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I. The Director's Notes

It is almost two years since the world was attacked by COVID-19, and life is not yet resumed to our typical pre-COVID-19 daily routines. Although we are allowed to go back to classrooms to teach and learn, everyone needs to wear a face mask to protect one another. The Center for China Studies is not yet in full run, but we need to publish the CCS newsletters as scheduled. Many of our usual activities became virtual. We are still waiting with hope. This special issue, continued from the previous one, covers four articles from our faculty or faculty

emeritus on their reflections of the current situation and the US-China relations.

II. The US and China: Competition, Conflict, or Cooperation

by Gene and Virginia Grabiner

For various reasons, not the least of which are the existential threats of climate change, climate crisis, and threat of nuclear war, we are in a period that demands world-understanding and human self-understanding. To make these understandings real we believe that the US and China must cooperate. Just imagine the possibilities if the US and China were to cooperate and abandon competition and conflict. Here are some possible benefits of US/China cooperation:

- Instead of continuing as the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gasses, these two economic giants could work together to fight the escalating climate catastrophe by reducing their carbon footprint and championing international agreements with other nations to do the same.
- Instead of blaming one another for the current pandemic, they could work cooperatively on global public health measures, including massive production and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines and research on other potentially horrendous diseases.
- Instead of engaging in wasteful economic competition and trade wars, they could pool their vast economic resources and skills to provide poorer nations with economic development programs and direct economic assistance.
- Instead of denouncing one another for human

rights violations, they could admit that they both had oppressed their racial minorities, announce plans for ending this mistreatment, and provide reparations to its victims. (Source: Imagine a World with U.S.-China Cooperation, Lawrence S Wittner, October 10, 2021, History News Network)

Yet, just the other day, US Secretary of State Blinken, urged that Taiwan be admitted as a member state to the UN. Not only that; he claimed that his suggestion was consistent with “our One-China” policy (Source: Reuters, October 26, 2021). This is counterproductive.

Meanwhile, both China and the US are shoring themselves up against one another. The current military buildups strongly suggest that we are in a New Cold War (or worse) in which one side will win and the other will lose (or both go down in mutual ruin).

It may be said that President Obama’s “pivot to Asia” was an attempt to limit China’s development and to counter the Belt and Road Initiative, which has gained friends, internationally. Hostility to China intensified under the Trump regime with tariffs (which actually backfired on the US economy) and the constant propaganda of the “Chinese virus.” And even under President Biden, the US is finger-pointing at China about Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea. It seems that US foreign policy toward China has been consistent, from Trump right through to Biden.

Since we are Americans, we recommend that all US belligerent rhetoric toward China be toned-down, whether it come from the government and/or the media. Also, America must acknowledge that we now live in a multi-polar world. That time when the US was the world’s only superpower has passed. It was but a brief world-historical moment. As an ancient Chinese proverb says: “Who reaches mountaintop, must go down.”

In the face of all this, the US and China have pressing common problems which must be faced cooperatively: climate change and climate crisis, the threat of nuclear war, public health and research on disease, and terrorism. These problems cannot be effectively addressed in an atmosphere of competition and conflict. The world-historical situation of humanity requires that the US and China work constructively, as partners to solve our shared problems. And only a partnership of China and the US leading the

way will be strong enough. Smaller countries with smaller economies, despite their efforts, simply cannot shoulder the burden like we can.

Gene Grabiner, SUNY Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus
Virginia Grabiner, SUNY Distinguished Professor Emerita

III. The Disturbing Trend of the US-China Relations *by Mike Lazich*

The AUKUS security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, announced on 15 September 2021, is merely the latest episode in the increasingly contentious new ‘cold war’ between China and the U.S. Under the pact, the U.S. and the UK agree to help Australia to develop and deploy nuclear-powered submarines, adding to the Western military presence in the Pacific region. The pact has been denounced by China as an unwarranted escalation of military tensions in the region and as another example of American efforts to unfairly ‘contain’ the rise of China as an economic and military superpower. The narrative promoted by the U.S. security/intelligence establishment in recent years has increasingly characterized the Chinese government as a malevolent force guilty of military aggression, human rights violations, and the suppression of democracy in China. This narrative has been faithfully promulgated by the American mainstream media with very little independent, journalistic investigation into the relative truth or validity of such condemnations. Indeed, recent opinion polls indicate that the majority of Americans now see China as an existential threat to U.S. economic interests and global supremacy.

China, on the other hand, sees the belligerent policies and actions of the Americans as nothing less than the latest manifestation of Western imperialism, describing U.S. economic sanctions and military intimidation as illegal and unprincipled meddling in the internal affairs of China in a futile attempt to maintain the unchallenged global hegemony the U.S. has imposed on the world since the end of the first Cold War. China has also decried the hypocrisy of U.S. criticism of China by pointing to the chaos and devastation caused by prolonged and unjustified American wars in the Middle East and the country’s clandestine intervention in the political affairs of whatever countries American leaders deem as enemy states. The ‘century of humiliation’ that China experienced from the time of

the Opium War in the mid-nineteenth century until the Communist Revolution of 1949 has served as a powerful historical incentive for the country's increasingly hostile reaction to Western attempts to stifle China's social, political, and economic progress.

So, how may we best comprehend and hopefully contribute to ameliorating this disturbing trend in U.S.-China relations that has the potential to escalate into a far more catastrophic confrontation? The first step, it seems, would be to ascertain the relative truth or falsehood of the various accusations that have been leveled against the Chinese government and acquire a more circumspect and comprehensive understanding of China's perspective in the context of the country's unique historical experience. This can be achieved by examining news sources outside of the America mainstream media, such as the Beijing supported Global Times, or the popular Hong Kong daily, the South China Morning Post, that reveal the Chinese view of key developments in U.S.-China relations. Compare competing narratives, evaluate supporting evidence, and draw your own independent conclusions. Americans must also learn to accept the new multi-polar world order that the rise of China and Russia are making inevitable. The Center for China Studies at Buffalo State has long sought to broaden our understanding of Chinese history, society, and politics in the hope that this might prompt an increase in cross-cultural engagement and cooperation. We sincerely hope that our efforts have helped, in a small way, to positively enhance our community's understanding of China and to illumine an important pathway to a more trusting and cordial relationship with our Chinese friends.

Michael Lazich, Professor of History Emeritus

IV. The Importance of Education in US-China Relations

by Bruce Acker

In the last several decades, we have seen dramatic shifts in international relations and the rise and fall of real or potential threats to the United States. We barely had a chance to breathe after the normalization of U.S.-China relations in 1979 when the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union collapsed, followed soon thereafter by the emergence of Al Qaida as a very grave threat, followed again quickly by the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Today, China has taken the lead as the number-one adversary

of the United States, to the point where nominee after nominee in the new Biden administration went out of their way in Senate confirmation hearings to portray China as a serious—even existential—threat. UN Ambassador Linda Thomas Greenfield said in her confirmation hearings that “China is a strategic adversary, and their actions threaten our security, they threaten our values, and they threaten our way of life, and they are a threat to their neighbors and they are a threat across the globe.”

How did we reach this point? As a rising power, China naturally bristles against U.S. and Western European domination of the world order. China is flexing its muscles economically throughout Eurasia, Africa, and Latin America with the Belt and Road Initiative; is taking a militarily-threatening posture against some of its neighbors; and is cracking down hard on dissent and minority groups.

You don't have to be paying too much attention to notice daily articles in your favorite newsfeed about Chinese violations of human rights, international law, or accepted business practices. In the United States, numerous volumes have been published in the past decade critical of China. Many pundits are postulating the beginnings of a new cold war.

In China, the general narrative is that the U.S. is working to keep China on the sidelines. The Chinese expect their country to be treated as an equal on the world stage. Their long century of humiliation is over. Taken together, U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods, sanctions of Chinese officials, condemnation of Chinese human rights violations, frequent accusations against Chinese-born scientists at U.S. universities, and military support for Taiwan are considered symptomatic of U.S. efforts to maintain its dominance of the global order and keep China subservient.

So where does that leave educators, students, and policymakers in the U.S.? The first point, which should be obvious but often gets lost in the anti-China rhetoric, is that we must increase the American commitment—at all levels of government and education—to Chinese language and area studies programs. Even if business opportunities start to dwindle, the imperative to understand Chinese language, culture, society and politics will remain. We need more young people—not fewer—learning Chinese, traveling to China, and understanding Chinese society and culture.

A corollary is that we must remain open to large numbers of Chinese students coming to study at American universities. Just as we need American students to understand China and be able to relate to Chinese people, we need young Chinese to understand and experience America and Americans.

One of the sad realities of the post-Soviet period was the rapid expansion of Russian language learning followed by the closure of many programs as business expectations diminished and authoritarianism reemerged in Moscow. American is paying a price now, since very few people outside of the intelligence agencies and diplomatic corps have much knowledge of Russia. Moreover, our students have lost out because they are rarely offered the opportunity to learn about Russian culture and traditions, meet interesting and friendly Russian people, or understand the complexities of Russian society. The current “Russia-as-adversary” approach rarely allows for nuanced understanding, cultural engagement, or people-to-people exchange. If we are not careful, the hardening “China-as adversary” narrative won’t allow for understanding and engagement either, and we would all be worse off for it.

Another important point to remember is that understanding is not the same as validating. We can take Chinese perspectives into consideration without agreeing with them. In fact, if we don’t consider their perspectives, how could we hope to resolve any sort of disagreement or collaborate in any way to solve critical global challenges?

A common accusation against Confucius Institutes is that the language teachers they help to bring from China to teach in U.S. schools and universities are brainwashing young people in the U.S. Of course, personal interaction with Chinese teachers is likely to enhance American students’ appreciation for Chinese people and culture. But Americans have many ways of learning about China and developing their own views. To conclude that young people would base their political leanings or party affiliations on the fact that they had a kind Chinese teacher is as condescending as it is absurd. Of course, any personal interaction or learning about China that doesn’t reinforce the China-as-threat narrative could serve to disrupt that narrative.

As a student in Leningrad in the 1980s, I don’t recall anyone in my cohort coming back to the U.S. more sympathetic to communist rule than when we set out. In fact, having lived in the Soviet Union for some time, some of us returned to the U.S. more conservative politically than we had been

prior to our study abroad. We did all return with hopes for better lives for our friends in the Soviet Union, and a conviction that it would be unthinkable to drop bombs on them. Surely no one could argue with that as a positive sentiment.

I hesitate to hazard a guess about the direction of U.S.-China relations. A warming of relations in the near term seems unlikely, in part because political leaders in both countries have staked their legitimacy on their ability to be tough on the other. In the long run, if the relationship is to become less antagonistic and we are to avoid a new cold war (or worse), education and exchange will be an important piece of the puzzle.

Bruce Acker, Associate Director of the University at Buffalo Confucius Institute

V. My Fond Memory of China *by Jill Norvilitis*

In 2000, I had the tremendously good fortune to be part of the first group from Buffalo State to travel to China to meet colleagues at several different universities and to establish sister institution agreements with those universities. The experience was unforgettable. This was my first extended contact with Chinese culture or, really, anyone from China. I remember learning very quickly to use chopsticks so that I did not stand out in the group as the only person who needed a fork. More than that, though, I remember the genuine warmth and hospitality everywhere we went. Our gracious hosts talked to me about psychology and showed us their beautiful country. That first trip turned into multiple collaborations and publications with people who, like me, believe that the way to move the world forward is to work to understand each other better through both research and through friendship.

Today, relations between the nations of China and the United States are tense due to issues such as human rights, climate change, and trade. It is easy to become discouraged and to see these two cultures as dug into their positions with no ability to come together. But then I remember that first trip and the friends that I made and the science that we created together, and I know the same path that I followed still works.

Jill Norvilitis, Professor of Psychology

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