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Foreword

In addition to fulfilling his other considerable duties, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick has been charged with leading the Senior Dialog, our highest-level, diplomatic discussion with China. To share the thinking behind that process with interested Americans, he delivered a remarkable address before the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations on September 21, 2005 in New York. In his remarks he established a new benchmark in United States China policy by providing a sophisticated assessment of China’s rise and a comprehensive rationale for U.S. strategy. Hailed by many as groundbreaking, the speech detailed Washington’s questions and concerns that follow China’s successful integration into the international economy and global institutions. Zoellick suggested that it is time for the United States to “foster constructive action by transforming our thirty-year policy of integration: We need to encourage China to become a responsible stakeholder. As a responsible stakeholder, China would be more than just a member—it would work with us to sustain the international system that has enabled its success.”

The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) is pleased to present four essays that evaluate the implications of the deputy secretary’s speech. Two scholars, Richard Baum and Robert Ross, and two former policymakers, Kurt Campbell and James Kelly, bring their experience to bear in analyzing the problems elaborated by Zoellick. The authors’ frank and keen assessments respond to Zoellick’s emphasis on the overarching framework for future U.S.-China relations and focus largely on how to deal with China as a great power.

In the first essay, Professor Richard Baum, Director of the UCLA Center for Chinese Studies, suggests that Secretary Zoellick’s speech has inserted strategic clarity into often contradictory Bush administration statements on China over the past five years. He also appreciates the recognition given in the address to inevitable differences in national interests between the United States and China, and hopes that “Zoellick’s proposed framework is a concept whose time has come.”

Dr. Kurt Campbell, Senior Vice President at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C. and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia and the Pacific, argues that the speech was directed specifically at domestic audiences in order to placate increasingly vocal concerns over China’s rise. He writes that the speech serves both as a timely reminder of the need for the United States to remain engaged in Asia and as a baseline from which Washington can recalibrate and clarify its China policy. He would like to see the address establish a pattern of considered discussion of China’s importance to the United States.
James Kelly, former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, argues that minor changes amid overarching continuity have characterized U.S. policy toward China throughout three decades and seven presidential administrations. He writes that Zoellick’s speech has brought together disparate elements of U.S. China policy into a cohesive and comprehensive statement for the second Bush term, and that it properly raises concerns over opaque, yet ambitious Chinese foreign and defense policies. In addition, he cautions both countries to adjust their domestic economic policies to ameliorate growing trade frictions and stabilize the international economy.

In the closing essay, Robert Ross, Professor of Political Science at Boston College, contends that the speech’s lack of attention to Taiwan as well as its stress on China’s constructive role in the Six-Party Talks are both causes for optimism, as they reflect relaxed geopolitical tensions in these two areas. Likewise, the address unequivocally endorsed a renewed commitment to engage China. Professor Ross warns, however, that U.S. policy must “recognize … China’s legitimate interests,” and that China cannot be expected “to accommodate itself to U.S. values or conceptions of a just global order.”

In the months and years to come, effective political reform in China would increase the likelihood that we will see across the Asia-Pacific compatible conceptions of interests, values, and international order, which will strengthen stability and expand prosperity among the nations of the region and beyond. Zoellick’s speech was notable for all the reasons mentioned in the paragraphs above, plus this one: its frank recognition of the positive role of democratic reform—consonant with Chinese culture—in China’s achieving full, responsible participation in an open and stable international system.

Bob Zoellick was an inspiring NBR director from 1993, just a few years following NBR's founding, to 2001. We at NBR also deeply admire and appreciate his extraordinary service to the United States both before and since.

Richard J. Ellings
President
The National Bureau of Asian Research
Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?
Remarks to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations

Robert B. Zoellick

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Mr. Zheng Bijian, Chair of the China Reform Forum, who over some decades has been a counselor to China’s leaders. We have spent many hours in Beijing and Washington discussing China’s course of development and Sino-American relations. It has been my good fortune to get to know such a thoughtful man who has helped influence, through the Central Party School, the outlook of many officials during a time of tremendous change for China.

This month, in anticipation of President Hu’s visit to the United States, Mr. Zheng published the lead article in Foreign Affairs, “China’s ‘Peaceful Rise’ to Great Power Status.” This evening, I would like to give you a sense of the current dialogue between the United States and China by sharing my perspective.

Some 27 years ago, Chinese leaders took a hard look at their country and didn’t like what they saw. China was just emerging from the Cultural Revolution. It was desperately poor, deliberately isolated from the world economy, and opposed to nearly every international institution. Under Deng Xiaoping, as Mr. Zheng explains, China’s leaders reversed course and decided “to embrace globalization rather than detach themselves from it.”

Seven U.S. presidents of both parties recognized this strategic shift and worked to integrate China as a full member of the international system. Since 1978, the United States has also encouraged China’s economic development through market reforms.

“… it is time to take our policy beyond opening doors to China’s membership into the international system: We need to urge China to become a responsible stakeholder in that system …”

And China has experienced exceptional economic growth. Whether in commodities, clothing, computers, or capital markets, China’s presence is felt every day.

China is big, it is growing, and it will influence the world in the years ahead.

For the United States and the world, the essential question is—how will China use its influence?
“WHITHER U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS?” ROUNDTABLE

To answer that question, it is time to take our policy beyond opening doors to China’s membership into the international system: We need to urge China to become a responsible stakeholder in that system.

China has a responsibility to strengthen the international system that has enabled its success. In doing so, China could achieve the objective identified by Mr. Zheng: “to transcend the traditional ways for great powers to emerge.”

As Secretary Rice has stated, the United States welcomes a confident, peaceful, and prosperous China, one that appreciates that its growth and development depends on constructive connections with the rest of the world. Indeed, we hope to intensify work with a China that not only adjusts to the international rules developed over the last century, but also joins us and others to address the challenges of the new century.

From China’s perspective, it would seem that its national interest would be much better served by working with us to shape the future international system.

If it isn’t clear why the United States should suggest a cooperative relationship with China, consider the alternatives. Picture the wide range of global challenges we face in the years ahead—terrorism and extremists exploiting Islam, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, poverty, disease—and ask whether it would be easier or harder to handle those problems if the United States and China were cooperating or at odds.

For fifty years, our policy was to fence in the Soviet Union while its own internal contradictions undermined it. For thirty years, our policy has been to draw out the People’s Republic of China. As a result, the China of today is simply not the Soviet Union of the late 1940s:

- It does not seek to spread radical, anti-American ideologies.
- While not yet democratic, it does not see itself in a twilight conflict against democracy around the globe.
- While at times mercantilist, it does not see itself in a death struggle with capitalism.
- And most importantly, China does not believe that its future depends on overturning the fundamental order of the international system. In fact, quite the reverse: Chinese leaders have decided that their success depends on being networked with the modern world.

If the Cold War analogy does not apply, neither does the distant balance-of-power politics of 19th Century Europe. The global economy of the 21st Century is a tightly woven fabric. We are too interconnected to try to hold China at arm’s length, hoping to
promote other powers in Asia at its expense. Nor would the other powers hold China at bay, initiating and terminating ties based on an old model of drawing-room diplomacy. The United States seeks constructive relations with all countries that do not threaten peace and security.

So if the templates of the past do not fit, how should we view China at the dawn of the 21st Century?

On both sides, there is a gulf in perceptions. The overwhelming priority of China's senior officials is to develop and modernize a China that still faces enormous internal challenges. While proud of their accomplishments, China's leaders recognize their country's perceived weaknesses, its rural poverty, and the challenges of political and social change. Two-thirds of China's population—nearly 900 million people—are in poor rural areas, living mostly as subsistence farmers, and 200 million Chinese live on less than a dollar a day. In China, economic growth is seen as an internal imperative, not as a challenge to the United States.

Therefore, China clearly needs a benign international environment for its work at home. Of course, the Chinese expect to be treated with respect and will want to have their views and interests recognized. But China does not want a conflict with the United States.

Nevertheless, many Americans worry that the Chinese dragon will prove to be a fire-breather. There is a cauldron of anxiety about China.

The U.S. business community, which in the 1990s saw China as a land of opportunity, now has a more mixed assessment. Smaller companies worry about Chinese competition, rampant piracy, counterfeiting, and currency manipulation. Even larger U.S. businesses—once the backbone of support for economic engagement—are concerned that mercantilist Chinese policies will try to direct controlled markets instead of opening competitive markets. American workers wonder if they can compete.

China needs to recognize how its actions are perceived by others. China's involvement with troublesome states indicates at best a blindness to consequences and at worst something more ominous. China's actions—combined with a lack of transparency—can create risks. Uncertainties about how China will use its power will lead the United States—and others as well—to hedge relations with China. Many countries hope China will pursue a “Peaceful Rise,” but none will bet their future on it.

For example, China's rapid military modernization and increases in capabilities raise questions about the purposes of this buildup and China's lack of transparency. The recent report by the U.S. Department of Defense on China's military posture was not
confrontational, although China’s reaction to it was. The U.S. report described facts, including what we know about China’s military, and discussed alternative scenarios. If China wants to lessen anxieties, it should openly explain its defense spending, intentions, doctrine, and military exercises.

Views about China are also shaped by its growing economic footprint. China has gained much from its membership in an open, rules-based international economic system, and the U.S. market is particularly important for China’s development strategy. Many gain from this trade, including millions of U.S. farmers and workers who produce the commodities, components, and capital goods that China is so voraciously consuming.

But no other country—certainly not those of the European Union or Japan—would accept a $162 billion bilateral trade deficit, contributing to a $665 billion global current account deficit. China—and others that sell to China—cannot take its access to the U.S. market for granted. Protectionist pressures are growing.

China has been more open than many developing countries, but there are increasing signs of mercantilism, with policies that seek to direct markets rather than opening them. The United States will not be able to sustain an open international economic system—or domestic U.S. support for such a system—without greater cooperation from China, as a stakeholder that shares responsibility on international economic issues.

For example, a responsible major global player shouldn’t tolerate rampant theft of intellectual property and counterfeiting, both of which strike at the heart of America’s knowledge economy. China’s pledges—including a statement just last week by President Hu in New York—to crack down on the criminals who ply this trade are welcome, but the results are not yet evident. China needs to fully live up to its commitments to markets where America has a strong competitive advantage, such as in services, agriculture, and certain manufactured goods. And while China’s exchange rate policy offered stability in the past, times have changed. China may have a global current account surplus this year of nearly $150 billion, among the highest in the world. This suggests that China’s recent policy adjustments are an initial step, but much more remains to be done to permit markets to adjust to imbalances. China also shares a strong interest with
the United States in negotiating a successful WTO Doha agreement that opens markets and expands global growth.

China’s economic growth is driving its thirst for energy. In response, China is acting as if it can somehow “lock up” energy supplies around the world. This is not a sensible path to achieving energy security. Moreover, a mercantilist strategy leads to partnerships with regimes that hurt China’s reputation and lead others to question its intentions. In contrast, market strategies can lessen volatility, instability, and hoarding. China should work with the United States and others to develop diverse sources of energy, including through clean coal technology, nuclear, renewables, hydrogen, and biofuels. Our new Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate—as well as the bilateral dialogue conducted by the U.S. Department of Energy and China’s National Development and Reform Commission—offer practical mechanisms for this cooperation. We should also encourage the opening of oil and gas production in more places around the world.

We can work on energy conservation and efficiency, including through standards for the many appliances made in China. Through the IEA we can strengthen the building and management of strategic reserves. We also have a common interest in secure transport routes and security in producing countries.

All nations conduct diplomacy to promote their national interests. Responsible stakeholders go further: They recognize that the international system sustains their peaceful prosperity, so they work to sustain that system. In its foreign policy, China has many opportunities to be a responsible stakeholder.

The most pressing opportunity is North Korea. Since hosting the Six-Party Talks at their inception in 2003, China has played a constructive role. This week we achieved a Joint Statement of Principles, with an agreement on the goal of “verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner.” But the hard work of implementation lies ahead, and China should share our interest in effective and comprehensive compliance.

Moreover, the North Korea problem is about more than just the spread of dangerous weapons. Without broad economic and political reform, North Korea poses a threat to itself and others. It is time to move beyond the half century-old armistice on the Korean peninsula to a true peace, with regional security and development. A Korean
peninsula without nuclear weapons opens the door to this future. Some 30 years ago America ended its war in Viet Nam. Today Viet Nam looks to the United States to help integrate it into the world market economic system so Viet Nam can improve the lives of its people. By contrast, North Korea, with a 50 year-old cold armistice, just falls further behind.

Beijing also has a strong interest in working with us to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles that can deliver them. The proliferation of danger will undermine the benign security environment and healthy international economy that China needs for its development.

China’s actions on Iran’s nuclear program will reveal the seriousness of China’s commitment to non-proliferation. And while we welcome China’s efforts to police its own behavior through new export controls on sensitive technology, we still need to see tough legal punishments for violators.

China and the United States can do more together in the global fight against terrorism. Chinese citizens have been victims of terror attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan. China can help destroy the supply lines of global terrorism. We have made a good start by working together at the UN and searching for terrorist money in Chinese banks, but can expand our cooperation further.

China pledged $150 million in assistance to Afghanistan, and $25 million to Iraq. These pledges were welcome, and we look forward to their full implementation. China would build stronger ties with both through follow-on pledges. Other countries are assisting the new Iraqi government with major debt forgiveness, focusing attention on the $7 billion in Iraqi debt still held by Chinese state companies.

On my early morning runs in Khartoum, I saw Chinese doing tai chi exercises. I suspect they were in Sudan for the oil business. But China should take more than oil from Sudan—it should take some responsibility for resolving Sudan’s human crisis. It could work with the United States, the UN, and others to support the African Union’s peacekeeping mission, to provide humanitarian relief to Darfur, and to promote a solution to Sudan’s conflicts.

In Asia, China is already playing a larger role. The United States respects China’s interests in the region, and recognizes the useful role of multilateral diplomacy in Asia. But concerns will grow if China seeks to maneuver toward a predominance of power. Instead, we should work together with ASEAN, Japan, Australia, and others for regional security and prosperity through the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.
China’s choices about Taiwan will send an important message, too. We have made clear that our “one China” policy remains based on the three communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act. It is important for China to resolve its differences with Taiwan peacefully.

The United States, Japan, and China will need to cooperate effectively together on both regional and global challenges. Given China’s terrible losses in World War II, I appreciate the sensitivity of historical issues with Japan. But as I have told my Chinese colleagues, I have observed some sizeable gaps in China’s telling of history, too. When I visited the “918” museum at the site of the 1931 “Manchurian Incident,” I noted that the chronological account jumped from 1941 to the Soviet offensive against Japan in August 1945, overlooking the United States involvement in the Pacific from 1941 to 1945! Perhaps we could start to ease some misapprehensions by opening a three-way dialogue among historians.

Clearly, there are many common interests and opportunities for cooperation. But some say America’s commitment to democracy will preclude long-term cooperation with China. Let me suggest why this need not be so.

Freedom lies at the heart of what America is … as a nation, we stand for what President Bush calls the non-negotiable demands of human dignity. As I have seen over the 25 years since I lived in Hong Kong, Asians have also pressed for more freedom and built many more democracies. Indeed, President Hu and Premier Wen are talking about the importance of China strengthening the rule of law and developing democratic institutions.

We do not urge the cause of freedom to weaken China. To the contrary, President Bush has stressed that the terrible experience of 9/11 has driven home that in the absence of freedom, unhealthy societies will breed deadly cancers. In his Second Inaugural, President Bush recognized that democratic institutions must reflect the values and culture of diverse societies. As he said, “Our goal … is to help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way.”

Being born ethnically Chinese does not predispose people against democracy—just look at Taiwan’s vibrant politics. Japan and South Korea have successfully blended a Confucian heritage with modern democratic principles.

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:
China has one umbrella labor union, but waves of strikes.

A party that came to power as a movement of peasants now confronts violent rural protests, especially against corruption.

A government with massive police powers cannot control spreading crime.

Some in China believe they can secure the Communist Party’s monopoly on power through emphasizing economic growth and heightened nationalism. This is risky and mistaken.

China needs a peaceful political transition to make its government responsible and accountable to its people. Village and grassroots elections are a start. They might be expanded—perhaps to counties and provinces—as a next step. China needs to reform its judiciary. It should open government processes to the involvement of civil society and stop harassing journalists who point out problems. China should also expand religious freedom and make real the guarantees of rights that exist on paper—but not in practice.

Ladies and Gentlemen: How we deal with China’s rising power is a central question in American foreign policy.

In China and the United States, Mr. Zheng’s idea of a “peaceful rise” will spur vibrant debate. The world will look to the evidence of actions.

Tonight I have suggested that the U.S. response should be to help foster constructive action by transforming our thirty-year policy of integration: We now need to encourage China to become a responsible stakeholder in the international system. As a responsible stakeholder, China would be more than just a member—it would work with us to sustain the international system that has enabled its success.

Cooperation as stakeholders will not mean the absence of differences—we will have disputes that we need to manage. But that management can take place within a larger framework where the parties recognize a shared interest in sustaining political, economic, and security systems that provide common benefits.

“When President Nixon visited Beijing in 1972, our relationship with China was defined by what we were both against. Now we have the opportunity to define our relationship by what are both for.”
To achieve this transformation of the Sino-American relationship, this Administration—and those that follow it—will need to build the foundation of support at home. That’s particularly why I wanted to join you tonight. You hear the voices that perceive China solely through the lens of fear. But America succeeds when we look to the future as an opportunity, not when we fear what the future might bring. To succeed now, we will need all of you to press both the Chinese and your fellow citizens.

When President Nixon visited Beijing in 1972, our relationship with China was defined by what we were both against. Now we have the opportunity to define our relationship by what are both for.

We have many common interests with China. But relationships built only on a coincidence of interests have shallow roots. Relationships built on shared interests and shared values are deep and lasting. We can cooperate with the emerging China of today, even as we work for the democratic China of tomorrow.
Whither U.S.-China Relations?
A Discussion of Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick’s Speech

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Zoellick’s Roadmap and the Future of U.S.-China Relations

Richard Baum

On September 21, 2005 Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick delivered a speech to the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations that painstakingly detailed the upside and downside—the yin and the yang—of the complex, often troubled relationship between the United States and China. Zoellick’s blunt and forthright policy address has produced aftershocks on two continents. Some have called the speech refreshingly candid, while others have deemed it needlessly demeaning and provocative. Analysts in both Washington and Beijing, regardless of where they fall in the dove/hawk divide, have painstakingly parsed Zoellick’s words in a search for cues and clues to the Bush administration’s future intentions.

To a significant extent, this search for hidden meaning stems from the sharp divisions present within the Bush administration. Over the past five years, Washington has sent Beijing inconsistent and sometimes self-contradictory signals, ranging from dark hints of military containment to conditional assurances of comity and cooperation. Based upon widely differing premises, such conflicting signals—often accompanied by exaggerated posturing—have tended to confuse more than clarify Washington’s China policy. Small wonder, then, that a major China policy address by the administration’s second highest-ranking foreign policy spokesman should receive intense scrutiny from all sides.

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Stated succinctly, Zoellick’s speech was a clear and direct statement regarding Washington’s complex hopes and concerns over the nature and global consequences of “China’s rise.” Beginning on a positive note, Zoellick stated that China’s post-Mao reforms and “opening up” have constituted a great contemporary success story. Seeking to allay mounting Chinese concerns that this very success has directly precipitated rising U.S. hostility, Zoellick reminded his audience that the United States has played a substantial, supportive role in facilitating China’s growth. According to Zoellick, the United States both recognizes and appreciates the important differences between China’s peaceful embrace of globalization and the more aggressive Cold War posture adopted by the former Soviet Union, adding that “China does not want a conflict with the United States.” Countering the argument that China and the United States are destined by the very logic of great power politics to become strategic competitors, he envisioned a future of potentially harmonious U.S.-China relations:

Picture the wide range of global challenges we face in the years ahead—terrorism and extremists exploiting Islam, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, poverty, disease—and ask whether it would be easier or harder to handle those problems if the United States and China were co-operating or at odds.

After outlining U.S. hopes for a more cooperative future, Zoellick noted that much of the international community has remained ambivalent—and more than a little anxious—regarding China’s rapid rise. Inviting Chinese leaders to see their country as outsiders do, the deputy secretary cautioned that although many countries hope China will pursue a “peaceful rise,” none are willing to bet their future on this possibility. As for U.S.-China relations, Zoellick suggested that a true concordance would depend upon the development of common values, and not merely parallel interests: “We have many common interests with China. But relationships built only on a coincidence of interests have shallow roots. Relationships built on shared interests and shared values are deep and lasting.”

Zoellick went on to detail the reasons for mounting international concern and “hedging” toward China. He bluntly criticized a variety of Chinese behavior: the PRC’s opaque military objectives; Beijing’s half-hearted, insufficient efforts to adjust Chinese currency to international market rates; and China’s recent attempts to “lock up” global energy supplies. He further chastised Beijing for attempting to forge opportunistic ties with “troublesome states” such as the Sudan and Burma, for tolerating “rampant theft of intellectual property and counterfeiting” at home, and for the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) continued one-party political dictatorship.
After cataloguing further examples of worrisome Chinese behavior at home and abroad, Zoellick went on to propose measures that China might adopt in order to allay the concerns held not only by the United States but also by the international community at large. Suggesting that China should “adjust its foreign policy” to focus “less on national interest and more on sustaining peaceful prosperity,” Zoellick urged China to pledge more money for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and Iraq, and to further cooperate in applying greater pressure on both Iran and North Korea to give up their nuclear weapons programs. He also called upon the PRC not only to refrain from maneuvering toward a “predominance of power” in Asia but also to “openly explain” its military priorities, doctrines, and intentions. At home, China should “consider elections at the provincial and county level,” reform its judiciary, and “stop harassing journalists who point out problems.”

Noting the serious challenges facing the international community in the 21st century, Zoellick urged the PRC to become a “responsible stakeholder” in the international community. Until China accepts this challenge, he suggested, the United States and other countries will have no choice but to continue to “hedge relations with China.”

Initial response to Zoellick’s speech on both sides of the Pacific ranged from outright shock and dismay at the deputy secretary’s blunt, hard-nosed criticism of China’s foreign and domestic policies, to cautious enthusiasm for the “realism” of his analysis and his provision of a concrete roadmap for achieving harmony in U.S.-China relations. In Beijing, where I have been living and teaching since early September, Zoellick’s speech has stirred up a good deal of controversy. There are two main schools of thought, which I label the “nationalist” and the “internationalist.” Those who adopt an essentially nationalist stance tend to reject outright Zoellick’s call for China to become a responsible stakeholder in global affairs, characterizing such comments as an arrogant, thinly veiled attempt to enlist China’s active support for the current U.S.-dominated global order. In the view of this camp, Washington is merely seeking to strengthen the United States’ own hegemonic grip on global power by offering Beijing a secondary, subordinate role in a U.S.-led great power consortium. This view was echoed to varying degrees by several Chinese academic participants in the recently concluded Beijing Forum, the
The internationalist school of thought views the Zoellick statement as a useful starting point for the construction of a more coherent and positive long-term relationship based upon partially convergent (albeit non-identical) global concerns and interests. Though disavowing Zoellick’s condescending prose and some of his more narrow, self-serving policy proposals (e.g., the plea for a more substantial revaluation of the renminbi), the internationalist interpretation acknowledges some possibility for moving the U.S.-China relationship onto more solid ground through a reduction in mutual posturing and polemics. Indeed, during personal conversations in Beijing over the past two months, several well-known Chinese academic specialists have noted with approval that the Zoellick speech offered the first new theoretical framework for U.S.-China relations to come from the Bush administration since the infamous “strategic competitors” conceptualization first formulated in 2000.

The influential senior Chinese policy advisor Zheng Bijian, President of the CCP’s Central Party School, has also embraced this internationalist viewpoint. In a widely reported speech to an international conference on U.S.-China relations in Beijing in early November 2005, Zheng interpreted Zoellick’s speech as “an acknowledgement of the logic behind China’s path of peaceful emergence,” and affirmed the deputy secretary’s recognition of the “success of China in opening up and joining the global economy.” Zheng further welcomed Zoellick’s statement that “China’s path is different from that of the former Soviet Union and therefore the United States should adopt a more pragmatic strategy toward China,” and applauded Zoellick’s clear message that “the United States is willing to work with a peacefully rising China in maintaining and improving the existing world order.”

Sounding a cautionary note, however, Zheng also added that, “while I appreciate the awareness of the overall situation and pragmatic spirit displayed in Mr. Zoellick’s

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1 For more information on the Beijing Forum, see http://www.beijingforum.org.
speech, this does not mean I agree with all his views.” Specifically, Zheng took note of what he saw as important flaws in Zoellick’s understanding of China. “Like other high-level U.S. officials who have spoken on their policies on China,” Zheng stated, “Mr. Zoellick has certain ideological prejudices when looking at the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese socialist system.” Zheng went on to categorically reject Zoellick’s concern that “China will turn autocratic or embark on expansionism just because it has been under the long-term rule of the CCP.”

Despite such caveats, Zheng’s response was on the whole quite positive and conciliatory, and raised the hope that Washington and Beijing might be able to construct a more realistic relationship based upon the conceptual foundation of Zoellick’s roadmap.

Following President Bush’s brief two-day visit to China in November 2005, observers are anxious to see whether Zoellick’s roadmap—and Zheng’s encouraging response—can be parlayed into a meaningful strategic dialogue. Though still too early to tell if a new direction in U.S.-China relations has been set, it nonetheless appears that a potentially significant corner may have been turned.

Zoellick has bluntly exhorted Chinese leaders to view their own country as the outside world does, and to become a “responsible stakeholder” in the emerging global order. In return for such exemplary global citizenship, Washington is offering Beijing a seat at the “big table” of great power condominium. Thus far, Chinese leaders have not embraced, rejected, or blinked at Zoellick’s proposal. Yet Beijing does appear to be taking Zoellick’s speech seriously. The notion that inevitable differences of national interest and viewpoint exist and can be legitimately pursued, debated, and contained within an overall framework of normative comity and strategic concordance is a new and refreshing concept in U.S.-China relations. One hopes that Zoellick’s proposed framework is a concept whose time has come.
Zoellick’s China

Kurt M. Campbell

On September 21, 2005 in New York, then deputy secretary of state Robert Zoellick, the acknowledged intellectual powerhouse of the Bush administration, delivered a nuanced presentation detailing the complexities of the U.S.-China relationship. Rarely, if ever, has a sub-cabinet official presented a speech of such consequence and at such an important juncture. Zoellick argued for a policy of continued broad engagement and productive cooperation between the United States, the dominant power in the international arena, and China, the rising behemoth in Asia. The speech, coming just before the release of the Pentagon’s annual report on China’s military power and the beginning of the Asian-focused dimensions of the Quadrennial Defense Review (sometimes referred to as the “China threat” sections), was a necessary check on the increasing trend in some Republican circles to portray China publicly as the next strategic rival and military threat facing the United States.

After a protracted period of uncertainty concerning the nature of the foreign policy difficulties likely to confront Washington over the course of the first half of the 21st century, two overriding challenges are finally coming into sharper relief. The first is how to wage a more effective campaign in the long, twilight struggle against violent Islamic fundamentalism; the second is how to simultaneously cope with the almost certain rise
of China to great power status. Zoellick's speech offered essential insights into how to manage the latter challenge.

The most interesting aspect of the Zoellick speech was the intended audience: interested parties in the United States. To be sure, some sections—such as the comments on the benefits of democracy and the need to become “a stakeholder” (the most memorable watchword from the speech) in the international system—were directed squarely at the authoritarian leaders in Beijing. The majority of the speech, however, was intended for the domestic U.S. audience, particularly those most inclined to view China as the next great threat to U.S. power and prestige on the global stage.

Divisions in U.S. politics over complex foreign policy matters are nothing new. Throughout U.S. history, domestic debates have often focused on how best to conceptualize challenges and threats, be they from imperial Germany, Soviet Russia, or more recently Islamic jihadists. In most respects, however, the domestic divisions concerning China are greatly amplified. The main difference is that debates over U.S. China policy occur not so much between the two parties but within them. During the Clinton administration, human rights and democracy advocates battled vigorously throughout much of the first term against proponents of increased U.S.-China trade relations. In the current Bush administration, however, the in-fighting is much more intense, as hardliners in both the Pentagon and the vice president's office square off against the traditional proponents of engagement housed primarily at the Department of State, the White House, and in various economic agencies.

In recent years, proponents from both sides have engaged in a much more public debate. The 2002 “National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” various Pentagon documents such as the “Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China,” and working drafts associated with the “Quadrennial Defense Review Report” have all raised deep anxieties regarding China's military growth and global aspirations. Zoellick's speech constitutes the pro-engagement camp's first major counter-attack in the ongoing bureaucratic in-fighting over the future of U.S. policy toward China.

When the Bush administration first came to power in 2000, many assumed that U.S. policy would shift inexorably away from Europe and the Middle East and toward the new strategic challenges and opportunities in Asia. Numerous administration officials gave speeches filled with language concerning “rising powers,” a term that was actually a coded phrase meant both to express concern over China's rise and to anticipate changes in U.S. foreign policy toward the newly significant Asian arena. September 11 profoundly refocused U.S. attentions, however, and over the course of the past five years U.S. strate-
gists have been mostly preoccupied by policy issues far removed from the enormously vital and important developments ongoing in Asia—developments animated primarily by the rise of China.

The most important contribution of Zoellick's speech is that it has sent to the ash heap of history those various historical analogies often employed by China's critics to stir up angst over the Middle Kingdom's intentions. Zoellick stated quite clearly that modern China is neither Soviet Russia nor Weimar Germany, and provided much-needed cover to those who labor under the belief that conflict with China is neither preordained nor worthy of pursuit. Yet one must be careful to view Zoellick's speech within the context of other administration statements on U.S. policy toward China. In comparison, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's Shangri-La speech in July 2005 evinced hard-line language that suggests the existence of deeply felt and unresolved differences of opinion over China. On one level, Zoellick and his allies can be thankful that the hardliners are currently preoccupied with Iraq. The Bush administration has, however, belatedly recognized (at least in private) that the United States in recent years has been largely missing-in-action from the diplomatic playing fields of Asia. Thus in recent months the White House has been redirecting effort back toward regional issues, especially those concerning China.

Ever since the galvanizing attacks of September 11, the United States has targeted violent jihadism primarily through the application of military power in both Afghanistan and Iraq—the latter of which is now, largely as a consequence of U.S. actions, inextricably linked to the network of global terrorism. The demands, mostly unanticipated, of the martial campaigns in the Middle East have had the additional consequence of diverting the United States away from the rapidly changing strategic landscape of Asia precisely at a time when China is making enormous strides in military modernization, commercial conquests, diplomatic inroads, and application of soft power. Rarely in history has a rising power made such prominent gains in the international system largely as a consequence of the actions and inattentiveness of the dominant power. Indeed, Washington has been mostly unaware of China's gains within the past few years, many of which have come at the expense of the United States. Though current
U.S. strategic thinking continues to stress the need to “manage” China’s emergence as a dominant power, a more apt description may be that Beijing is increasingly attempting to manage U.S. perceptions and actions while simultaneously consolidating China’s newfound gains globally. From this perspective, Zoellick’s speech occasionally assumes an almost preachy tone, often assuming that the United States currently occupies—and will continue to occupy—the high ground in all facets of U.S.-China relations.

Washington’s policy of “engagement” toward China, in practice now for over a generation, is an ill-defined approach based upon commercial interaction. The strategy is designed to draw China into the global community of nations, yet is largely free from clearly defined metrics of success or failure. Though the United States has certainly adopted a cautious stance by maintaining a robust military presence in the Asia-Pacific, the “engagement” and “hedging” elements of the U.S. approach are not well integrated, and Washington must begin to consider how best to interact with Beijing in the next phase of relations. One might argue that the U.S. policy of engagement has succeeded so well that China is now beginning to best the United States in open political and commercial contests.

One issue that Zoellick carefully avoids, however, is the predilection of the United States toward predominance in the international arena. Simply put, the United States will not yield its position and prerogatives either voluntarily or gracefully to another rising state in the international order, regardless of the circumstances or the nature of the competition. This desire to maintain U.S. pre-eminence in the global order and deter potential challengers is quite clearly articulated in the “National Security Strategy.” Though China currently inspires anxieties within the United States that U.S. dominance may end, such sentiments regarding global power and prestige are not unique to this day and age. Following the end of the Cold War, much strategic commentary surfaced regarding the need to prevent Japan and a newly reunified Germany—two states that at the time were seen to be gaining in international position—from gaining any undue increase in global influence at the expense of the U.S. position. These historical examples suggest that, though concerns over democracy and human rights often animate U.S. worries over China’s rise, such anxieties ultimately are not determinative. The essential feature of this hegemonic parable is that the United States will not lightly brook
any changes to the power relationships that it has cultivated; appreciating this essential truth is a crucial component in constructing an effective China policy for the future.

History is littered with failed strategies for dealing with rising states. British and French attempts to contain an ascendant imperial Germany at the turn of the twentieth century resulted in disastrous consequences, as did U.S. and British timidity in confronting Japan's expansion throughout Asia and the Pacific during the 1920s and 30s. Indeed, the only instance in modern times of a graceful transition of power occurred between Great Britain and Washington at the end of World War II. The intimate relationship that spanned Washington and Whitehall throughout Britain's slow decline, however, is in no way similar to the complex, largely distrustful links that currently obtain between Beijing and Washington.

Because practitioners, commentators, and leaders are wrong far more often than they are right, hegemonic predictions concerning Asia must be made cautiously. In 1986 Mikhail Gorbachev gave a speech in Vladivostock that many felt would usher in an era of Soviet dominance in the Pacific. Soon after, the prevalent sentiment held that Japan would become the dominant player in the international arena and that Tokyo would transform its considerable economic power into political and military muscle, perhaps even replacing the United States as “number one” in the global heirarchy. Throughout this period there was also a deep belief that America was in the midst of a tragic and irreversible decline as a result of the costly and draining Cold War competition. More recently, this line of thinking has been animated by fears of an almost preordained Chinese ascent—fears that are common despite evidence that Beijing faces enormous domestic and international challenges that could derail any such trajectory to pre-eminence. Indeed, in anticipation of the next new ascender on the international scene, India, some prognosticators in Asia have in fact already downgraded the long-term prospects for China's rise. In his speech, at least, Zoellick treats China's continued rise as likely to continue; but history suggests that we should also be prepared for other outcomes as well.

Nevertheless, two separate challenges—jihadist threats and a rising China—will dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda for at least the next generation. In addition, the construction of a durable, bipartisan consensus on an overarching foreign policy approach to these twin challenges is essential. A degree of bipartisanship in U.S. domestic politics was a recurring feature of much of the Cold War-era and, in the immortal words of Senator Vandenburg, bitter divisions often stopped “at the water’s edge.” Bipartisanship has been conspicuously absent in current foreign policy debates, and this internal divisiveness inevitably hampers the effective formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy. Unfortunately, Zoellick has offered no thoughts on how to forge a
bipartisan China policy, preferring instead to loyally follow the Bush administration’s “go it alone” strategy. Given the magnitude of the challenges that lie ahead, a concerted effort to rediscover some common ground in U.S. domestic politics may indeed be one of the most important ingredients for striking a successful balance between these two huge U.S. foreign policy challenges that are sure to face the country in the coming decades.

In the final analysis, Robert Zoellick’s speech is an important reminder to those both at home and abroad that the United States must remain engaged in a region that is so absolutely vital to every aspect of American life. Let us hope that this speech is not merely an isolated contribution into the long march for a China policy with clarity and vision, but rather the beginning of a purposeful and recurring discussion of a policy agenda that addresses how and why China matters for the United States, both now and into the future.
United States Policy Toward China: A Timely Restatement

James A. Kelly

Since 1972 seven U.S. presidents have promoted a remarkably consistent policy of engagement with China. Given the worldwide changes in the past three decades, as well as painful perturbations in China itself, this essential steadiness is all the more remarkable. Skeptics in and out of the United States have raised doubts at every turn, many with entirely valid justification. But U.S. engagement with China, whether in the form of Bill Clinton’s “Strategic Partnership” or George W. Bush’s “Cooperative, Constructive, and Candid” relationship, has contributed to the historic and unprecedented development of China as a global power and trading behemoth. The new speech by Robert Zoellick has now reframed the presentation of the Bush administration’s China policy.

Doubts and questions persist. On the one hand, the Bush administration has been frequently and falsely accused of seeking to “contain” China. On the other hand, and more seriously, the huge trade deficit ($163 billion in 2004) that has emerged between China and the United States and the perception of lost U.S. jobs have raised temperatures among increasing numbers of members of the U.S. Congress. In the case of China, economic and political issues quickly intertwine.

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China is addressing these concerns directly. Beijing shifted the value of the Chinese currency by some 2% in July, and a recent *Foreign Affairs* article by Beijing elder and insider Zheng Bijian has sought to reassure that China seeks a peaceful rise.

The Zheng article, to which Zoellick refers, outlines a 35-year plan for China to effect a peaceful rise, identifies daunting obstacles that must be overcome, and seeks to reassure agitated observers by noting that China’s breathtaking but uneven 27-year emergence has been accomplished with “capital, technology, and resources acquired through peaceful means.”

This timely speech by Mr. Zoellick performs a valuable service in that it carefully articulates the Bush administration’s second-term policies toward China. The speech—given in New York to business leaders and policy wonks, but intended for wider circulation—signals neither policy change nor complacency with the status quo.

In his remarks, Deputy Secretary Zoellick—second in command at the Department of State and a former full cabinet member as President Bush’s first-term global trade representative—re-emphasized the cooperative relationship that both nations profess a desire to attain. The speech, however, also provided useful details regarding the Bush administration’s concerns, reservations, and even aspirations.

Zoellick specifically rejected the notion that the United States should contain China. He also rejected the suggestion that the United States should recruit Asian countries into some sort of a coalition designed to block or oppose China. According to Zoellick, Asian countries would not join such a coalition and the policy would fail. Most of all, this type of plan is unnecessary.

Zoellick did recognize that the rise of China presents political, military, and economic uncertainties, which is precisely why the United States and its allies hedge against possible adverse turns in China’s development.

In his speech, Zoellick has endeavored to introduce a new phrase into the sometimes arcane language of China diplomacy. He outlined a policy that goes beyond current U.S. efforts to speed China’s full membership into the international system by urging China to become a *responsible stakeholder* in that system. This phrase is already eliciting comment in several languages.

Zoellick has urged China to assume responsibility. Beijing should aspire to something more than simply pursuing China’s own interests. Some commentators in China have viewed this as a patronizing suggestion, but such comments needed to be stated publicly. By urging China to become a *stakeholder* in the international world order, Zoellick is calling for Beijing to evince the sort of behavior characteristic of one who
belongs to, and appreciates belonging to, the international system that has so greatly facilitated China's soaring rise in wealth. Here I would mildly dispute the language of the speech. China need not be urged to become a stakeholder because Beijing already holds an acute interest in the strength and stability of the international system that has enabled China's growth. Rather, Beijing should act more in accordance with its already huge stake in a working and effective global system.

China is a great power now, and Washington needs to be able to interact constructively with Beijing. At the same time, there are many Chinese military and political elites who relish that their country is a great power again. Such elites are making clear that they intend to assert firmly what they believe to be in China's interests. Chinese are all too conscious of the humiliations that their country has endured for centuries. As a great power, China is pursuing a steady build-up of a navy as well as other forces capable of projecting power well beyond its borders. Such goals should not necessarily be viewed as a threat; rather, China is merely following its own classic strategist, Sun Tzu, by obtaining its goals without actually having to use force. In this way, each of China's neighbors will have to consider China's interests regardless of the situation. China will not be militarily intimidated by anyone; Beijing may choose to back down on some matter for economic or diplomatic reasons, but does not intend to yield easily on any issue—including sovereignty in the South China Sea or India's desire for a free hand in the Indian Ocean.

This assertiveness is also precisely why the United States as well as China's neighbors must consider the prospect of a darker future. Some may call such considerations hedging, but the fact remains that no one can be certain that future Chinese leaders might not be tempted by their new wealth and power to seek to intimidate others. The Chinese political system is simply too opaque to ensure complete confidence. For this reason, Zoellick's speech—coming just before Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's first official visit to China—calls for a more cogent, complete explanation of China's military modernization plans. U.S. concerns revolve less around the fact that China's forces are being modernized and more due to concerns that some service branches appear to be
undergoing hasty optimization designed specifically to oppose known U.S. forces and to increase capabilities that might be used to attack Taiwan.

At the same time, both China and the United States are in the midst of an unprecedented economic embrace. The United States currently holds an enormous trade deficit with China and U.S. companies have invested significant amounts of money in Chinese ventures. For its part, China (as well as Japan and many others) holds huge foreign exchange reserves that are invested in U.S. Treasury instruments. The United States has allowed itself the luxury of growth on borrowed money—namely the recycled proceeds of sales by China and others. China has, however, also chosen and persisted along the proven but narrow economic path that has marked previously successful Asian economies—the path of export-led growth. Since such export-led growth is unsustainable over the long term, however, China must find a way to depend less upon an export-based economy, and instead fuel China's growth through increased investment in domestic prosperity.

For its part, the United States must return to living within its means. In the meantime, however, these two great powers are locked in this deep economic embrace from which neither knows how to gracefully dislodge itself. Economic-based political pressures are building in Washington. Yet, given the enormous differences between the two, this unique embrace has fostered what is, on the whole, a rather smooth relationship.
Toward a Stable and Constructive China Policy

Robert S. Ross

Secretary of State Robert Zoellick’s presentation of the Bush administration’s agenda for U.S.-China relations is remarkable both for what it omits as well for what it includes. One of the foreign policy issues that received the least attention by Zoellick is Taiwan. Having previously constituted the most dangerous and intractable dilemma in U.S.-China relations, the Taiwan issue looks increasingly amenable to a peaceful resolution, a goal that serves both U.S. and Chinese interests. Zoellick made clear that the Bush administration is pleased with the current trend in cross-Strait cooperation and the prospect of Taiwan’s continued engagement with the mainland. Equally important, Zoellick's discussion of the impasse on the Korean peninsula was limited to stressing the U.S. hope that Beijing will continue to maintain a constructive role in the Six-Party talks; Washington now appears content to work through Beijing to manage tensions on the Korean peninsula. The fact that the Taiwan and Korea flashpoints—once sources of considerable tension and heightened preparation for war—now play such a diminished role in U.S.-China relations is cause for considerable satisfaction.

Zoellick’s presentation is also noteworthy for the message it sends to the domestic audience. Zoellick affirmed the White House’s unequivocal endorsement of a policy that promotes U.S.-China cooperation and encourages Chinese participation in framing the

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global order. By aligning with the Clinton administration in developing a post–Cold War China policy characterized by engagement rather than confrontation, the Bush administration has laid the basis for a bipartisan consensus on U.S. policy toward China. If achieved, such a bipartisan consensus would marginalize the strident calls from the wings of both political parties for a confrontational approach to security, economic, and political conflicts of interests with China. By challenging the domestic pressures for confrontation, the Bush administration is serving the long-term U.S. interests of maintaining a stable and constructive relationship with China.

Now that the prospect of conflict over Korea or Taiwan is declining and the administration is increasingly focused on engagement, Zoellick's timely presentation has outlined the future agenda of Washington's China policy. This agenda includes issues central to U.S. security and economic development: enhancement of counterterrorism cooperation, management of potential conflict associated with China's growing demand for energy resources, promotion of international economic stability in the face of China's surging economy, and the rise of Chinese defense capabilities.

The Bush administration's approach to these issues is to encourage China to become a “responsible stakeholder” (a term used in Zoellick's speech) in the international political order, and to pursue its interests within the established world order rather than as a disruptive revisionist state. But this approach suggests a dated view of China's role in international politics: on many fronts, China has already become just as much a stakeholder in the international order as has the United States.

Zoellick suggested that China, as a responsible member of the international community, should pursue resources such as Sudanese oil in tandem with sincere efforts to help resolve that country's humanitarian crises. China is, however—in contrast to the United States—currently participating in United Nations' peacekeeping activities in the Sudan, a fact that only underscores China's emergence as one of the more active contributors to worldwide UN peacekeeping operations. Similarly, ever since China's admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2000, Beijing has become one of the more constructive forces in the promotion of free trade. Beijing has frequently aligned with Washington in opposition to other WTO members usually considered to be “responsible stakeholders” (e.g., Japan and the European Union) as well as to China's reputed revisionist allies

“… failure to recognize that China possesses legitimate interests of its own … undermines incentives for Beijing to seek negotiated solutions to bilateral conflicts.”
in the developing world. And rather than pursue a unilateralist foreign policy, China actively participates in global and regional multilateral institutions and in multilateral confidence-building measures.

All of the above observations suggest that the Bush administration’s current agenda is not so much to preserve the existing global order but rather to secure Chinese cooperation in areas that support the national interests of the United States. This is the appropriate goal of U.S. foreign policy toward any country. Despite the easing of tensions in the Taiwan Strait and on the Korean Peninsula, important issues remain in the U.S.-China relationship that require determined U.S. attention. Yet to frame these issues as conflicts stemming from Chinese challenges to the global order serves neither U.S. efforts to promote Chinese cooperation nor U.S. interests in East Asia or elsewhere.

Chinese cooperation with disreputable regimes in the Middle East reflects Beijing’s interest in securing access to oil in the same manner that U.S. cooperation with two of the world’s worst violators of human rights—Saudi Arabia and Pakistan—reflects Washington’s need to meet energy and antiterrorism interests. China’s policy is due less to the Chinese leadership’s disregard for global norms and more to national interests that lead Beijing to cooperate with countries in conflict with the United States. Similarly, China—as is the case with the European Union and Russia—cooperates both in order to secure access to oil and out of concern for U.S. unilateralism. On trade issues, Beijing’s reluctance to reform the Chinese economy further is due in great part to concerns over double-digit unemployment and political stability rather than to an alleged “mercantilist” ideology. U.S. trade policy is similarly motivated by domestic economic and political interests.

U.S. insistence that China’s positive security environment does not justify the country’s rising defense outlays ignores the considerable growth in the U.S. defense budget since the end of the Cold War (excluding the cost of the war in Iraq), ongoing U.S. procurement of next-generation weaponry, and the significant and ongoing deployment since the mid-1990s of U.S. power-projection capabilities on China’s maritime periphery. China’s military build-up reflects just as much concern for U.S. military power as the U.S. build-up in East Asia reflects Washington’s concern over the rise of China.

The United States and China will be neither friends nor allies. The great power capabilities of these two states promise strategic competition well into the 21st century. China pursues many policies that undermine U.S. interests, including domestic and foreign economic policies, cooperation with Iran and other states challenging U.S. security, and a prolonged defense build-up. U.S. policy should seek to secure Chinese cooperation in ways that benefit U.S. interests. But failure to recognize that China pos-
quires legitimate interests of its own, however, undermines incentives for Beijing to seek negotiated solutions to bilateral conflicts. Such near-sightedness also suggests to other countries, including many of Washington's security partners in East Asia, that the United States is interested only in expanding its own regional power in East Asia rather than promoting regional stability. A mature and constructive U.S. policy toward China does not require China to accommodate itself to U.S. values or conceptions of a just global order. Such a policy must respond to the rise of China with rigorous regional security and defense policies as well as self-interested economic policies, all while simultaneously acknowledging the existence of legitimate conflicts of interests between China and the United States. Such foreign policy candor and realism will best enable the United States to use its capabilities to secure Chinese cooperation in ways that align with U.S. interests.
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