⁶ "Military Expenditure of China," *The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2011, available at <<http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>>.

⁴⁷ Salvatore Babones, "The Middling Kingdom: The Hype and the Reality of China's Rise," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2011; Arvind Subramanian, "The Inevitable Superpower: Why China's Dominance Is a Sure Thing," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2011.

⁴⁸ Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: Norton, 2011), 119, 129–136.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 132–133.

⁵⁰ Nathan and Ross, 50–51.

⁵¹ Dewardric L. McNeal, *China's Relations with Central Asian States and Problems with Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, December 17, 2001).

⁵² Jing Dong-yuan, "China's Role in Establishing and Building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)," *Journal of Contemporary China*, November 2010.

⁵³ Jim Nichol, *Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 11, 2010).

⁵⁴ Lowell Dittmer, "Ghost of the Strategic Triangle: The Sino-Russian Partnership," in *Chinese Foreign Policy: Pragmatism and Strategic Behavior*, ed. Suisheng Zhao, 212–213 (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004).

⁵⁵ Jim Nichol, *Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 12, 2011).

⁵⁶ David J. Gerleman, Jennifer E. Stevens, and Steven A. Hildreth, *Operation Enduring Freedom: Foreign Pledges of Military and Intelligence Support* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, October 17, 2001).

⁵⁷ C. Christine Fair, "The Counterterrorism Coalitions: Cooperation with Pakistan and India," RAND Project Air Force, 2004, 15.

⁵⁸ David Sanger, *The Inheritance* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009), 142–143.

⁵⁹ Brian Fishman, "Al Qaeda and the Rise of China: Jihadi Geopolitics in a Post-Hegemonic World," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2011.

⁶⁰ Jabin T. Jacob, "The Future of China-Pakistan Relations after Osama bin Laden," *Future Directions International*, August 8, 2011, available at <www.futuredirections.org.au/publications/associate-papers/179-the-future-of-china-pakistan-relations-after-osama-bin-laden.html>.

⁶¹ Harsh V. Pant, "The Pakistan Thorn in China-U.S.-India Relations," *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2012.

⁶² "Talking Points for PC 0930 on 14 September 2001," available at <www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB358a/doc07.pdf>; Gerleman, Stevens, and Hildreth.

⁶³ K. Alan Kronstadt et al., *India-U.S. Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, October 27, 2010).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ DOD, *Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: DOD, January 12, 2012), available at <www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Kronstadt et al.

⁶⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "How U.S. Can Secure the New East," *The Diplomat*, February 16, 2012.

⁶⁸ S. Amer Latif, "India and the New U.S. Defense Strategy," Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 23, 2012, available at <<http://csis.org/publication/india-and-new-us-defense-strategy>>.

⁶⁹ See Anthony Cordesman, "The Military Balance in Asia:1991-2011," Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 16, 2011, available at <http://csis.org/files/publication/110516_South_Asia-AsiaMilitaryBalance2011.pdf>; *CIA World Factbook*, 2012, available at <www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html>; Zakaria, 148, 167. Note that in his book, Zakaria's chapter on India is titled, "The Ally"; the chapter on China is titled, "The Challenger."

⁷⁰ Pan Guang, "China's Policy on the Conflict in Afghanistan," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (2010).

⁷¹ Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, "Japan's Dual Hedge," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2002.

⁷² DOD, "Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths by Regional Area and by Country," December 31, 2011, available at <<http://web1.whs.osd.mil/mmid/m05/hst0699.pdf>>.

⁷³ Friedberg, "11 September"; Nathan and Ross, 84–93; Bates Gill and Yanzhong Huang, "Sources and Limits of Chinese Soft Power," *Survival* 48, no. 2 (Summer 2006); Hugh White, "Why War in Asia Remains Thinkable," *Survival* 50, no. 6 (December 2008–January 2009).

⁷⁴ David Zweig and Bi Jianhai, "China's Global Hunt for Energy," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2005; Zakaria, 134–135.

⁷⁵ Nicholas Khoo, "Fear Factor: Northeast Asian Responses to China's Rise," *Asian Security* 7, no. 2 (2011).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Department of State, "Background Note: South Korea," available at <www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm#relations>.

⁷⁸ Scott A. Snyder, "China-Korea Relations: DPRK Provocations Test China's Regional Role," *Comparative Connections*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2011.

⁷⁹ "Opinion of China," Key Indicators Database, Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2011, available at <www.pewglobal.org/2011/07/13/chapter-4-views-of-china/> (accessed April 3, 2012).

⁸⁰ Khoo.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Samantha Ravich, "Outside View: Same Old North Korea," United Press International, April 5, 2012, available at <<http://m.upi.com/m/story/UPI-46891333622730/>>.

⁸³ Robert S. Ross, "Chinese Nationalism and Its Discontents," *The National Interest*, Fall 2011.

⁸⁴ Department of State, "Background Note: Thailand," January 3, 2012, available at <www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2814.htm#foreign>.

⁸⁵ Javad Heydarian, "Between a Dragon and an Eagle," *The Diplomat*, February 27, 2012.

⁸⁶ Department of State, "Background Note: Singapore," December 2, 2011.

⁸⁷ Donna Miles, "Obama Announces Expanded U.S. Military Presence in Australia," American Forces Press Service, November 17, 2011, available at <www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=66098>.

⁸⁸ Thomas J. Christensen, "The Advantages of an Assertive China: Responding to Beijing's Assertive Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2011.

⁸⁹ PRC scholar Wang Jisi wrote recently, "Although the vast majority of people in China support a stronger Chinese military . . . they should also recognize the dilemma that poses. As China builds its defense capabilities . . . it will have to convince others, including the United States and China's neighbors in Asia, that it is taking their concerns into consideration." See Wang Jisi, "China's Search for a Grand Strategy: A Rising Great Power Finds Its Way," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2011.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*