

*Panel Summary: China, the United States, and the World*

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On April 29, 2006, at the University of Chicago's *China and the Future of the World* conference, James R. Lilley, Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and former United States Ambassador to China; Wu Jianmin, President of China Foreign Affairs University and former Chinese Ambassador to France; and John J. Mearsheimer, R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science and Co-Director of the Program on International Security Policy at the University of Chicago participated in a discussion panel on the future of China's foreign policy, titled "China, the United States, and World." The panel was moderated by Bruce Cumings, Norman and Edna Freehling Professor of History at the University of Chicago.

The question of whether China's economic rise would lead to increased security competition in Asia between China, its neighbors, and the United States figured prominently in each of the panelists' speeches and in their responses to questions from the audience. Professor Mearsheimer, a proponent of the theory of offensive realism, cast the debate in stark theoretical terms that predicted an increasingly aggressive Chinese foreign policy within the next two to three decades. Professor Mearsheimer's central thesis was that China cannot rise peacefully if it continues to grow economically. He laid out a theoretical framework within which to consider rising great powers such as China. Professor Mearsheimer argued that states find themselves in an anarchic international system in which all states have some offensive capabilities and cannot be certain of the intentions of other states. Given the uncertainty of such a system, states are induced to fear one another because they simply cannot be certain about whether other states will have offensive intentions in addition to offensive capabilities. Furthermore, he noted that there is no higher authority to which states can appeal if victimized by aggression, so the structure of the international system further dictates that the pursuit of power is the best way for states to survive.

Professor Mearhsheimer said that China will translate its economic power into military power, and as this power increases, so too will China's incentive to dominate East Asia in the same way that the United States dominates the western hemisphere. The United States does not tolerate peer competitors and recognizes that regional hegemony is the ideal way to ensure security. Professor Mearsheimer contended that China will thus imitate the 19th century expansionist policies of the United States, which grew U.S. territory and consolidated power. China will therefore formulate an Asia Monroe Doctrine to ensure regional dominance. He added that current indicators of China's intentions are not useful because China is likely to behave far differently when it has more power.

Ambassador James R. Lilley traced the evolution of Chinese foreign policy and its interaction with American policy since the rise of China's communist regime. He stressed that the maintenance of internal stability has historically been a vital goal of China's foreign policy, and that China's continued economic success further deepens this trend. Globalization, Lilley asserted, is a novel factor that sustains China's development, strengthens China's relationship with its neighbors and the United States, and subordinates military competition to economic development. The result of this is that Chinese foreign policy does not seek to endanger vital economic ties through expansionism; rather, it increases commercial and political influence through foreign aid contributions and cooperation in regional organizations. Ambassador Lilley added that American foreign policy toward China

should seek to better understand China's regional activities in order to limit the consequences of differences of opinion on international issues and to minimize the potential for conflict.

Ambassador Wu Jianmin similarly emphasized China's economic development as a key driver of Chinese foreign policy. He highlighted the sharing of China's growth with rest of the world as the most important feature of China's rise. He cited two preconditions for China's continued modernization: peace and international cooperation. China would be foolish to pursue expansionist policies because such policies would endanger these two preconditions and make impossible the attainment of China's three primary goals: economic parity with average industrialized countries by 2050, democratization, and continued openness to other civilizations. Furthermore, Ambassador Wu observed that the common interests shared by China and the United States outweigh their differences; mutual benefit is thus the basis for the formulation of their respective policies, particularly with reference to the current Chinese trade surplus and consumption of oil.

China's growing demand for oil was addressed by all three panelists, with different conclusions drawn about the implications of the trend. Ambassador Wu reasoned that the recent influx of foreign manufacturing industries has contributed greatly to China's increased consumption of oil, and that China's energy use should be viewed as a reflection of China's role in driving global economic growth. Not only China benefits from its energy usage. Ambassador Lilley identified the increased Chinese presence in Africa and Latin America, as well as efforts to build an oil pipeline from Kazakhstan, as evidence that efforts to secure oil might create tensions between the U.S. and China, but not necessarily lead to armed conflict. He noted that the United States engages in similar practices of securing oil. Professor Mearsheimer, however, noted that China's oil consumption will only increase over the next decades and that China will eventually need to secure oil routes from the Middle East, routes now controlled by the U.S. navy. China would therefore require a blue-water navy of its own, and with it would come increased security competition with the United States.

Another source of potential conflict is the dispute over Taiwan. Professor Mearsheimer noted that the Chinese are deeply committed to reclaiming the island, while the U.S. and Japan are unwilling to concede such an important strategic asset. Ambassador Lilley confirmed the American obligation to defend Taiwan in the case of an armed conflict with China, although he observed that the Chinese clearly have a rhetorical advantage given widespread international recognition of the "One China" policy. Lilley added that the United States' greatest advantage is its ability to foster further globalization between Taiwan, China, and other nations in the region in an effort to moderate strategic tensions. Ambassador Wu called U.S. arms sales to Taiwan contrary to the will of the Chinese government and people, while maintaining that a peaceful solution to the problem is the wish of the People's Republic of China. The U.S. should not encourage Taiwan's president Chen Shui-Bian and the separatist movement, he warned.

Globalization is a powerful factor that will substantially change the character of the international system and allow China to rise peacefully, Ambassador Wu stated during his remarks. During the question-and-answer period, Professor Mearsheimer argued that globalization, or economic interdependence, will not necessarily guarantee peace. An international depression would negate the

effects of globalization. Additionally, he cited the high level of economic interdependence between Germany, Russia, and England prior to World War I as an example of the inability of economic interdependence to prevent the outbreak of war. He went on to address the argument that China's strategic culture is opposed to aggression, equating such arguments with America's own exceptionalism and offering the view that China has not behaved aggressively in recent times because it has simply been too weak to do so.

Ambassador Lilley disregarded a question on whether China would emerge as a moral example in the modern world, calling the question an example of "pedantic moralism," which he said is a common feature in U.S. exchanges with China. He said that China cannot be a moral example until it demonstrates that events such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution are not parts of the Chinese system. Ambassador Wu said that it may be too early to tell whether the Chinese will set a moral example for the world, but that the most important feature of Chinese culture is the Chinese belief in harmony; Chinese prefer peaceful dialogue to force in the resolution of international disputes. The most important issue for the Chinese government currently, Ambassador Wu said, is improving the lives of Chinese people through economic growth and increased prosperity.