

Chinese View of the United States

HOW DO THE CHINESE PERCEIVE THE WORLD'S SUPERPOWER?

CHINA
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Background

- China's people still admire America's popular culture, advanced technology, and education system and strongly value their country's economic relationship with the United States. Chinese feelings generally toward the United States have warmed significantly over the past two years, according to a Chicago Council study, though a 2007 survey by the Committee of 100 found that China's elite view the United States more favorably than does the general public.
- Additionally, many in China perceive their country to be a future peer to the United States in terms of economic and military power.
- Given Beijing's paramount near- and mid-term priority on attending to its internal challenges and maintaining a peaceful international environment, China's leaders have assiduously sought to maintain smooth relations with Washington.
- At the same time, they are suspicious of and attuned to perceived hypocrisy in U.S. foreign policy.
 - The Chinese harbor lingering grievances over past indignities and perceived victimization at the hands of the United States, including the EP-3 spy plane incident in 2001, the accidental bombing of China's Belgrade embassy in 1999, congressional opposition in the mid-1990s to China's bid to host the Olympic Games, and continuing U.S. arms sales to and defense support for Taiwan.
 - Many Chinese also perceive hypocrisy in repeated U.S. calls for China to improve its human rights record and environmental standards, as evidenced by China's annual reports on U.S. human rights practices and by Chinese comments about the developed world's (including U.S.) pollution record.
- China also often reveals its discomfort with U.S. global predominance, fueled by a belief among Chinese officials and elite that the United States will seek to slow or block China's emergence as a great power by seeking to
 - Undermine China's national power through policies of humanitarian intervention, preemption, alliances, missile defense, or permanent separation of Taiwan from the mainland, de facto if not de jure;
 - Westernize China by propagating "universal values" of democracy and human rights in order to induce change in China's political system and bring about the downfall of the Chinese Communist Party;
 - Limit China's development by depriving it of adequate energy supplies and enforcing environmental standards;
 - Draw China down the same path it led the Soviet Union, leading to the collapse and dissolution of the Chinese state.
 - China often acts consciously to avoid mirroring Soviet missteps, whether by abjuring the notion of engaging in an arms race with the United States, carefully affirming its intent not to place itself in ideological opposition to the United States, or focusing on economic development before addressing dramatic political reform;
 - Expand U.S. influence along China's periphery, leading to the development of anti-China blocs that may seek to contain Chinese power or infiltrate and destabilize China's minority regions.
- The long-term implications for U.S.-China relations of lingering Chinese grievances and suspicions toward the United States are uncertain, but they could fuel or mix with rising populist nationalism in China to create long-term tensions.

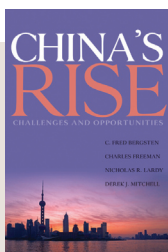
Background *(continued)*

- Nonetheless, China and the United States at the same time have expanded avenues of cooperation in recent years through
 - Creation of a U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue aimed at providing an overarching framework for ongoing bilateral economic discussion to address economic and trade tensions and related issues. In the June 2008 round, the discussion broadened to include climate change, while the December 2008 round focused on the financial crisis.
 - The initiation of a semiannual U.S.-China vice-ministerial Senior Dialogue on strategic issues that aims to facilitate candid communication, build understanding, prevent miscalculation, and exchange perspectives at a senior level.
 - Establishment of a host of working-level dialogues conducted within the State Department on a broad range of global, regional, and transnational issues.
 - Increased contact between the two militaries, including the inauguration of a telephone hotline between the U.S. Department of Defense and the Chinese Ministry of Defense.
 - Restarting the bilateral human rights dialogue after a six-year hiatus.
 - Close coordination on the organization and conduct of the Six-Party Talks to address North Korea's nuclear weapons program.
 - Growing government, military, and people-to-people exchanges in the fields of counterterrorism, nonproliferation, UN reform, health, energy, environmental protection, energy, and culture.

Current Situation

- China recognizes the current reality of a U.S.-dominated world and will likely accommodate to it at least in the short run where its vital national interests are not directly at stake.
- Beijing has conceived of a two-decade “period of strategic opportunity” (beginning in 2002) during which it believes the United States will be preoccupied with the War on Terror and China can focus on its domestic development needs.
- Nonetheless, China's leaders remain worried that once the United States is no longer preoccupied with terrorism, Washington will return its attention to the “China threat.”
 - China's strategists remain focused on the United States as its foremost potential strategic rival in the future.

AT A FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL, MANY CHINESE OFFICIALS AND ELITE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE UNITED STATES THROUGH VARIOUS METHODS WILL SEEK TO SLOW OR BLOCK CHINA'S EMERGENCE AS A GREAT POWER.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
SEE CHAPTER 10: “CHINA AND THE WORLD ” IN *CHINA'S RISE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES* BY C. FRED BERGSTEN, CHARLES FREEMAN, NICHOLAS LARDY, DEREK J. MITCHELL & CHAPTER 5: “CHINA'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY: PARTNER OR RIVAL?” IN *CHINA: THE BALANCE SHEET: WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS TO KNOW NOW ABOUT THE EMERGING SUPERPOWER* BY C. FRED BERGSTEN, BATES GILL, NICHOLAS LARDY, DEREK J. MITCHELL