



## **Roundtable with Deputy Chief of Mission Zheng Zeguang Embassy of the People's Republic of China August 31, 2005**

On August 31, 2005, Minister Zheng Zeguang, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Chinese Embassy in Washington, on behalf of the Chinese Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong, attended a roundtable discussion at CSIS with a group of China scholars and policy experts. The two-hour meeting addressed President Hu Jintao's upcoming visit to the United States, which is his first visit here as China's leader. Minister Zheng's presentation was followed by an insightful and constructive conversation among the audience of leading China watchers from nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and Capitol Hill. Dr. Bates Gill, CSIS Freeman Chair in China Studies, moderated the roundtable meeting.

The Honorable Carla Hills, Chairman and CEO of Hills and Company, and CSIS Trustee, introduced Minister Zheng, emphasizing the key issues at play in the U.S.-China relationship. She welcomed the Minister to CSIS at such an opportune time. Bonnie Glaser, CSIS Senior Fellow and consultant on Asian affairs, and Randy Schriver, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and currently a Partner with Armitage International, offered brief commentary to launch the broader discussion following Minister Zheng's remarks.

The presentation by Minister Zheng, the comments by Ambassador Hills, Ms. Glaser, and Mr. Schriver, and the roundtable discussion focused around three main themes: the working agenda for the summit, the challenge of "strategic mistrust" between the United States and China, and the critical role of leadership in improving U.S.-China relations.

Participants at the roundtable agreed that security issues will be a focus of the working agenda, with North Korea one of the major issues up for discussion, along with counterterrorism cooperation and improving military-to-military relations. Energy security and environmental issues will likely be addressed as well. Participants also expect trade and economic issues to top the agenda in light of existing trade friction and disputes between the two countries. Finally, participants expect President Hu to take this opportunity to raise the issue of encouraging more non-governmental exchanges to facilitate better understanding between the American and Chinese people. President Bush, on the other hand, is likely to raise the importance of improving human rights and religious freedom in China. The leaders will certainly exchange longstanding positions regarding Taiwan, but no dramatic statements are expected on this topic. All in all, the working aspect of the summit is unlikely to produce major new initiatives, agreements, or "deliverables."

Discussion among roundtable participants also centered on the challenge of "strategic mistrust" between the United States and China. The source of the recent rise in "China bashing" by some quarters in the United States and the surprise with which this has been received in China was discussed at length. Despite many areas of bilateral cooperation, ongoing Chinese concerns over American policy regarding Taiwan and American concerns over the implications of "China's rise" are creating "strategic mistrust" on both sides. Most participants agreed that there is a danger of the two countries drifting into an adversarial relationship if this mistrust is not arrested. It was agreed that a challenge of this nature needed to be addressed by the senior political leaders, and was not for their respective bureaucracies to solve.

In this regard, many participants agreed on the critical role of the two leaders in addressing the issue of "strategic mistrust" and improving U.S.-China relations. The role of such leaders as Richard Nixon and Deng Xiaoping in moving the U.S.-China relationship forward was noted. Participants hoped that Presidents Bush and Hu would take the lead in framing popular perceptions of the United States and China in their respective countries and engage in regular, constructive dialogue to counteract "strategic mistrust" and facilitate better understanding between the two sides.